



NAVY NEWS

OCTOBER 2024

The second of the Royal Navy's new City-class Type 26 frigates, HMS Cardiff, touches the water for the first time as she is towed alongside at BAE Systems Scotstoun on the River Clyde in Scotland.

See page 4

Picture: LPhot Stuart Dickson



CITY SLICKER

Inside: ■ TRENT HUNTS NARCO-SUB ■ CHF DOWN UNDER ■ F-35s IN ICELAND



A rainbow creates a colourful back drop as HMS Trent's boarding team deal with a captured 'narco-sub' that was carrying a significant amount of cocaine in the Caribbean Sea.

The selection of images on the facing page show how the ship's latest two drugs busts unfolded.

Pictures by LPhot Matt Bradley

THE **NARCO-SUB** AT AT THE END OF THE



ROYAL Navy patrol ship HMS Trent seized £160m of cocaine from a 'narco-sub' in the Caribbean Sea.

In eight drugs busts in seven months, the Portsmouth-based patrol ship has stopped nearly £750m of narcotics reaching the streets of the UK – or anywhere else.

Trent's latest operation, alongside the US Coast Guard and a US Maritime Patrol Aircraft, was the first 'narco-sub' the Royal Navy has ever intercepted.

The ship's boarding team – comprising US Coast Guard personnel, Royal Marines from 47 Commando and specialist sailors – clambered aboard the semi-submersed vessel in waters 190 nautical miles south of the Dominican Republic.

The team seized 2,000kg of cocaine with a street value of £160m, striking yet another blow to the Caribbean drugs trade.

HMS Trent's Commanding Officer, Commander Tim Langford, said: "It has been a busy yet rewarding eight months for Trent whilst deployed to the Caribbean, and this latest seizure reinforces the utility of Royal Navy's Offshore Patrol Vessels in the delivery of this vital tasking.

"My skilled team and our embarked USCG Law Enforcement Detachment fought challenging conditions to interdict this semi-submersible – rarely seen in the Caribbean – and were rewarded with another record haul.

"These operations are a team effort, and require involvement from every single member of my crew irrespective of their usual role – they can be extremely proud of what they have achieved."

This eighth drugs bust took place on August 26, just 72 hours after Trent's last successful interdiction in which 462kg of cocaine worth £37m was seized.

About 90 nautical miles north of where they stopped the narco-sub, a high-speed night-time pursuit by Trent's sea boats saw two suspects and 12 bales of drugs seized, ready to be



RAINBOW

handed over to US authorities.

Having seized 9,459kg of drugs – worth nearly £750m – Trent surpasses HMS Argyll as the best hunter of smugglers in the Royal Navy this century, smashing the frigate's £620m running total (including busts in the Caribbean during patrols in 2014).

These successful interceptions disrupt Transnational Criminal Organisations (TCO), and underscore the Royal Navy's vital role in maintaining maritime security and upholding international law both at home and abroad.

This role is more important than ever with the flow of drugs to Europe and the UK, where an estimated 117 tonnes is consumed per year, grows significantly.

HMS Trent continues to patrol the Caribbean as a reassuring presence to British Overseas Territories during hurricane season (from June to November) and to stem the flow of illegal cargo through the region.

Aboard the ship are around 50 specialists in disaster-relief operations, including Crisis Response Troop from 24 Commando Royal Engineers.

As well as carrying equipment to make repairs to damaged infrastructure and life-saving medical supplies, the ship has a drone system, called the Puma, which provides vital reconnaissance and surveillance and is operated by 700X Naval Air Squadron.

The ship recently visited the British Virgin Islands, making repairs on Tortola after Tropical Storm Ernesto had passed through the region.



Training or on patrol around the UK

- HMS Richmond

HMS Cattistock

HMS Hurworth

HMS Iron Duke

HMS Severn

HMS Tyne

Coastal Forces Squadron

XV Patrick Blackett

Project Wilton

814 NAS

815 NAS
- 820 NAS

824 NAS

825 NAS

845 NAS

846 NAS

847 NAS

RFA Tiderace

RFA Stirling Castle

RFA Proteus

DTXG



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HMS TRENT has continued her emphatic drugs busting streak, most recently seizing the Royal Navy’s first narco-submarine in the Caribbean Sea in her eighth smuggler interception this year (see pages 2-3).

In home waters, **HMS Iron Duke** shadowed Russian Kilo-class submarine Novorossiysk and its supporting tug Evgeny Churov as they sailed out of the Baltic and made for the Atlantic by the shortest route possible: through the Dover Strait.

The Type 23 frigate returned immediately to the North Sea for a near carbon copy operation – this time with Steregushchiy-class corvette Stoiky and tanker MT Yaz, later handing over duties to **HMS Tyne** (see page 5).

Also on page 5 is a closer look at the NATO policing mission for F-35B Lightning jets of **617 Squadron** in Iceland.

RFA amphibious support ship **Cardigan Bay** has returned to the UK after delivering humanitarian supplies to Gaza (see page 6).

The ship deployed to the Middle East more than two years ago to work alongside Royal Navy minehunters in the protection of key shipping lanes.

It’s G’day from **HMS Tamar** on page 7 as the patrol ship works in the South Pacific with the Royal Australian Air Force.

The Aussie aviators dropped in on the River-class ship some 200 nautical miles south of Fiji to test the ability of the two Commonwealth forces to work together – at range.

It’s also G’day from **Commando Helicopter Force**, as we take a closer look at their deployment in the Australian outback (page 9).

Three Merlin Mk4s of **845 Naval Air Squadron** and 70 personnel have been deployed with **RFA Argus**, providing support to the Littoral Response Group (South) – spearheaded by the **Royal Marines of 40 Commando**.

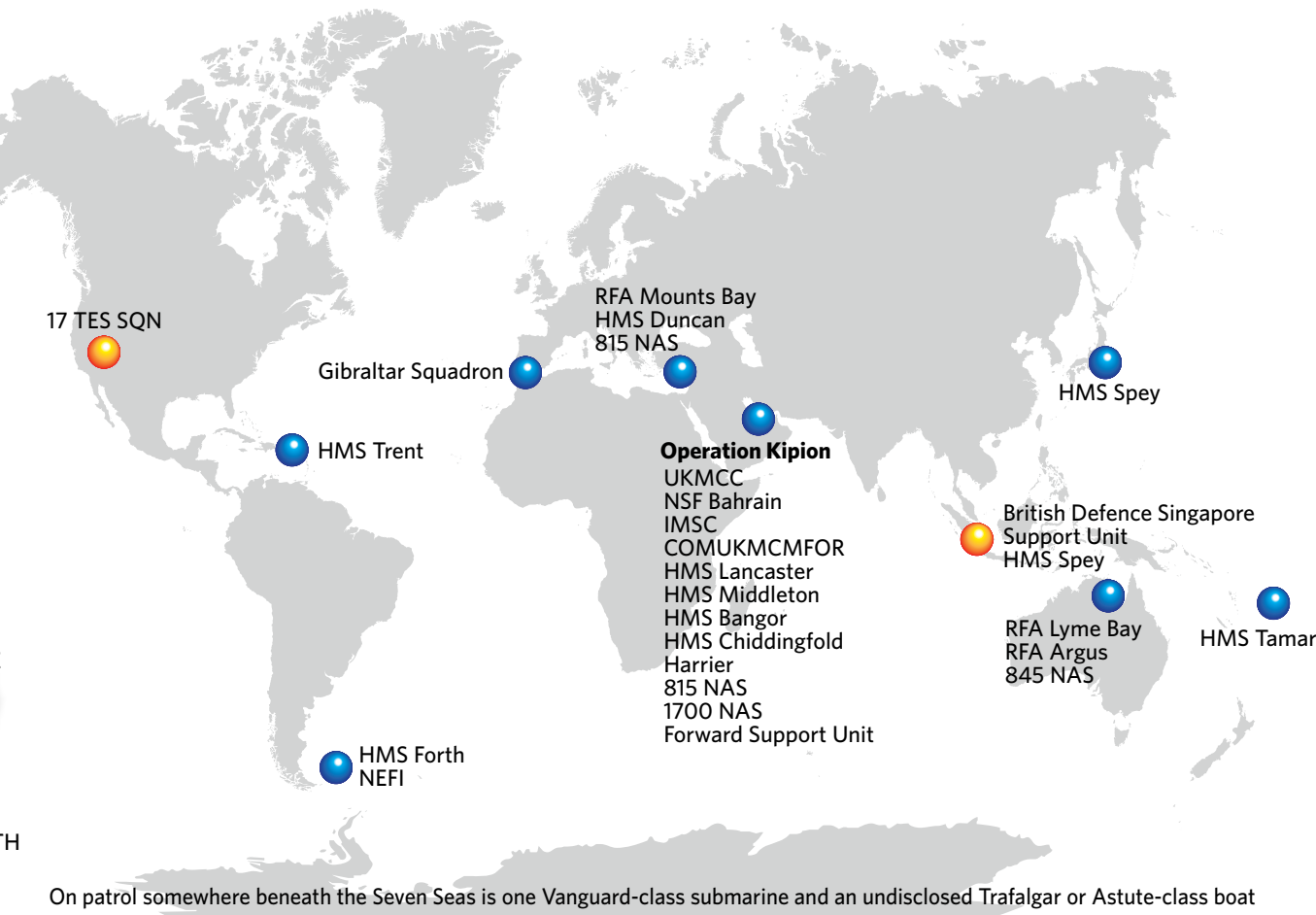
In the Mediterranean, seven sailors from **HMS Duncan** got the ‘Top Gun’ experience when they sampled life on US Navy amphibious assault ship USS Wasp during operations (page 11).

The Portsmouth-based destroyer has been acting as sole escort for the Wasp Amphibious Ready Group, which includes flagship Wasp, USS New York, USS Oak Hill, an air group of Osprey tiltrotor and Harrier jets and US Marines from the 24th Marine Expeditionary Unit.

On page 13 we meet Lieutenant Fraser Nadine, one of a select group of pilots flying one of its ablest jets from one of the world’s largest warships: Super Hornets on and off the deck of the aircraft carrier USS Carl Vinson.

Royal Marines went ‘deep behind enemy lines’ on raiding, surveillance and reconnaissance missions on the Korean Peninsula (pages 14 and 15). We put the magnifying glass over **HMS Diamond’s** momentous deployment in the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden (see pages 16 and 17). Commanding Officer, Commander Pete Evans, and Executive Officer, Lieutenant Commander Martyn Harris, sat down with journalists to look at the historic mission which saw the Type 45 shoot down Houthi drones and a missile.

On a more lighthearted note, we have turtles on page 23. The six turtles will be safely returned to their original Atlantic habitat thanks to a unique Royal Navy mission.



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

THERE are now two of the Royal Navy’s next generation frigates in the water – briefly – as HMS Cardiff entered the Clyde for the first time.

Nearly five years to the day steel was first cut for the Type 26 submarine hunter, the ship was moved on to the largest barge of its type in Europe and left BAE Systems’ Govan yard for Loch Long and the MOD facility at Glen Mallan.

There, over several days, she was carefully lowered into the water for the first time in a delicate operation involving not just experts from BAE, but also the Royal Navy and the MOD’s Defence Equipment and Support, and safeguarded by Ministry of Defence Police’s Clyde Marine Unit.

The last act of the float-off operation – spread over several days – was to tug the now afloat HMS Cardiff (the first in nearly 20 years when the Type 42 destroyer was in service) back up river to BAE’s Scotstoun facility, on the Clyde’s northbank.

There Cardiff – whose sponsor is opera singer Katherine Jenkins – joins the lead ship of the City class for outfitting, leading eventually to trials and ultimately joining the Fleet.

Shortly she’ll move for fitting out into dry dock – the same dock recently vacated by HMS Glasgow to accommodate Cardiff.

And there, like Glasgow before her, shipwrights, technicians, engineers and, when they join, ship’s company will install and commission the systems which will make the Type 26s the world’s foremost anti-submarine warships.

For now, the thousands of people who’ve toiled on Cardiff for the past five years are delighted – and proud - to see her depart Govan (she leaves the yard in a more complete state than her predecessor, weighing in at around 6,000 tonnes).

“Seeing the latest ship in the water for the first time is a proud and exciting moment for the thousands of people involved in this great national endeavour,” said David Shepherd, Type 26 Programme Director for BAE Systems.

“The Type 26 has awesome and world-leading capability and we’re looking forward to installing HMS Cardiff’s complex systems and bringing her to life.”

Modern shipbuilding methods

constructing vessels in huge sections plus the tremendous strain on a hull which a slipway launch imposes (several warships have been damaged in the past) make the much gentler float off the favoured method for a 21st Century launch, although it does lack the drama and excitement of a bottle of champagne smashing against the hull to send the vessel into the river to the roar and clatter of chains and cheering crowds.

With Cardiff gone, attention at Govan now focuses on Type 26s No.3 (Belfast) and No.4 (Birmingham), plus No.5 (Sheffield) which will be laid down later this autumn.

They will all be constructed indoors – Glasgow and Cardiff spent many months on the hardstanding at Govan, exposed to the Scottish weather – in the new Janet Harvey hall, a gigantic assembly shed which will be completed next year, where two Type 26s can be put together side-by-side.

Between 2028 and the mid-2030s the eight City-class frigates will replace the ageing Type 23 frigates which currently perform vital anti-submarine patrols to safeguard UK waters and interests from underwater threats.

■ Croeso is welsh for welcome

HMS Cardiff passes under the Erskine Bridge in Glasgow
Picture: LPhot Stuart Dickson

Croeso Cardiff

Constant vigilance



TO THOSE who challenge us, who oppose our values, our laws, our customs, whose actions may even be hostile, we have the watch.

By sea and air, sailors and naval aviators – plus their RAF comrades and our NATO allies – have maintained a constant vigil of waters and skies vital to the security of the UK.

For seafarers, it's been business as usual.

For fliers, it's been a new experience.

Let us begin at sea, where HMS Iron Duke and HMS Tyne shadowed four

Russian vessels passing the UK in a six-day operation.

Very much standard fare – but crucial all the same.

First the Kilo-class submarine Novorossiysk and its supporting tug Evgeny Churov sailed out of the Baltic and made for the Atlantic by the shortest route possible: through the Dover Strait.

The well-choreographed shadowing operation started at the beginning of September when Canadian warship HMCS Shawinigan escorted the diesel-powered submarine and her support vessel as they headed across the North Sea.



As the Russian duo approached the busy Dover Strait, HMS Iron Duke took over, maintaining constant watch on the two vessels, using her many sensors including her Wildcat helicopter, from 815 Naval Air Squadron, in the air. The submarine remained on the surface throughout the operation.

Once the Russian vessels had passed UK waters, Iron Duke handed over shadowing duties to the Marine Nationale off the northwest coast of France, where the frigate FS Auvergne took up the mission.

The ship then returned immediately to the North Sea for a near carbon copy operation – this time with Steregushchiy-class corvette Stoiky and

tanker MTYaz as it approached Dover, picking up shadowing duties from the Belgian Navy, whose patrol vessel BNS Castor had kept watch up to that point.

The British frigate then handed over monitoring duties to patrol ship HMS Tyne off north western France.

Throughout both journeys past the UK – permitted under international law in accordance with the right of innocent passage– the Russian warships and their support vessels were closely monitored by UK forces to ensure they acted in a safe and non-threatening manner.

“These were the fourth and fifth such operations for HMS Iron Duke since we emerged from a period of intense training in July, and I am extremely proud of the professionalism and selfless dedication that my ship's company consistently display as they perform their duty,” said Iron Duke's Commanding Officer Commander David Armstrong.

“Maritime security operations of this nature are a fundamental capability of the Royal Navy, with the protection of our sovereign waters and critical national infrastructure a key focus.”



As for the skies, we shift to the Iceland-Greenland-Faroes Gaps, monitored for a month by naval aviators.

For the first time, F-35B Lightnings were committed on a NATO air policing mission, watching the skies of the northernmost Atlantic and Arctic fringes.

617 'Dambusters' Squadron – whose personnel are drawn pretty much 50-50 from the RAF and Fleet Air Arm, like the entire Lightning Force – swapped RAF Marham (home when not deployed on an RN carrier) for the land of ice and fire.

Naval Air Station Keflavik – next to Iceland's principal airport, two dozen miles from the capital Reykjavik – served as their home for the four weeks of Operation Masterer.

For more than 15 years, NATO aircraft have patrolled Icelandic skies, responding to a request from the host nation which has no air force of its own to perform the mission.

Four F-35Bs carried out the operation – the first time the UK's fifth-generation fighters have been used for Quick Reaction Alert duties.

QRA is the RAF's response to hostile/unknown/rogue aircraft approaching the

UK's airspace – the modern-day equivalent of ringing the bell in the Battle of Britain and shouting 'Scramble'.

Such 'Q shouts' as they are known in RAF parlance are typically performed by Typhoons, so this was a whole new experience – a new mission, 1,100 miles from home, in a strange land and a base never used by the F-35.

As a result, says junior engineering officer ("JENGO" or Deputy Air Engineering Officer in his native Jackspeak) Lieutenant Sankey RN, the squadron has had to revise the way it works to have an F-35B immediately ready for take-off – known as 'cocked on'.

“This is the first time the UK F-35B has been used for such a mission set and it's required us to push the boundary of existing operating procedures to design fast, safe, and effective means of ensuring we have aircraft 'on state' for tasking, 24/7,” he explained.

“For the team, this presented a steep learning curve, which they have overcome with huge enthusiasm knowing that what we

have achieved here will shape how we use the F-35B both on land, and embarked, for future operations.”

He oversaw a team of around 60 engineers maintaining the state-of-the-art stealth fighters – like the rest of the 130-strong detachment in Iceland an RAF/RN mixiblob.

Although the squadron is well versed with operating away from Marham from its numerous embarkations on HMS Queen Elizabeth (Lt Sankey has done three to date), moving kit and caboodle to Iceland for a few weeks offered a new challenge.

He said overseeing the F-35's engineering support at Keflavik – as JENGO he's expected to know all three aspects of the job: mechanical, avionics and armourer – has been “the pinnacle” of his time with the legendary RAF squadron.

“Being the complex machine it is, the F-35B requires round-the-clock maintenance from our team of engineers.

“Engineering the jet here in Iceland is exceptional and the host nation support has been outstanding. The most impressive thing



CARDIGAN BAY BACK HOME



ROYAL Fleet Auxiliary amphibious support ship Cardigan Bay has returned to the UK after delivering humanitarian supplies to Gaza.

The ship deployed to the Middle East more than two years ago to work alongside Royal Navy minehunters in the protection of key shipping lanes.

But in April this year, she was re-tasked to the Mediterranean to assist in delivering lifesaving, medical, nutritional, sanitation and water supplies to Gaza amid the ongoing Israel-Hamas conflict.

RFA Cardigan Bay was welcomed home to Portland over the weekend by Rear Admiral Jude Terry, Royal Navy's Director People and Training and the newly appointed RFA Head of Service Commodore Sam Shattock.

Captain (X) Mark Colley, Commanding Officer of Cardigan Bay, said: "On each of my three appointments to RFA Cardigan Bay I have been impressed by the flexibility and adaptability of the ship and more importantly her people."

"The can-do attitude of the ship's company never ceases

to amaze me, even when faced with the prospect of drone and missile attacks in the Bab Al MendeB Straits, everyone demonstrated professionalism and resolve knowing that we were making a difference.

"Myself and all those that have served in Cardigan Bay over the past two years are hugely proud of what the ship has



**THE CAN-DO ATTITUDE OF THE SHIP'S
COMPANY NEVER CEASES TO AMAZE ME**

delivered on the international stage."

RFA Cardigan Bay has been replaced by sister-ship RFA Mounts Bay, whose presence in the Eastern Mediterranean will continue to provide options for contingency planning against a range of

possible scenarios.

While in the Mediterranean, Cardigan Bay joined international efforts of the construction of a US temporary floating pier, providing accommodation for hundreds of US sailors and soldiers working on it.

Almost 11,000 tonnes of aid were transferred through this maritime aid corridor, across the pier to the World Food Programme for onwards distribution to the people of Gaza.

The ship's work demonstrated the flexibility of the RFA and her crew, switching seamlessly between mine-hunting support duties and national tasking.

Departing from her Middle Eastern home of Bahrain in late March, she headed for the Eastern Mediterranean via the Bab Al MendeB Strait and Suez Canal to undertake the four-month humanitarian mission.

The Bay-class ships have a vehicle deck that can fit 24 Challenger tanks end-to-end, and when fully loaded, they can take up to 500 personnel for specific operations. She is crewed by around 60 RFA personnel.

G'DAY, Tamar...

This is a cockpit-eye view of the Royal Navy's patrol ship powering through the South Pacific – as seen by the crew of a Royal Australian Air Force transport aircraft.

The Aussie aviators dropped in on the River-class ship some 200 nautical miles south of Fiji to test the ability of the two Commonwealth forces to work together – at range.

While HMS Tamar has worked regularly with the Royal Australian Navy during her two-plus years in the Pacific – use of bases in Darwin and more recently Cairns have been essential to sustain the Portsmouth-based vessel on her long-term deployment with her sister ship HMS Spey – link-ups with the RAAF are less frequent.

So, to test that joint ability – eyeing up potential combined search-and-rescue/disaster relief operations – the Australians planned an air drop of (symbolic) supplies for Tamar to fish out of the Pacific.

Their C27J Spartan – an Italian-built military transporter designed to deliver personnel and kit to short, austere airstrips and remote areas which large aircraft like the A400M or Hercules cannot use – located Tamar in the expanse of ocean, but were not able to make the drop as the sea was too rough.

Although it meant there was no special delivery of Antipodean delicacies for the patrol ship's crew – including some Milo (a malted hot chocolate drink – think Aussie Horlicks), Vegemite (Aussie Marmite) and Australia's favourite biscuits, Tim Tams (chocolate boursbons) – it did prove the ability of the Royal Navy and Royal Australian Air Force to co-ordinate efforts far from their respective homes.

"We are a long way from home and knowing that we can call on partners like Australia is amazing," said Lieutenant Joe Hobday, Tamar's Navigating Officer. "It is key that we continue to work with our friends and allies in the region."

"The aircraft looked awesome as it made its pass and the wing waggle was a nice touch. I love a Tim Tam, it was a shame we couldn't get them this time! We look forward to

working with them again soon".

The patrol ship's Commanding Officer Commander Tom Gell added: "We have regularly worked with Australian Defence Forces in this part of the world and it is like working with colleagues."

"Our time in Cairns allowed us to execute some essential maintenance and keep the ship on mission. Operating together allows us to help protect the International Rules based system and demonstrates the UK's enduring commitment to this part of the world; we are stronger together."

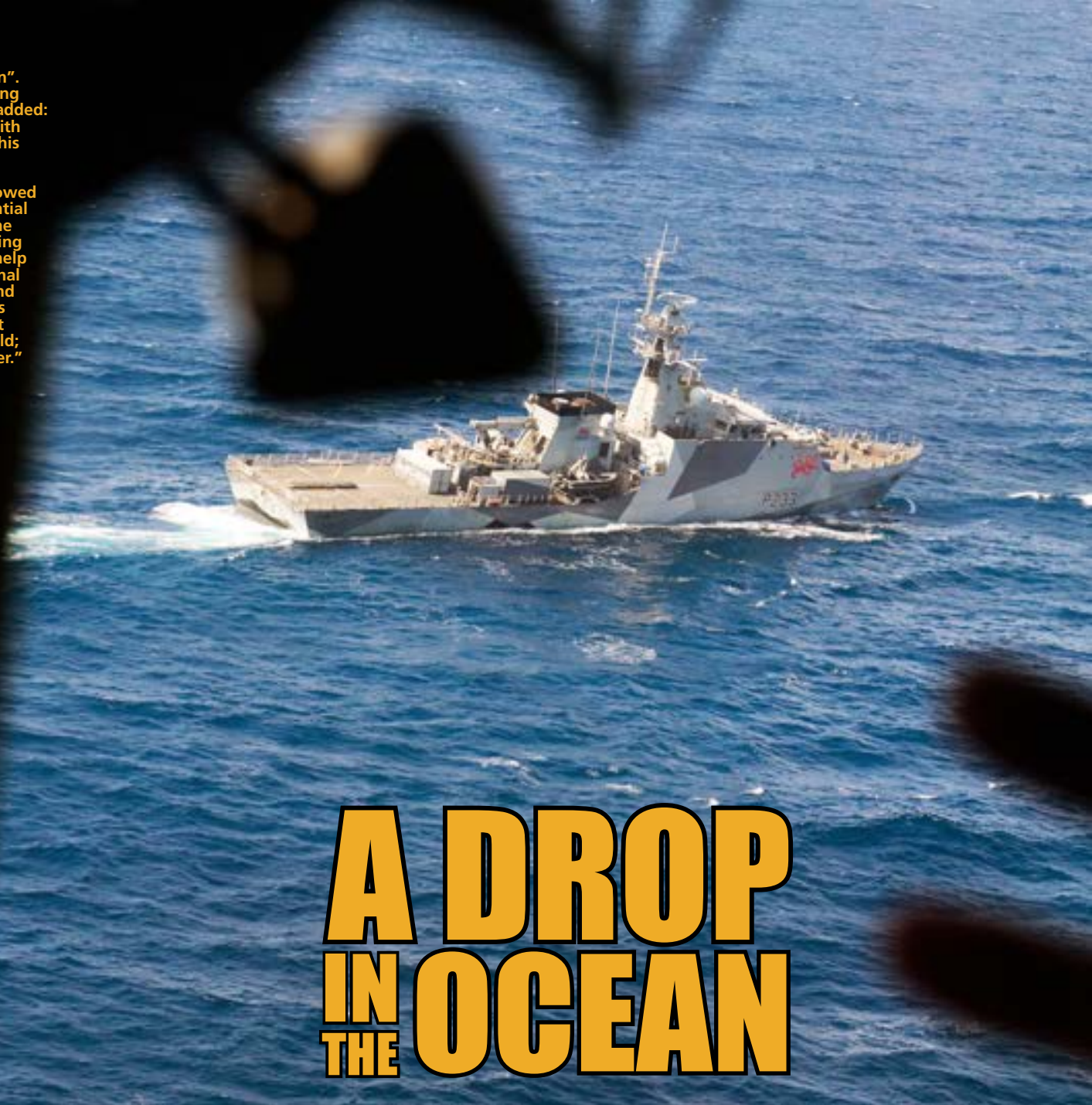
Flying Officer Alan Landman RAAF was at the control column as the Spartan flew alongside Tamar, close enough to make out her striking dazzle paint camouflage scheme and imposing dragon rampant which adorns her hull.

"It's always fun to make a low pass on a warship, and Tamar's definitely got the best paint job I've seen so far."

Flight Lieutenant James Champness RAAF, the Spartan detachment commander, added: "It's great to be out here operating with our allies, and it's great to see the Royal Navy reassert their persistent presence in the region. Working with our Commonwealth and AUKUS partners is always special, so days like today are not only great fun, but meaningful opportunities to practise with our allies, too."

"Interoperability isn't just a buzzword – being able to operate and communicate with our allies is vital to our shared goals in the region."

"I know we used to paint our planes camouflage as well, maybe we should do it again – it looks sick!"



A DROP IN THE OCEAN



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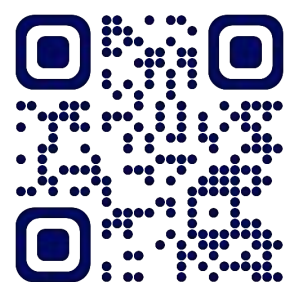
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TOUCHDOWN IN OZ

THE wings of the Royal Marines have pushed their machines – and themselves – to the limit over six weeks in the Australian bush.

Venturing where the helicopter has rarely gone before, the flying battlewagons of the Royal Marines have been integral to the commandos' training in Australia's Northern Territory.

Three Merlin Mk4s of 845 Naval Air Squadron and 70 personnel have been deployed with RFA Argus, providing support to the Littoral Response Group (South) – spearheaded by the Royal Marines of 40 Commando.

The crux of the deployment has been Predator's Run, an amphibious/land exercise in northern Australia working with militaries of the host nation and USA.

Flying from the deck of Argus – often at night and always, where possible, out of sight of the 'enemy' – the Merlins have been shifting personnel and kit from ship to shore, then, with a foothold established, pushing inland, to prove the squadron's amphibious specialty.

It's meant island raids, deep reconnaissance missions and personnel extraction in challenging conditions (bush/semi-desert) for three weeks, which proved both punishing and rewarding for air and ground crew.

"Taking part in an amphibious exercise alongside other nations is the height of what we can train for," said Merlin pilot Lieutenant Aaron Dempsey of 845 NAS.

"As naval aviators, our speciality is providing lift from ship to shore to allow our marines to take a target."



Predator's Run is one of the largest exercises UK forces have taken part in at such a distance – 9,000 miles – from the mother country.

More than 400 Royal Marine and Army Commandos were involved, using both RFA Argus and amphibious support ship RFA Lyme Bay, as their floating bases.

Over the six-week exercise alongside 1st Brigade of the Australian Army, the marines pushed over 400 miles into the austere Northern Territory, demanding not merely that the green berets 'fight' in challenging conditions – but their aerial support: everything from orientation flying over the bush to flying in dust clouds stirred up on landing/take-off, maintenance in the field and setting up forward refuelling/arming points in the middle of nowhere.

"We've often been working at our maximum weight and our furthest range, so this exercise has given us a great opportunity to gain confidence in the aircraft and our ability to get the most out of them," Lieutenant Dempsey added.

"As an aviator, when you land after a mission where you've achieved the maximum you can achieve, and got the job done, it's extremely satisfying.

"I've never been to Australia, so for the first time to be whilst flying a Merlin around the bush was pretty special. Safe to say I managed to spot a few kangaroos while we were flying around, which was a particular highlight."

Merlins in the Outback? There has to be a 'wizards of Aus' pun in there...

Anyway... Argus and her Merlin detachment are now heading west on the next leg of their deployment.

Pictures: PO Phot Arron Hoare



Reference code: NAVY



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WINGING IT OVER TO WASP

SEVEN sailors from HMS Duncan got the 'Top Gun' experience when they sampled life on US Navy amphibious assault ship USS Wasp during operations in the Eastern Mediterranean.

The Portsmouth-based destroyer has been acting as sole escort for the Wasp Amphibious Ready Group, which includes flagship Wasp, USS New York, USS Oak Hill, an air group of Osprey tiltrotor and Harrier jets and US Marines from the 24th Marine Expeditionary Unit.

Their joint operations provided the opportunity for seven sailors from each nation to 'cross deck' and experience life in corresponding navies for 48 hours.

Engineering Technician Bradley Jones was among the British sailors to sample life with the Americans on Wasp.

"If you've ever seen the film Top Gun, I'm sure you've also had far flung fantasies of landing onboard the flight deck of a US carrier, taking off your safety helmet, hair windswept, and being greeted like some sort of demigod," said ET Jones.

"For one day this had become my reality, and I can't deny how brilliant it felt. It was truly utterly brilliant.

"As I made my way across the flight deck, more conscious than ever of my gait and posture due to the ship's snap happy photographer, I finally made my way into the ship itself.

"Were there similarities? Yes. In regards to food, Royal Navy ships enjoy their 'Fish Friday', 'Curry Wednesday', and 'Sunday Roast'.

"It was interesting to learn that our American cousins also revel in their own weekly set menu, but one that would get approval from Uncle Sam.

"They delight in 'Taco Tuesday', and revel in 'Chicken Wing Sunday'. However, instead of having a humble water and orange squash dispenser, crew have access to a soda machine twenty-four hours a day.

"The dispenser bestows a constant flow of sugary goodness in the form of root beer and Coca Cola – free of charge."

Meanwhile, Master-at-Arms 2nd Class Damien Smith and six of his colleagues were being introduced to life on Duncan.

"Everyone was hospitable," said Damien. "They even gave me the nickname 'Smudge' because [in England] Smith was such a common name; they would smudge the first name of the one they knew in the phonebook."

"Once we touched down, I thought 'This place is beautiful,'" added Hospital Corpsman 2nd Class Gunner Barenklau. "Everything was super colourful."

One of the highlights during a tour of the ship was a brief from the Royal Marines boarding team – from 42 Commando's Lima Company, who specialise in intercepting drugs smugglers, terrorists and pirates.

"They had a lot of cool gear used for compliant and non-compliant boarding," said Lieutenant Julianna Miller. "Different weapons, small arms, and cameras that were used to look for illicit materials they found on the ships."

Back on USS Wasp, ET Jones had the opportunity to watch flight deck operations as the unique Ospreys and the Harrier flew to and from Wasp.

"The final night spent on the USS Wasp was spent marvelling at the take-off and landing of the Osprey tiltrotor aircraft and Harriers," he said.

"I would like to extend my deepest gratitude to the reverend's bodyguard who afforded us such an experience by escorting us to all the appropriate areas, and acquiring the correct personal protective equipment for us."

The British contingent missed their home comforts. They swapped their usual six-person cabins, beer and wine, separate areas for eating and socialising, plus high-speed Wi-Fi, for sluggish internet for two hours a day,

a total ban on all alcohol and 150-person berths that were dark all day due to the ship's rotation between day and night watches.

"What the Americans lack when it comes to comforts, they more than make up for when it comes to sheer fire power," said ET Jones.

"Any adversary wanting to pick a fight with USS Wasp would quickly have to deal with the 2,000 Marines she carries in her hull, ready to spring into action the moment provoked."

Among those on the exchange was Mass Communication Specialist (MCSA) Soren Quinata who was paired with Leading Photographer Gareth Smith – both of them are tasked with capturing on camera their respective ship's activities while on deployment.

MCSA Quinata said: "There are 180 sailors and marines assigned to Duncan that hail from all over the British Commonwealth. Naturally, I was paired with Royal Navy Leading Photographer Gareth Smith, the British equivalent of a mass communication specialist.

"Despite the various backgrounds of the crew, a common language everyone spoke was football, which our new shipmates insisted was the 'proper term' for soccer."

"As the long day of events came to a close, I made my way through the dim, red-lit corridor on the lower levels of the ship and found my assigned quarters. On the door, a label read, "Welcome aboard HMS Duncan, MCSA Quinata." The note was a subtle but lovely touch. Suddenly, I felt at home in a foreign ship."

ET Jones concluded: "On behalf of HMS Duncan, I extend my true thanks to all those onboard the USS Wasp who afforded us their time and hospitality. It's safe to say that the bonds that tie our two countries extend further than just the economic, cultural, and political ties. There exists a genuine mutual affection between our two great nations."





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DRAGON RISING



This is the crest of the USA Navy's 192nd Fighter Attack Squadron – the Golden Dragons. Above, two of their steeds, the F/A18-E Super Hornet, in close formation over the Pacific. And below is one of their 'knights', a Brit and Royal Navy pilot no less, Lieutenant Fraser Nadine, enjoying an exchange with the California-based fast jets... currently on deployment with 100,000 tonnes of hard steel: USS Carl Vinson

ICEMAN. Maverick. Cougar. Cyclone. Hammer. Payback.

You've got to love aviator's callsigns. The epitome of cool.

Now meet Spuddle (the dictionary definition: an archaic verb meaning to work hard but achieve little).

It fits neither 33-year-old Lieutenant Fraser Nadine, nor his accomplishments.

He's one of a select group of pilots flying one of its ablest jets from one of the world's largest warships: Super Hornets on and off the deck of the aircraft carrier USS Carl Vinson.

Fraser completed his basic aviation training here in the UK, first on the Grob Tutor and Tucano trainer.

He could have gone on to be an F-35B Lightning pilot with the Fleet Air Arm by completing basic fast-jet training in a Hawk, then grappling with the fifth-generation stealth fighter in the USA. Instead,

he volunteered for an extended stint in the States, crossing the Pond to move on to jets: firstly the T-45 Goshawk at Naval Air Station Meriden, Mississippi.

"For my first ever carrier qualification landing in a T-45 I was sent out to land on the USS Gerald R Ford, the US Navy's newest carrier. As soon as I saw it my nerves disappeared. I thought: 'this is massive, I'm going to have a great time!' To think that asset is set aside for flight training is incredible."

From the Goshawk, Fraser moved on to the Super Hornet, the backbone of the US Navy's carrier aviation striking force.

He spent 18 months mastering the jet at Naval Air Station Lemoore – roughly half-way between San Francisco and Los Angeles – before being assigned to Strike Fighter Squadron 192 (VFA-192 aka 'The Golden Dragons' and, unofficially, 'Super Shit Hot World Famous Golden Dragons'), who fly out of the same base.

He loves the California lifestyle – work and play.

"The flying is awesome," Fraser enthused. "You're above Death Valley and huge swathes of the country in airspace set aside just for your training which is amazing."

"If you get out at weekends then three hours in any direction is world-class: mountains, coast, vineyards, LA, San Francisco, so you just

have to make the most of it."

When not at base, the Golden Dragons are one of nine squadrons (four of them strike/fighter units, including one F-35C Lightning formation) which comprise Carrier Air Wing 2, assigned to the USS Carl Vinson.

He shares the 100,000-tonne nuclear-powered flattop with around 5,000 other personnel – basically 50 per cent larger than the UK's Queen Elizabeth-class carriers... with three times the number of souls aboard.

"It can be taxing, it's busy, it's loud and it's crowded," he says. "I know three ways around the ship, from the Ready Room to the Mess Hall and

"It's incredible. You'll go from sitting still on the catapult to 200 miles an hour in under two seconds. Then you're straight into the mission mindset."

LIEUTENANT FRASER NADINE

then up to the flight deck, and you just rinse and repeat every day."

A typical day for the squadron at sea sees flying begin around 10-11am following the morning briefings, going all the way through to 2am. Aircrew can expect two sorties a day – anything from bombing/maritime strike missions to defensive combat air patrol and air-to-air refuelling training with tankers – as well as additional duties.

"You're also studying, trying to get your additional duties done and getting enough sleep and exercise, so your day is very busy."

Ok, let's get down to business and hit the flight deck.

Fraser's steed is the F/A18-E Super Hornet, a single seat strike fighter capable of reaching one and a half times the speed of sound and delivering ordnance – air-to-air, air-to-ship, air-to-ground, missiles, bombs, guided bombs, mines – on to a target up to 500 miles from the carrier.

First of course you have to get off the deck. The conventional way (last used by the Royal Navy in 1978): steam-powered catapult to propel the Super Hornet to an airworthy speed in the blink of an eye.

"It's incredible," Fraser says. "You tell the Shooter – the catapult officer

– what the weight of your jet is, and they will tune in the correct power setting. Then you'll go from sitting still on the catapult to 200 miles an hour in under two seconds. Then you're straight into the mission mindset from there."

Mission complete, it's back to the carrier.

"It's not too bad," Fraser continues. "You have 'Paddles' [Landing Signals Officer] to assist, and behind that's it about making sure you're scanning, checking glideslope and centreline, and then the arrested landing itself is a little violent not too bad."

Now repeat. At night.

"It's pitch black, you can't see anything other than with the aid of a tiny finger light to check all your switches, just trying to get yourself settled. You dim everything and are then shot into pitch darkness. Imagine no moon, it's just a void, and you're trusting your instruments because all you see is the waterline symbol, the velocity vector, and the horizon line. As long as airspeed is increasing and you're above the horizon you're good."

That's take-off. Landing is similarly daunting. But so too is simply being moved around the Vinson's deck in the dark.

"You've got a junior sailor, probably 18, telling you to come forward and the nose-wheel is actually behind you, so it feels as though you're sitting over the edge of the deck," says Fraser.

"He's saying to come forward, I've got you, turn left. He's just trying to get all the jets parked into a very tight spot and you're trusting a teenager, it's incredible."

Not only are such relative youngsters bestowed with huge responsibility, but a US carrier deck is among the most dangerous workplaces on the planet.

"When power is applied then a sailor can go cartwheeling down the flight deck, people being blown overboard is a major worry," Fraser said.

"You also have time pressure crunches to do maintenance or checks and you've got sailors scrambling over jets with all their flight gear. We're trying to say slow down, be safe, but I need this jet to go flying."

Away from front-line operations, fast-jet ops at sea probably don't get any more intense than during the US Navy's premier workout in the Pacific.

This year 40 warships (American plus regional allies) and three submarines – some 25,000 personnel in all from more than two dozen nations – threw their hats into the ring for the three weeks of Rim of

the Pacific (RIMPAC) 2024.

While there were no major Royal Navy assets committed, the RAF did send two P8 Poseidon maritime patrol aircraft to join the largest naval exercise in the Indo-Pacific region.

"RIMPAC was insane. We conducted dissimilar air combat training with Typhoons, Hawker Hunters and A-10s [the Americans' much feared 'Warhog' ground attack aircraft] which was pretty interesting, as is the sortie count."

"We carried out some strike sorties, including sink exercises. We also got a ten-day run ashore in Hawaii."

As the 'only Brit in the village', despite 5,000 shipmates he realises he "stands out like a sore thumb" with his Union Jack on his flying suit and accent.

"But everyone's very welcoming and on July 4th everyone wants to host the Brit," Fraser added.

"I've got a book of 'Jackspeak' and there's some Royal Navy lingo the squadron has adopted."

"I also took one of my flight instructors on to HMS Queen Elizabeth and he made the weirdest comments – 'the corridors are so wide' or 'oh, is that carpet?'."

Yes, yes it is...

Given the synergy between the two navies and US Marine Corps F-35s operating on UK carriers almost as frequently as our own Lightnings, the exchange experience has been hugely beneficial.

"Those who come across to the US have a wide variety of experience with the aim of bringing that knowledge back to the UK for the benefit of our own carrier aviation," Fraser explained.

"The big deck experience is not something which can be replicated with our carriers – the way they conduct their flight operations is vastly different."

"But when I go back to the UK any integration with the US will be far easier."

And we can't do a story about a fast-jet pilot on a US carrier without asking the obvious question. Is it 'just like Top Gun'?

"Well my parents now understand what I do!" Fraser laughs. "Life on a squadron is very busy during the day and then everyone goes back and watches a movie and goes to bed, rinse repeat for nine months. The public's perception? When you meet the public they're very excited."

"One of the guys on the squadron, callsign Iceman funnily enough, did some of the filming for *Top Gun Maverick*, and the squadron skipper was the body double for the female pilot."

So that's a 'yes' then. Ish...

Images by Cpl Joseph Helms, Cpl. Luis Agostini
and Cpl. Alora J. Finigan of the US Marine Corps

KOREA PATH

ROYAL Marines went ‘deep behind enemy lines’ on raiding, surveillance and reconnaissance missions on the Korean Peninsula.

For the second year running, members of the UK Commando Force were deployed to Korea for a major joint exercise between the USA and Republic of Korea – known as Exercise Ssang Yong, or ‘twin dragons’.

The Commandos’ world-renowned expertise in covert raiding operations were put to good use as part of a 13,000-strong allied force, carrying out specialist missions alongside the US Marines’ 15th Marine Expeditionary Unit’s Recon Company and the Republic of Korea Marines Corps’ own recon elements.

A Strike Team of 12 commandos from Taunton-based 40 Commando’s Alpha Company were part of the main efforts around Pohang, a fishing and shipping port on South Korea’s eastern coast on the Sea of Japan.

There, a ‘decisive action’ phase saw large-scale manoeuvres from sea and air to showcase the overwhelming power the allies can bring to bear, namely on complex amphibious operations, to snuff out any potential conflict.

Ahead of that main thrust were 40 Commando and their raiding counterparts, taking out ‘enemy’ targets and feeding back information from their surveillance and reconnaissance work to the commanders to ultimately inform the next move on the battlefield.

“We participated in an immensely successful joint package ranging from aircraft control to a surveillance and reconnaissance mission,” said Major Hugo Grant, in command of Alpha Company.

“The company demonstrated once again that the UK Commando Force is able to deploy and work with partners, anywhere in the world.”

The Commandos also travelled to north





of capital Seoul to take part in a separate raid at the Rodriguez Live-Fire Complex. All of this has built deeper partnerships and understanding of combat tactics, as the UK forges deeper bonds in the Indo-Pacific. The complex is close to where two of 29 Commando's Joint Terminal Attack Controller (JTACS) – who call in air support and strikes – were deployed on the Pilsung ranges at the foot of Mount Taebak, one of the highest mountains in Korea.

There, among the stunning scenery, the Commandos coordinated strikes alongside their US and Korean counterparts from the 6th Air Naval Gunfire Liaison Company and 2nd Marine Division respectively.

The UK Commando Force also deployed three Information Warfare experts, four mortars and a Real-Life Support team from 40 Commando's Logistics Company.

Ssang Yong, held regularly since 2012, looks at how allied forces can defend the Korean Peninsula.

The primary focus of this year's exercise was to improve the joint ability to conduct a combined force landing, in which coalition forces swiftly took out key enemy facilities to stop a hypothetical conflict scenario.

The ROK-US Navy and Marine Corps conducted joint amphibious operations, followed by land-based operations to rehearse eliminating enemy forces.

The exercise ran for 13 days – August 26 to September 7 – and included more than 40 ships, 40 aircraft, including F-35B Lightning jets, and 40 Korean Amphibious Assault Vehicles.

Republic of Korea Marine Corps Lieutenant Colonel Cho Hyun-Chul, who participated in the exercise as battalion commander of the landing forces, said: "This exercise reaffirms the strong alliance between the Republic of Korea and US Marine Corps and further strengthens our combined defence posture. Going forward, the ROK and US Marine Corps will

firmly retaliate against any provocation from the enemy."

Royal Marines took part in their first Ssang Yong in 2023 as they returned to the Korean Peninsula for the first time since the Korean War, during which Royal Marines of 41 Independent Commando saw action as far north as Lake Chosin and carried out amphibious raids behind North Korean lines between 1950 and 1951.

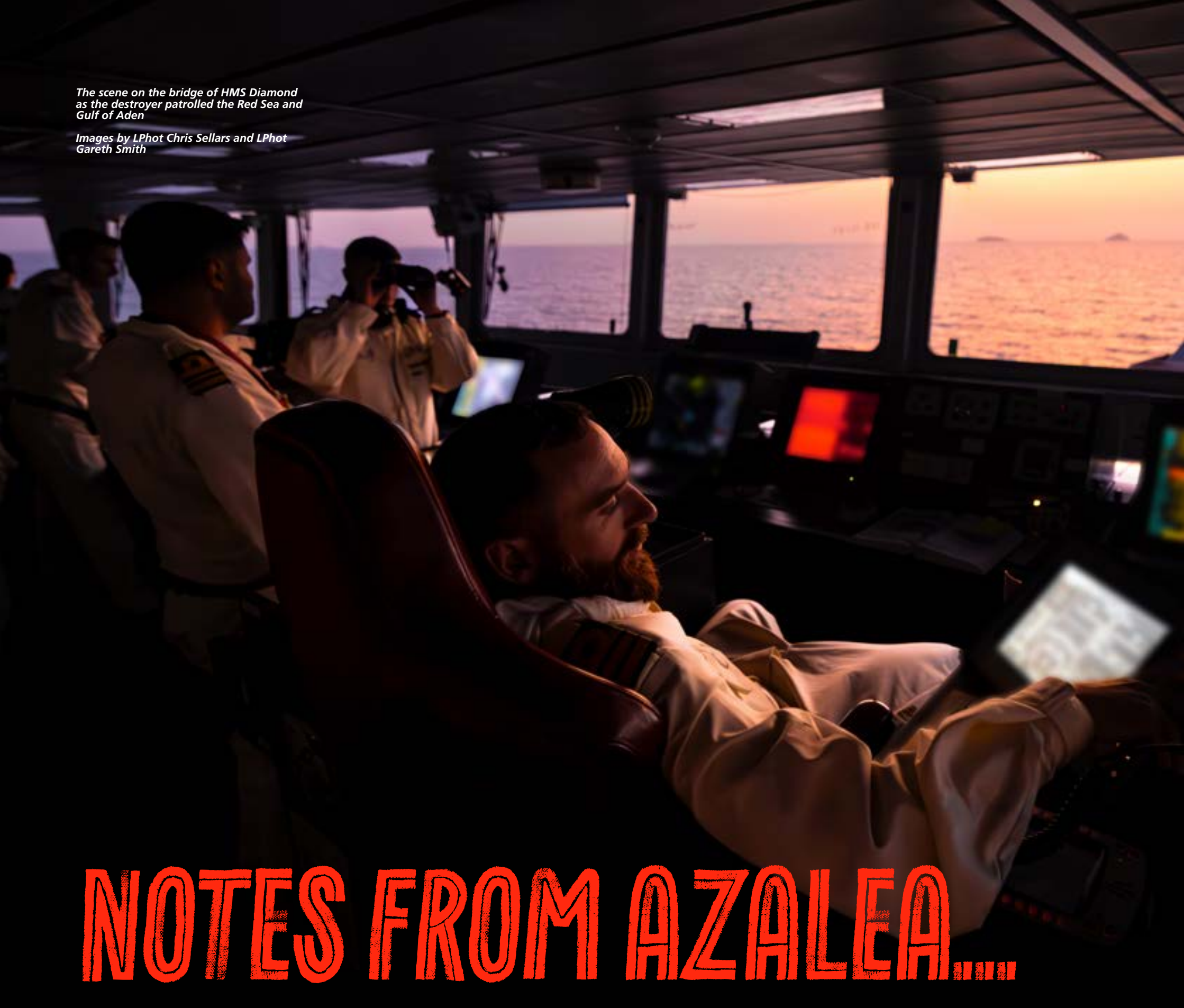
40 Commando have been focused on deployments east of the Suez Canal for the past two years, having been deployed in Australia across the summer for Exercise Predators Run.

The Somerset-based unit went more than 400 miles into the outback of the Northern Territory as they spearheaded allied forces taking part in a major show of strength in July and August.

It was part of a regular deployment Down Under, which in recent years has also coupled with jungle training in Belize.

The scene on the bridge of HMS Diamond as the destroyer patrolled the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden

Images by LPhot Chris Sellars and LPhot Gareth Smith



NOTES FROM AZALEA.....

AN orderly queue formed outside one of the popular tattoo parlours in Gibraltar after HMS Diamond had arrived in port.

All of those in the queue had something in common.

They all wanted a tattoo of an azalea flower. They were also all sailors from HMS Diamond.

And, by the time they came home in early July, they'd all worked together to shoot down nine drones and a ballistic missile fired by Houthi rebels in Yemen at commercial shipping in the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden.

When HMS Diamond returned to Portsmouth, the nation was focused on the general election and, although returning with much-deserved fanfare, it took a while for the opportunity to arise to tell the story of the ship's historic deployment in full.

In mid-August, the Royal Navy hosted a few select media outlets to sit with HMS Diamond's Commanding Officer, Commander Pete Evans, and Executive Officer, Lieutenant Commander Martyn Harris, to put the magnifying glass over the ship's momentous deployment.

Cdr Evans and Lt Cdr Harris were warm hosts – they've been used to some very high-profile visitors to Diamond during their ten-months at sea, including then Prime Minister Rishi Sunak in October while in the Baltic, and since hosted new Defence Secretary John Healey.

In the Commanding Officer's cabin, we sat round on comfy chairs with hot wets and biscuits and heard about the historic deployment in which Diamond was in the thick of the most intense naval action for the Royal Navy since the Falklands War.

The tempo was relentless, but the deployment started out as something fairly routine – Diamond was part of the UK Carrier Strike Group operation off the coast of Norway and into the Baltic Sea in the autumn of 2023.

Coming alongside in November, the ship's company were planning their Christmas leave when they were sent to the Mediterranean and, eventually, by the middle of December, into the melting pot of the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden – through which 11% of global trade passes.

As Diamond arrived, the Iranian-backed Houthis were straight at it with attacks on merchant shipping and the ship's company immediately composed themselves, operating in their 'patrol box' named Azalea (later the inspiration for the many tattoos), one of many patrol areas under Operation Prosperity Guardian, the multinational mission to protect trade passing through the region.

Importantly, Diamond wasn't tasked with escorting individual merchant ships but was kept in Azalea, protecting those who sailed through that particular zone – with Prosperity Guardian effectively forming a series of guarded areas for commercial shipping to pass through as they sailed towards the Suez Canal.

The American battle staff at the head of Operation Prosperity Guardian under Combined Task Force 153 decided where each warship would patrol and moved them around according to the threat.

Later in the deployment, Diamond spent most of her time in the Gulf of Aden and, generally, they'd be working with US warships.

Tactically, the mission was a roaring success,

the strategic impact of it will be one that is debated over and over.

"You can only talk about what you were told to do and what your job was," said Cdr Evans. "We were told to stop merchant ships coming to harm and we definitely did that."

Over communications Diamond could hear merchant ships spotting missiles and there was clearly a high level of panic from them.

Often it was managing merchant vessels and their crews' jitteriness, explaining that the lights in the sky were from Diamond's Wildcat helicopter and the red dots arcing over the horizon were in fact missiles fired from allied ships.

The Type 45's radar – the powerful Sampson – performed superbly, even in the sweltering heat of the Middle East.

"Sometimes temperatures effect radars, Sampson is the same as any radar, but there was never a point when we didn't think it was going to make it," said Cdr Evans.

In the early stages in the Red Sea, Diamond's engagements were at night and mainly against UAVs, but it moved onto missiles as the Houthis presumably changed tactics after limited direct success with their drones.

Missile firings out of Yemen would happen at any given moment, there was no pattern, meaning Diamond's sailors were on high alert around the clock on a relentless operational pace.

"You hear the general alarm and sometimes its 30 seconds, you're waking up and you're throwing your overalls on," said Lt Cdr Harris. "One engagement we had about 20 seconds

and then you hear 'brace brace brace'."

The UAVs were easier to deal with, the ship had more time to react and were more formulaic, but the missiles were much more difficult.

The deployment was a game of two halves. The first from December to February, Diamond was mainly dealing with UAV attacks.

The second half from March to the end of May, the Houthis had started firing more missiles, whether through a change of tactics or that they were just firing what they had at their disposal.



HMS Diamond protecting a merchant ship

No matter the threat, the Type 45 stood up to it – Commander Evans is full of praise for his ship's equipment and weaponry.

The 30mm gun even got in on the action.

A UAV was heading for a merchant vessel,



heading down the side of Diamond.

The ship's company knew if they didn't hit the UAV with the 30mm, they would be able to catch it up with the Sea Viper missiles. It was basically a free hit.

"We made the decision to use the gun," said Cdr Evans. "It worked really well. I think we were the only ship to engage a target with a gun while we were there, or perhaps at least the first."

The cost of firing the 30mm pales in comparison to launching the Sea Viper missile, which was shooting down low-cost UAVs at the cost of millions.

Cdr Evans said: "It might be that Sea Viper costs more than a UAV but what's the price of that merchant crew? So you've got two lines of cost. First, you're going to send your ships around the Cape of Good Hope, so your price in Sainsbury's is going to go up – there's a cost-of-living crisis on. Secondly, nobody wants to see a merchant ship burning and anyone killed."

"For me, the cost was not a problem."

The midpoint of Diamond's deployment in February was a three-week stop in Gibraltar. Commentary from some areas bemoaned the distance Diamond had to travel, out of the active operational theatre, to stock up on Sea Viper missiles and carry out essential maintenance.

Was there not a nearer port available that could carry out the same work?

"The decision was taken to go back to Gibraltar and for me it worked really well," said Cdr Evans. "If you're going into maintenance, you're going to need to do machinery trials. You can't do that in the Gulf of Aden, so you lose

time there.

"If you want to give your people a rest, you can fly them back to the UK from Gibraltar. You can't do that at any of the deployed bases in the region."

Ultimately, you can work back up to full speed in the Mediterranean after sailing from Gibraltar but you can't do that from Bahrain, where you'd immediately be back in the thick of it.

You also don't have to worry about customs for parts and equipment being shipped to Gibraltar, but you would have to elsewhere.

90% of Diamond's crew returned home for some much needed respite while the ship was undergoing maintenance.

While in Gibraltar, HMS Richmond patrolled in Diamond's stead – getting a couple of kills with her Sea Ceptor missiles, before heading back to the UK to continue operations closer to home.

The pinnacle of the deployment, for Cdr Evans and Lt Cdr Harris, came on 24 April when Diamond shot down a ballistic missile.

When it came to advanced warning, it was a matter of seconds to make the engagement.

Diamond had a couple of merchant vessels nearby in the Gulf of Aden and it happened late morning – just before lunch.

For weeks on end, the patrols were utterly mind numbing – the most boring thing on earth, but then in less than a minute sailors and officers were required to react and shoot down a ballistic missile.

"The basic level of Anti-Air training in the Royal Navy is latently really, really high," said Cdr Evans. "The top up training, drilling and research the Air Warfare Officers (AWOs) did in

the ops room themselves is what gave us the edge in that engagement.

"It all came down to the human angle. The AWOs were always drilling, they were always ready. It was amazing, as soon as that missile popped up everyone was ready. They'd drilled it so many times, they were just so ready.

"What's remarkable isn't the missile and radar, but just the fact that there's such a period of nothing and then all calamity breaks out. Nobody was asleep, nobody was day dreaming.

"That's what gave us the edge."

There was a lot of faith in the ship's systems but even more so in the ship's company.

They made themselves as ready as they could be.

Sea Viper is going through a £400m upgrade to enable it to intercept the latest anti-ship ballistic missile threats, along with upgrades to the Sampson radar Command and Control system and Combat Management System.

The formidable duo of Type 45 and British sailor is only going become more powerful.

The ship had a 90% availability across her deployment – an incredible feat on a ship as complex as the Type 45 and with a ship so close to a major refit.

"We had a mantra around the ship that 'nothing works unless everything works'. The

one for every raid. If a Typhoon shot down a UAV that pilot would have a stencil on his aircraft and the same on a Challenger tank.

"We had to do it because it's a long tradition. Navies, armies and air forces have always done



The kill marking stencil on HMS Diamond

those kind of things."

Diamond returned to Portsmouth in early July and is now heading towards refit, undergoing the major engine upgrades that all Type 45s are getting.

The sailors and officers of patrol box Azalea now disperse across the fleet in new jobs and on different ships. But the experience in the



A Sea Viper missile is launched at the ballistic missile

Marine Engineers did a fantastic job in trying circumstances," said Cdr Evans.

"We had our snags like any ship in the navy would have, but our availability was really good and the team kept the wheels on the bus really well.

"It's a funny thing with these ships... you tend to get them working really, really well and then put them into refit.

"By the time we got back to Portsmouth it was running like a Formula One car."

The ship never skipped a beat during her deployment. She was even home on time.

Aside from the intensive naval action, Diamond also acted as conduit between US forces – with their huge amount of intelligence and information gathering – and other European ships, bridging an important gap in communications because of the close working partnership between the UK and US.

Diamond had operated extremely closely with USS Gravelly during the early phases of their deployment, allowing them to build an understanding, ultimately becoming highly integrated into the US forces in the region.

They would regularly be able to pass vital information onto European warships patrolling the area, helping them with the overall operational picture and identifying individual targets as friendly or not.

Diamond returned home to Portsmouth in July with stencils of her kills on the bridge wing – the idea for those came from Lt Cdr Harris.

"We came up with this elite team idea," he explains. "When we'd done something, I told the ship's company we can't give you a medal today, you might not get one for a while. I can't give you extra money or leave, so what can we do?"

"We came up with the patch and the stencils. That's something the team can look at and if they're feeling pretty crap one day, you only have to look at that."

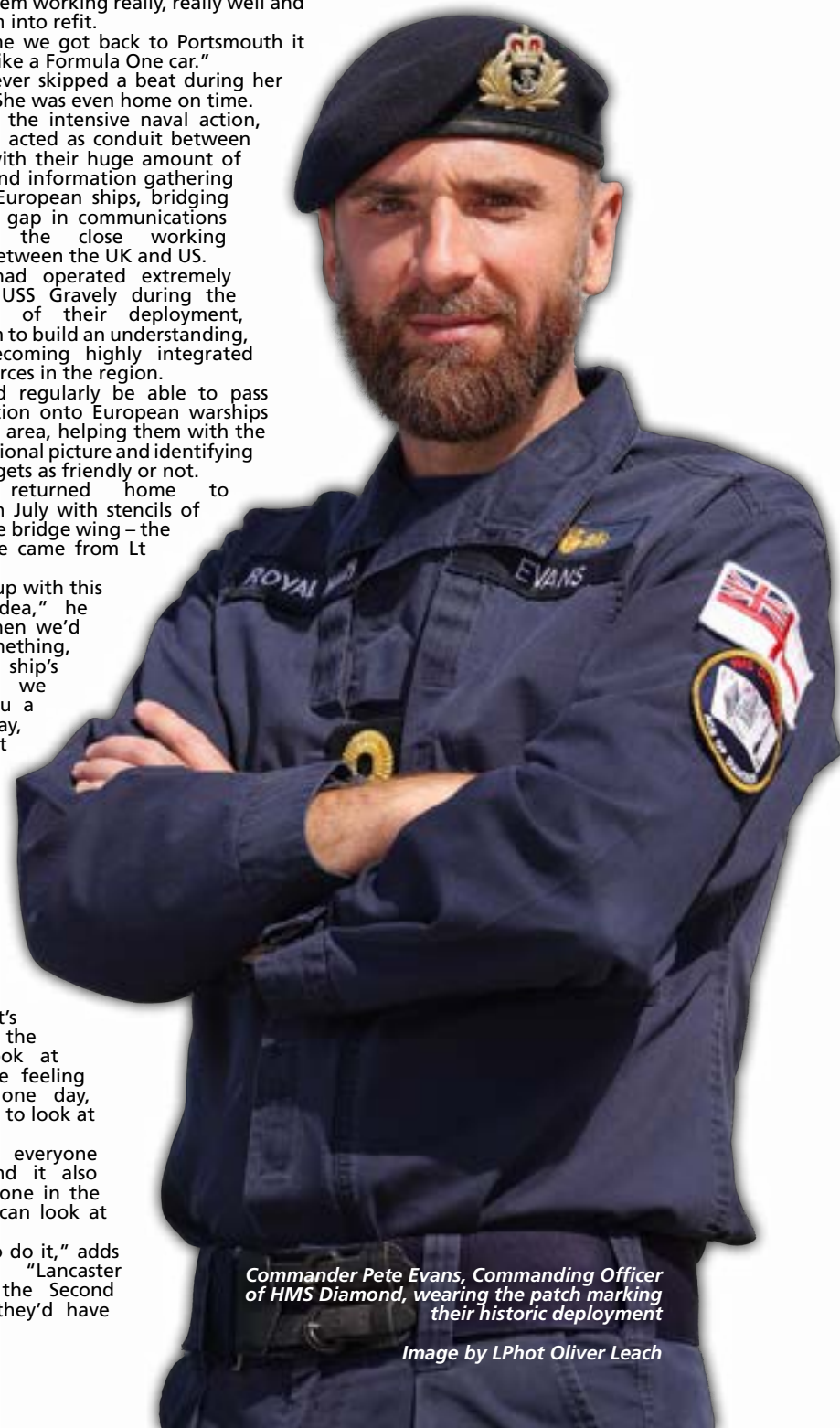
"It inspires everyone on board and it also inspires everyone in the navy. People can look at that."

"We had to do it," adds Cdr Evans. "Lancaster bombers in the Second World War, they'd have



*HMS Diamond returns home
Image by LPhot Kevin Walton*

Red Sea and Gulf of Aden will live long in the memory. Some of them also have their azalea tattoos as a constant reminder of their achievements.



Commander Pete Evans, Commanding Officer of HMS Diamond, wearing the patch marking their historic deployment

Image by LPhot Oliver Leach

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No place like Joan

JOAN of Arc – or Mission Jeanne d’Arc to give it the correct title – that is, the French Navy’s premier annual training deployment.

Lieutenant Elliot Marples spent five months as an exchange officer as the task group (two ships, three helicopters and 800 personnel) ranged around the Mediterranean, Atlantic and Pacific, giving French officer cadets practical training at sea, as well as a taste of diplomacy and interaction with overseas navies.

The 2024 iteration took the participants to the western Mediterranean, Atlantic and Pacific coasts of South America, the Panama Canal, Caribbean and North America before returning home to Brest.

As well as the trainee cadets, the French extended an invitation to the Royal Navy to embark an exchange officer as an instructor aboard deployment flagship, helicopter assault ship FS Tonnerre, escorted by frigate FS Guépratte.

With a French mother, the language side of the exchange wasn’t too much of a problem for the Brit – but learning the routines, systems and culture were more challenging.

Once mastered, Elliot (pictured on the Tonnerre with USS Gerald Ford in the background) was charged with providing lessons to the international officer cadets who could not attend French lessons, and also assist the English teacher in delivering lessons and conducting assessments.

Instead of visiting French Guiana, the Tonnerre was sent to Haiti to evacuate civilians as political/social unrest swept through the Caribbean nation.

Thereafter, the deployment returned to its original plan and five Spanish-speaking ports.

But Jeanne d’Arc wasn’t just about port visits. The task group carried out multinational naval exercises with virtually every country it called on.

“Flexibility and short-term planning became a bit of a motto as plans changed at the last minute and the complexity of the exercises adapted to a growing enthusiasm from the Latin American countries to show their military prowess,” Elliot added.

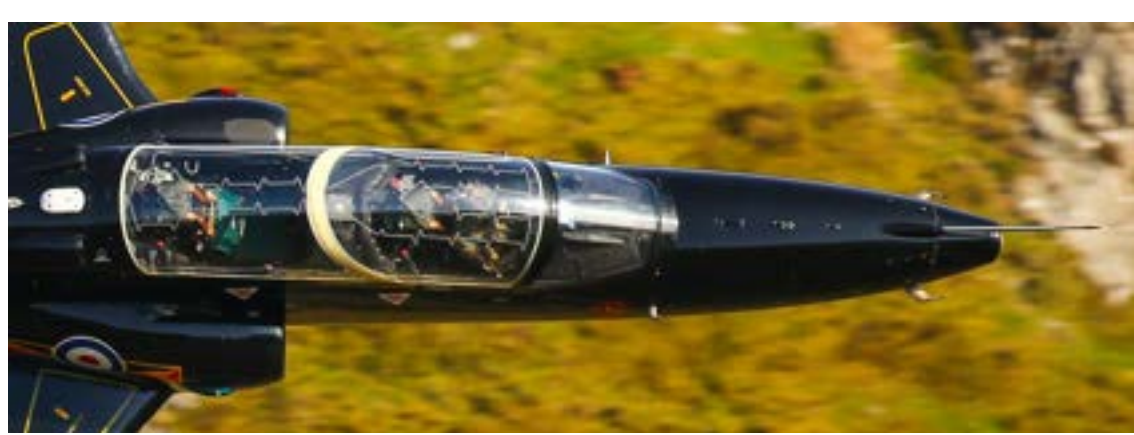
“Their eagerness to train with European navies was striking.”

He has nothing but praise for the wider experience of the deployment too.

“I hope that this exchange endures and that other Royal Navy officers are given the opportunity to experience a Jeanne d’Arc,” Elliot said.

“The presence of a Royal Navy officer at the heart of the Marine Nationale’s officer training is a powerful symbol for the strong ties between our nations, and the interoperability of our two militaries.

“The experience is definitely one I would love to repeat if given the chance.”



Definitely not average

MANY congratulations to Fleet Air Arm pilot Lieutenant Commander Dave Bouyac who is possibly the best qualified instructor in military aviation – across three different forms of flight.

By successfully completing the advanced course for helicopter instructors – the official parlance is ‘Above Average’ or ‘A2’ – the vastly experienced naval aviator has become the first military pilot in recent memory (and possibly ever) to hold higher-level qualifications to teach students in three different disciplines: traditional piston-driven planes, helicopters and fast jets.

As the principal training establishment teaching Service personnel the basics of helicopter flight, RAF Shawbury can call on a rich vein of Qualified Helicopter Instructors (QHI) or A2 Qualified Flying Instructors (QFI) but only Dave has completed the Above Average course in fixed-wing piston, fast jet and rotary-wing aircraft, making him one seriously-qualified teacher.

It’s the jet qualification which sets Dave, from No 1 Flying Training School, apart from his colleagues at Shawbury.

Each one of the Above Average courses requires tremendous hard work and dedication, so to reach such status it on three different types is exceptional.

In a career spanning a quarter of a century, Dave has flown extensively both on the front-line and in imparting his vast knowledge and experience on scores of future fast jet and helicopter pilots, as well as Fleet Air Arm observers (who, like pilots, must undergo Elementary Flying Training).

Since joining the Royal Navy in 1998 Dave:



- has flown in Junglie Sea Kings with the Commando Helicopter Force over Bosnia and Iraq;
- has flown the Harrier GR9 on operations in Afghanistan;
- has taught the basics of flight – Elementary Flying Training – at RAF Barkston Heath on the Grob Tutor;
- has served as Senior Pilot and Qualified Flying Instructor on the ‘Maritime Aggressor Squadron’ (736 Naval Air Square) on the Hawk T1, developing tactics to benefit both aviators and the Surface Fleet;
- has served as Flight Commander and Qualified Flying Instructor on Advanced Jet Training on the Hawk T2 (pictured above going through the ‘Mach Loop’ in Wales);
- is currently a Qualified Helicopter Instructor on RAF 60 Squadron, using the Juno HT1 and Jupiter HT1 to teach student pilots how to fly in the support helicopter role before they learn how to operate front-line aircraft such as the Merlin and Wildcat.

It is a job he loves.

“It’s been a real privilege to have had such a varied flying career,” he said.

“The feeling of being a student in the flying training system, with the huge amounts of pressure to succeed, has never left me, so it’s been an honour to be able to teach the new trainees coming through and pass on what I’ve learned. Every day is a school day though, so I can’t rest on my laurels!”

Group Captain Mike Jordan, Commandant Central Flying School, formally presented the naval aviator with his A2 QHI certificate.

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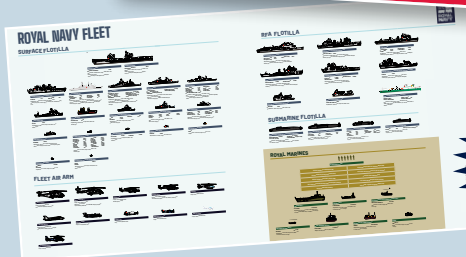
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READY TO RUN



TWO sailors will be hitting the streets of Chicago as they join thousands of runners taking part in the city's marathon.

Sub-Lieutenant Kieran Kitsell and Leading Hand Ben Radford have spent the past few months preparing for the Bank of America Chicago Marathon.

Taking place this month, the pair are raising money for the Royal Navy & Royal Marines Charity.

This will be Kieran's third marathon, having already completed London and Berlin before he joined up two years ago.

The journey just to get to the start line

will be no mean feat in itself, as he will be making his way from his current draft on HMS Medway, in the Caribbean, via London and back over to North America.

For Ben, this will be his first marathon, and he will be thinking of his dad, former Royal Marine, Steve Matthews, every step of the way.

The two shared a passion for running, regularly entering races together and, unbeknown to Ben at the time, Steve had planned to enter the Chicago Marathon himself.

Sadly, following a cancer diagnosis,

Steve passed away in 2022.

He was a Falklands veteran serving in both 40 and 42 Commando between 1980 and 1989.

Following in his father's footsteps, Ben joined the Royal Navy in 2016, making RNRMC the obvious choice of charity supporting the entire naval family.

The Bank of America Chicago Marathon is one of the six World Marathon Majors and is known for its flat and fast course.

Scan the QR codes to donate.



Story books help families stay connected

THE Royal Navy & Royal Marines Charity (RNRMC) is helping families within the navy community stay connected through their funding of the Aggie Weston's Storybook Waves initiative.

Aggie Westons is a charity which provides pastoral care and practical help for serving personnel of the Royal Navy, Royal Marines and Royal Fleet Auxiliary, and their families.

They enable serving personnel to record a bedtime story for their children to listen to while they are separated.

Lieutenant Commander Ian McClelland is serving on board Type 45 destroyer HMS Duncan, currently on deployment in the Mediterranean.

He took the opportunity to record a Storybook Waves bedtime story for his two daughters, aged 10 and eight.

He highlighted how meaningful this initiative has been to his family.

"It is important to me that the girls can hear my voice and still feel connected to me despite the distance," he said.

"Modern technology can provide calls and video calls, but the Storybook Waves allows me to be part of their bedtime without breaking the family routine."

Ian has served in the Royal Navy for 18 years and in the last 10 years has spent more than 40 months deployed.

He heard about Aggie's through the Chain of Command and has used it since 2014 to record a story so that his daughters have some contact with him while he is away.

Recording centres are based in convenient locations around the country and each recording centre has a selection of books.

For personnel on board a ship or deployed, contact your Chaplain who will make arrangements for you to record a story.



Jolly good time in campervan funded by charity



THE Royal Navy & Royal Marines Charity (RNRMC) and The Submarine Family (TSF) recently awarded funding to His Majesty's Naval Base (HMNB) Clyde to purchase a VW Campervan.

Affectionately named Jolly, the vehicle will be an affordable and convenient recreation option appealing to more junior personnel and those in single-living accommodation.

With the high-tempo nature of delivering the number one defence priority of the Continuous at Sea Deterrent, RNRMC and TSF

(a fund within the RNRMC), were keen to support the naval base to improve the work/life balance of its serving personnel.

The campervan will also be available to book on a case-by-case basis for those serving at other Royal Navy establishments.

The campervan joins HMNB Clyde's current offer of motorhomes and static caravans and allows for a more flexible, easy and fun option for those looking to enjoy the beautiful scenery of the Scottish Highlands and Islands in their off-watch

time.

The first couple to rent the Jolly campervan were Ross and Fiona Balfour, who between them have 55 years of combined naval service. Ross continues to serve, while Fiona completed 22 years and is now a civil servant at HMNB Clyde.

The Balfours said: "We feel very lucky to have had the chance to use this great addition to the Central Amenities Fund (CAF) assets."

"Jolly, along with all the CAF assets, provides an exceptional

opportunity for base personnel to take advantage of these amenities for a very reasonable price, thanks to the generous support of RNRMC and TSF."

Income from bookings taken will be used to keep the campervan on the road so that it is self-sufficient and self-sustaining.

Those interested in booking the campervan should contact the Central Amenities Fund Manager at HMNB Clyde with priority being given to those on frontline units to give them the respite they deserve.

Military musical extravaganza raises thousands for charity

THE entertainment bonanza that is the Royal Edinburgh Military Tattoo has raised nearly half a million pounds for the Royal Navy and Royal Marines Charity.

Since 2018, the annual event has donated £483,500 to the charity which supports sailors and Royal Marines, both serving and veterans.

This year, the RNRMC was the Tattoo's lead charity.

Andrew Jameson, charity chief executive, said: "This is part of a long-standing partnership and supporting our important work with the Royal Naval Community."

"We would like to express our deepest gratitude to everyone at the Royal Edinburgh Military Tattoo Charity."



ENJOY TRAFALGAR NIGHT CELEBRATIONS AT HOME

OCTOBER is a month steeped in naval tradition as the service celebrates the victory of the Royal Navy led by Vice-Admiral (of the Blue) Horatio Nelson over the combined French and Spanish fleets at Cape Trafalgar in 1805.

This Trafalgar Night, serving personnel are invited to help raise vital funds for the Royal Navy & Royal Marines Charity (RNRMC) by collecting donations at their Mess or Association dinner.

By hosting a donation collection at Trafalgar Night dinner or Pickle night celebrations, they'll be helping sailors and marines who are going through tough times, ensuring they receive the support they need to recover and thrive.

Each October since the early 19th century, Officers in the Royal Navy have joined together to commemorate the Battle of Trafalgar in 1805.

Traditionally Nelson's famous victory is celebrated in mess decks and ward rooms all over the world but the RNRMC is now giving others the chance to bring celebrations into their own homes.

The RNRMC provides an exclusive event pack which contains 'England Expects' bunting, a History of Trafalgar brochure, Trafalgar Night Recipe cards from the RNRMC cookbook, fun party games and more.

Scan the QR code for more:





I GUESS the gigantic human anchor gives it away...

But if you didn't know, the 2024 Royal Edinburgh Military Tattoo was led by the Royal Navy - the first time in seven years the Senior Service has been the, er, senior service at the annual spectacle.

As it has done since 1950, the Scottish capitals iconic fortress served as the backdrop for the celebration of music, drill, military pageantry, dance and performance.

Then it drew an audience of 6,000. Today, over three weeks in August, it attracts around 220,000 spectators who converge on Edinburgh from around the globe for the world-famous fringe festival.

With the RN the lead service, there was a strong nautical theme to the 2024 tattoo as the audience was taken on a musical journey around the globe, bringing together the voices and stories which connect cast members, audiences, and cultures.

Leading the Royal Navy's involvement in the Esplanade area were the Bands of His Majesty's Royal Marines, including their world-famous Corps of Drums, celebrating their service's 360th birthday this year.

The Corps' musicians pooled the immense talent across the Service and its four 'regular' bands - in Portsmouth (HMS Nelson), Plymouth (HMS Raleigh), Scotland (HMS Caledonia in Rosyth), Fareham (HMS Collingwood) and Lympstone

(Commando Training Centre) - plus the Royal Marines School of Music in Portsmouth.

They took to the amphitheatre every night of the three-week run of the tattoo, joined by musicians of the United States Navy Ceremonial Guard and the United States Sea Service Band.

Unique to the 2024 tattoo, however is the performance nightly of the event's lone piper - drawn, for the first time, from the ranks of the Royal Marines Band.

Beyond the Royal Navy's involvement, other tattoo participants included: (deep breath) the Pipes and Drums of 1st Battalion Scots Guards, the Pipes and Drums of the Royal Gurkha Rifles, the Australian Federal Police Pipes and Drums, the Combined Pipes and Drums of The Royal Tank Regiment, the Scottish and North Irish Yeomanry, the Majestic Drum Corps, India Teamwork Arts, and The Citadel Regimental Band and Pipes.

It takes more than just artists and performers to ensure the tattoo runs smoothly.

Sailors from Fife Reservist unit HMS Scotia stepped into the limelight to throughout the event, making the short trip from HMS Caledonia over the Forth in Rosyth daily.

Scotians welcomed the audience and supported the arrival of each night's salute taker.

Every evening members of HMS

Scotia's ship's company chatted with audience members ahead of the performance, providing a visible naval presence on the castle esplanade, interacting with visitors from across the UK and globe, explaining their role as reservists, and of course posing for many a photo.

With the audience seated and awaiting the start of the performance, the Scotians then provided a saluting party and door openers to welcome the the guest of honour each evening: senior UK international military figures, politicians and other VIPs.

Sub-Lieutenant James Hodson oversaw Scotia's contribution to the tattoo, taking part on every evening. "Meeting and working with colleagues from across the UK armed forces and further afield was a great experience for all involved," he said. "It was brilliant to see such a diverse range of audiences and to hear many of the stories they had from their experiences with the armed forces both here in the UK and from across the world."

AB Sinclair also represented Scotia: "I thoroughly enjoyed the Royal Edinburgh Military Tattoo, it was a real highlight of this year. The chance to represent the RNR to members of the public, foreign militaries, and VIPs, not to mention the incredible music, was definitely worth braving the Edinburgh weather!"

Pictures: PO(Phot) Baz Wheeler, LPhotos Stuart Dickson and Dan Bladen



NIGHTS AT THE CASTLE

Stand by for (even more) action...

WE ARE about to launch Sting Ray... into the mid-21st Century.

The Fleet's mainstay lightweight torpedo is to receive a £60m upgrade to counter the latest underwater threat.

Whitehall has awarded BAE Systems a contract to enhance Sting Ray, the standard torpedo carried by Royal Navy ships and helicopters... as well as by the RAF's new Poseidon P8 long-range maritime patrol aircraft.

Sting Ray has been in service since 1983. It's currently carried by Merlin and Wildcat helicopters which drop the weapon into the sea in the vicinity of a suspected hostile submarines, or else it's fired by horizontal launchers on a Type 23 frigate.

The existing Mod 1 variant powers through the ocean at up to 45kts, honing in on its submerged target through active/passive sonar. Upon impact its 45kg Torpex explosive charge - which accounts for one sixth of the torpedo's weight - detonates and destroys the target.

Although constantly upgraded since introduction, the time has come for a fundamental revamp of Sting Ray to develop a new version.

Over the next four years experts from BAE Systems in Portsmouth and Fife will design, develop and construct prototypes of Sting Ray Mod 2, before conducting in-water trials.

The upgrade will introduce new technological features, including added deployment options, ensuring that Sting Ray continues to meet the challenge of emerging threats now and into the future.

It comes as the Royal Navy's heavyweight torpedo, Spearfish, has undergone its mid-life upgrade and is now being introduced into service with the Submarine Service.

"This is great news for the Royal Navy and other Sting Ray users," said Commodore Steve Bolton, the Royal Navy's Deputy Director Aviation Programmes.

"We are taking what is already a very good anti-submarine warfare weapon and turning it into the best in class."

The contract will support more than 100 highly-skilled engineering/manufacturing jobs at BAE Systems' sites in Portsmouth and Hillend, Fife, and will also support high-tech suppliers across the UK.

Registered charity number: Royal Navy & Royal Marines Children's Fund 106082

Naval Children's Charity

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

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

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



Cdre Sam takes over the RFA

There is a new name and face at the helm of the Royal Fleet Auxiliary: Commodore Sam Shattock.

He has assumed the role of Commodore Royal Fleet Auxiliary (and also Deputy Director Afloat Support), taking over following the retirement of Cdre Eagles and the interim appointment of Captain Ali Clack.

Cdre Shattock has a 34-year career in the RFA behind him, including command of Bay-class amphibious support vessels and Tide-class tankers, recognition for operations in the Baltic, and Gulf, and staff roles including Deputy Assistant Chief of Staff Afloat Support.

Cdre Shattock said of his new role "I look forward to the privilege of leading this inspiring organisation. The RFA remains essential to Defence outputs".

Cdre Shattock was welcomed into his new role by the Royal Navy's Director of Force Generation, Rear Admiral Anthony Rimington, who said he was "excited" by the new appointment.

"As well as running the RFA day to day, I am keen that we work together to deliver the RFA for the future that is focused on its key role of supporting maritime outputs at the heart of the Royal Navy.

"That will encompass the size and shape of the RFA flotilla, and of course the people that make it the fantastic organisation that it is, tailored to the Royal Navy's support requirements of a rapidly evolving fleet of crewed and uncrewed ships."

Are you ready to be a Shadow?

THE first 'Shadow Board' will meet next month – and volunteers ranging from commander to able seaman are invited to join it.

The P&T Shadow Board has been created to offer P&T's leadership different perspectives and challenge on key issues from a diverse group of individuals.

Establishing the Shadow Board will reduce the risk of group think and fosters a culture of challenge and debate.

If you are interested, please contact navypeople-hqcosmailbox@mod.gov.uk.



Medics look to 2030

The Maritime Medical Integrated Force 2030 (MMIF30) implementation team is now in place to re-shape medical support across the Senior Service by the beginning of the next decade.

Some 58 projects will be delivered, including the transition from one Maritime Role 3 facility (currently aboard RFA Argus – pictured during an exercise in 2022) to two Maritime Role 2 enhanced Deployed Hospital Care capabilities on the future Multi-Role Strike Ships, future medical support to defence diving and, the creation of Medical Support Groupw – an operational-level Headquarters to manage and support RN medical capability around the globe.

The overhaul follows two years of work focused on medical transformation. In 2022 MedOpCap gathered experts from across the Royal Navy and Defence Medical Services to assess current medical capability and identify necessary changes to provide healthcare across the Navy's Force Level Outputs: Carrier Strike, Operational Advantage in North Atlantic, Littoral Strike and Persistent Presence.

Early activity has seen progress in: understanding medical support to NATO Special Operations

Forces; the introduction of a Maritime Medical Centre of Excellence (a multi-role environmental and tactical training facility at Commando Logistics Regiment (CLR), aiming to enhance medical training and Pre-Hospital Emergency Medical care); and endorsement of a High Consequence Infectious Disease capability for Surface, Subsurface and Littoral environments, including funding for experimentation on ships in late 2025.

"Global security has changed, and so UK Defence and the Navy must change with it," explained Lieutenant Gregory Vardon-Smith, one of the staff officers on the MMIF30 team.

"This requires a more proactive and modern armed forces, better prepared for warfighting, and more persistently engaged worldwide. To prepare, we must transform.

"Being part of MMIF30 is a fast-paced and extremely demanding role, but I am expecting it to be one of the best jobs I will have; transforming the RN Medical Service into a variable and highly-adaptable force able to deliver the desired medical effect around the globe, both at sea and in the littoral environment."

You said, we did: Promotions

SOME significant policy changes to pre-selection eligibility criteria for promotion for RN regular and reserve personnel have been announced by the Royal Navy's Promotions Team.

Historically, seniority-based eligibility criteria was judged to be the time required to achieve a level of experience or qualifications to warrant a positive recommendation for promotion. This varies across ranks and specialisations, with some linked to the attainment of competence or task book completion.

Removal of seniority-based eligibility criteria will allow all candidates to be considered for promotion on an annual basis,

providing they have received a positive recommendation for promotion.

This ensures that the Service can recognise and reward those individuals who are demonstrating potential early in rank across the Ratings and Officer cadres.

These changes will be phased for promotion boards taking place in 2025 and 2026 to ensure that reporting officers can consider candidates' suitability for promotion as part of the annual appraisal process.

"These changes align with feedback received from the front line and is another excellent example of 'you asked us to remove unnecessary barriers

to promotion and after much hard work by the promotions team, we have implemented the changes requested'," said Stuart Lawrence, Head of Royal Navy Promotions.

"As a pre-cursor to the Pan Defence Skills Framework implementation and development of a skills-based workforce model, pre-selection eligibility criteria for promotion have been reviewed to ensure that the RN continues to deliver an inclusive talent management system and can identify and recognise those individuals who are demonstrating potential early in rank."

For more information on these changes, see RNTM 01-082/24.

Personal thanks at regular awards



A PERSONAL thank you from the Director P&T Rear Admiral Jude Terry for Lieutenant Commander Jenny Dunford.

The latter, who works in personnel services, is one of more than 90 individuals and their families invited to Admiralty House in Portsmouth in 2024 for the P&T Awards to thank them for contributions to the Royal Navy and the wider MOD.

The quarterly awards – which recognise RN personnel, including regulars, reservists, recent veterans, RFA personnel, and civil servants – also embrace commendations, thank yous for outstanding above-and-beyond contributions, valedictory certificates acknowledging long years of service and loyalty to the RN, and medals awarded for various campaigns and service.

The ceremonies are a fantastic opportunity for serving and former personnel, civilians and their guests to network, and meet with the Director personally, while enjoying a formal presentation ceremony alongside refreshments.



Time for a TMO?

Do you fancy the responsibility of becoming one of the Navy's Training Management Officers (TMOs).

If so Lieutenant Robert Bullock (pictured above delivering a lesson) wants to hear from you to grow the specialisation and has already one two-day 'taster' session for 30 sailors and Royal Marines – a mix of upper yardmen/senior upper yardmen and prospective TMOs at Britannia Royal Naval College.

The two-day 'experience event' was designed to reduce application apprehension, provide key information, and give candidates an opportunity to ask questions about the specialisation and more general officer roles.

Among subjects tackled were: the initial pathway to join the specialisation; how to get a degree; the Admiralty Interview Board process; the specific Training Management Officer's course; and what to expect in your first job – and beyond.

Each element of the event was delivered by a subject matter expert from representatives from the AIB and the Learning Development Team to TMO cadets and qualified officers sharing their experiences and answering questions.

The two days in Dartmouth also gave interested candidates an insight into life in the college and what they can expect should they go on to attend BRNC.

"The Training Management pipeline is currently exclusively fed by in-service candidates," explained Lt Bullock.

"The quality and quantity of candidates is paramount to ensuring the inflow is healthy and the quality of candidates is high."

He is looking for personnel who are passionate about training, would enjoy roles which continually work to improve RN training, hold, are taking or interested in undertaking a degree or higher education qualification.

If that sounds like you, see RNTM 01-101/23 or contact Robert.Bullock734@mod.gov.uk.



NATO's naval leaders confer

NATO's senior naval commanders converged on Portsmouth to discuss current and future maritime operations in a rapidly-changing geo-political and technological environment.

Leading figures and staff from Canada, France, Germany, Greece, Italy, Poland, Spain, Turkey, United States, plus the alliance's Maritime Command (MARCOM) headquarters in Northwood made use of the RN's War Fighting Centre in Portsmouth and UK flagship HMS Queen Elizabeth, to discuss key issues with the goal of improving future command and control of exercises and operations, as well as broadening understanding of strategy.

As well as keynote address from the senior Royal Navy officer assigned to NATO, Vice Admiral Mike Utley, NATO Maritime Commander, there was the chance for the alliance's various Combined Task Force commanders and staff officers to both meet face-to-face and discuss challenges, as well as share and promote a common understand of working at sea as an international force for good. Guests were also given a comprehensive tour of the UK's flagship in Portsmouth Naval Base.

This inaugural NATO Combined Task Force Maritime Commanders Conference came as RN forces were engaged on two major exercises – Sandy Coast in Belgium, a test of mine warfare forces with British P2000 patrol boats acting as disruptors, and the annual workout for the latest tech and data systems, REPMUS in Portugal.

Queen Elizabeth's sister ship HMS Prince of Wales is about to link up with NATO forces off Scotland, in preparation for her maiden task group deployment in 2025. Exercise Strike Warrior, which involves F-35B fast jets of 809 Naval Air Squadron providing the striking power of an international naval force, reaches its climax in the middle of this month in the North Sea/northern Scotland (tune in to next month's edition for coverage of all three exercises).



SEA. SHELLS. SANCTUARY.

BY THE time you read these words Jason, Gordon, Perran, Hayle, Holly and Tonni should be living the dream.

Not a Cornish boy band, but six turtles safely returned to their original Atlantic habitat thanks to a unique Royal Navy mission.

We linked up with two marine life organisations to deliver half a dozen turtles to warmer waters after the creatures were washed up on the UK shores and nurtured back to health.

Crew of HMS Medway were due to release the vulnerable creatures upon reaching warmer waters in the western Atlantic around the turn of the month as the patrol ship headed towards the Caribbean to relieve her sister ship HMS Trent.

Alongside her regular cargo of food supplies, spare parts for machinery, disaster relief/aid kits Medway also carried six loggerhead turtles cared hitherto for by aquariums in Cornwall and Anglesey.

With the creatures sufficiently developed, the time had come to 'repatriate' them.

They had to be returned to their warm, native waters... which meant shipping them back across the Atlantic.

With HMS Medway due to head to the Caribbean on deployment, the Royal Navy offered to help out.

"As professional mariners, many of us are keen to do what we can to reduce the loss of biodiversity at sea," said Rod Jones, the Royal Navy's Senior Maritime Environmental Protection Adviser.

"Encountering marine wildlife is one of the great joys of seafaring and if we can assist, even in a small way, to make that more likely in the future we are pleased to be able to do that.

"Assisting turtles to return to warmer waters may not be the Royal Navy's primary role but as a government body we are very pleased to be able to support the UK's ambition for more healthy and diverse seas."

The juvenile turtles were swept from the warm waters of the Caribbean or Eastern Seaboard of the USA by strong winds and Atlantic currents.

Once in the cold waters around they UK they quickly become

'cold-stunned' and cannot survive. Fortunately, they were washed up and rescued.

Five came ashore in Cornwall and Devon and have been cared for since by staff at Newquay's Blue Reef Aquarium, while the sixth creature has been nurtured by folk at Anglesey Sea Zoo having been found on one of the island's beaches.

"All the turtles arrived in a weakened state – in many cases we were unsure if they were going to make it overnight," explained Steve Matchett, group curator for Blue Reef Aquarium.

"All were dehydrated and emaciated. This is due to being too cold for a long period and being unable to feed/function properly. They have all prospered once we got them past the initial stages.

"We are very grateful to the Navy for stepping in to repatriate these rescued turtles."

His team showed sailors from HMS Medway how to look after the turtles while aboard the warship.

Although the creatures didn't need feeding their usual fare of marine life such as jellyfish or crustaceans, they and their tanks did need cleaning to prevent a build-up of turtle poo.

And they also had to be kept warm – an ambient air/water temperature above 20° Celsius.

Such was the unusual nature of the job – the RAF carried out a 'turtle repatriation' about a decade ago – the two 'turtle keeper' posts on board were oversubscribed, with the names of Sub Lieutenant Adam Whitelaw and communications specialist Engineering Technician Ryan Brooks pulled out of a hat.

"The turtles were surprisingly low maintenance," said Ryan. "All we really had to do was make sure their cages were clean and the turtles themselves were happy, cosy and moist – that they did not dry out or suffer sore spots – checking in on them twice a day."

Adam added: "This is something we've never done before, so definitely something to talk about.

"We received some really good, comprehensive training and the aquarium was always available for consulting if we needed help."

The creatures were temporarily rehomed in Medway's sick bay until

the ship arrived in the Azores a few days later and waters around 23 Celsius – turtle-perfect temperatures.

Very different waters, we have to say, from those preferred by the European flat oyster.

It's really not fussy. Temperature. Cleanliness. Location. Other users.

Which is why there's a small 'oyster garden' now at the foot of Whale Island in Portsmouth Harbour, bang opposite the naval base. And ferry port.

Yes, around 2,000 of them are being nurtured in an ambitious project to reintroduce the species to the Solent... whose waters it once dominated.

The Blue Marine Foundation's Solent Oyster Restoration programme looks, long term, to restore those heady days... with a little help from the RN/MOD.

At a cost of £5,000, an 'oyster garden' (basically half a dozen crates lowered into the harbour from a pontoon) has been established by Harriet Rushton of DE&S Salvage and Marine Operations (SALMO) Wrecks team.

Funded by the Defence Infrastructure Organisation, it has already released a batch of 200 European flat oysters (*Ostrea edulis*) to the River Hamble between Portsmouth and Southampton.

This year the conservationists are raising 2,000 oysters – and hope most will survive the vagaries of the British weather – to join the older cohorts and help breed, spawn and restock Solent waters, as well as filtering them and improving water quality.

"It has been very exciting to establish and manage this project," said marine biologist Harriet.

"These oysters are being grown for conservation, re-introducing a lost native keystone species in the Solent, which will enhance biodiversity and help clean the water.

"This shows the Ministry of Defence's commitment to improving the UK's ecosystem and helping to address climate change, thus contributing to minimising climate and ecosystem pressures on MOD training and operations."

This is a long-term project – it may well be a decade or more before the team's efforts bear fruit – but Rod

Jones believes if successful there is potential for the initiative far beyond the Solent.

"If we can grow oysters here – which is far from an ideal environment as a very industrial setting – then there are clearly opportunities to grow them elsewhere, other naval bases or MOD sites," he added.

"The Navy has been operating in the Solent for centuries so it is only right that we should be involved in protecting its environment.

Every couple of weeks, he, Harriet and sometimes the Whale Island Conservation Volunteers inspect the oysters and their crates as these can become fouled with algae, sea squirts and other marine organisms, especially during spring and summer, impacting the oysters' ability to feed and grow. It takes up to 18 months for the oysters to reach adulthood.

The Solent was once home to the largest fishery of European flat oyster, in Europe, but since the peak in the mid-19th Century, numbers have dropped by 95 per cent as a result of overfishing and pollution and their niche is now occupied by the invasive Pacific oyster, *Magallana gigas*. By the 1980s, numbers of the native species were negligible.

Reintroducing *Ostrea edulis* to the Solent has widespread benefits for the local environment.

A single adult oyster – measuring just 8-9cms – can filter up to 200 litres of water a day, removing chemicals and pollutants, improving not just the clarity and quality of the sea, but allowing sunlight to penetrate further, enabling species and habitats dependent on the sun's rays, such as seagrass and saltmarsh, to grow.

Cleaning the waters around Whale Island will benefit Royal Navy personnel and Sea Cadets. They are used by divers and sail training and, in summer, leisure and adventurous training activities.

Once released, and settled in the Solent – Blue Marine Foundation has established artificial reefs in Langstone Harbour (between Portsmouth and Hayling Island) and the River Hamble (between Southampton and Fareham) – the oyster shells merge into one another to form reefs which become

biodiversity hotspots, providing shelter and food for marine life, from tiny plankton to larger fish species. In this way, they are classed as a keystone species.

Oysters also remove carbon from the environment, extracting carbon ions from seawater to build their shells. When they die, their shells become buried beneath sediments, eventually transforming into solid beds of limestone, effectively removing carbon from the atmosphere.

"It is great to



be working on this project together to reintroduce native oysters to the Solent," said Dr Luke Helmer, restoration scientific officer at Blue Marine Foundation.

"As part of this, we have created artificial reefs, made from shell and gravel material, onto which the oysters are released, as they require hard substrate on which to attach, grow and spawn.

"They can then create their own reefs and further enhance the health of the local marine environment. It will be a pleasure to see this collaboration in a conservation project continue to unfold."

Pictures: CPO Dave Jenkins
LPhotos Joe Burt, Alikea Munday
and Henry Parks



Memorials, marches and Monte Cassino

MEMBERS of Wansbeck and District branch of the Royal Naval Association bade farewell to one of their stalwarts, former Wren Sheila Davies, who has died aged 82.

The branch contributed an anchor wreath as requested by Sheila and there was a guard of honour of 15 veterans, plus RNA standard for the memorial service at St Bartholomew's Church in Newbiggin by Sewhale the *Last Post* and *Reveille* were sounded at Blyth crematorium.

The wake was held fitting held at the Elizabethan Hall, meeting place for Newbiggin veterans - a group Sheila was involved in re-starting when she first to the village from the South.

Elsewhere, branch members supported a regimental dinner to celebrate the 350th anniversary of the Royal Northumberland Fusiliers (now the Royal Regiment of Fusiliers) and attended the flag-raising ceremony and service on September 3 to mark Merchant Navy Day at Lynemouth in Northumberland with local councillor Liz Dunn delivering a speech followed by prayers for those merchant sailors who have given their lives for their country.

The remembrance theme continued a few days later when Wansbeck joined veterans from across the UK at Eden Camp near Malton.

The former camp for WW2 Italian and German PoWs is now a tourist attraction.

Each September it hosts a remembrance parade/day, inviting veterans of all three Services on site to march, hold a memorial service and generally look around the site.

Supported by an excellent military band from East Yorkshire, 51 standards from a variety of regiments lead the parade and more than 100 veterans pounded the parade ground, joined by some cadets.

In the 400-500 spectator audience were more veterans who were unable to do the march for various reasons.

Back in Northumberland, the branch helped a WW2 veteran celebrate his 101st birthday in Cramlington; a former Royal Northumberland Fusiliers he fought at Monte Cassino and still teaching judo as a 10th Dan instructor!

Hero's rare medal goes to museum

VICTORIA Crosses. Distinguished Flying Crosses. OBES. MBEs. The King's/Queen's Gallantry Medal.

Naval aviators have won them all in 115 years of flying at sea.

But only one naval aviator ever held the Turkish Distinguished Service Medal – a rare decoration even its native land and never bestowed on a foreigner until Lieutenant – later Captain – Ian McKechnie saved the lives of 72 Turkish sailors in a single night.

Fifty years after his deed that medal – and other decorations, citations and accounts of his accomplishments as a pilot – have been handed over to the guardians of naval heritage.

They were received by South Ayrshire Provost Iain Campbell on behalf of the Fleet Air Arm Museum, where they will join medals won by other great names in naval aviation as a reminder of past deeds and bravery to inspire future generations.

The Turkish medal was awarded for one of the greatest single acts of lifesaving in Fleet Air Arm history.

In July 1974, Lt McKechnie was pilot of frigate HMS Andromeda's Wasp helicopter, dispatched to Cyprus to help civilians caught up in the Greek-Turkish conflict raging for the island.

Amid Turkish landings on July 21, the former US destroyer TCG Kocatepe was mistaken for a Greek ship by Turkish pilots and bombed.

More than 50 souls died, but over 100 were saved by the Royal Navy, 72 of them by Lt McKechnie in his tiny helicopter.

Over 4½ hours the then lieutenant set down 55 times on the deck of a foreign warship, Turkish destroyer TCG Berk which had never conducted such operations – all in the pitch black of night.

The head of naval aviation, Vice Admiral Sir Peter Austin, described it "the finest feat of aviation in the Fleet Air Arm" in all of 1974 – and awarded Lt McKechnie the Boyd Trophy in recognition.

Due to the political sensitivities at the time, the full details of the



Director of Flight Ops for Navy Wings Alistair McLaren, Turkey's Acting Consul General in Edinburgh, Demet Kayaoğlu, Captain McKechnie's widow Shonah, and South Ayrshire Provost Iain Campbell with some of the papers and personal effects donated to the Fleet Air Arm Museum and (inset) a then Lt McKechnie with his unique Turkish decoration



action were not revealed – nor the nationality of the ship and rescued sailors.

Born in Surrey and educated in Portsmouth, after a brief career in the Merchant Navy, Iain McKechnie joined the Royal

Navy in 1963 and trained as a jet pilot – bombing the wreck of the tanker Torrey Canyon off Land's End in 1967 to burn off its cargo of oil using napalm – though he proved equally at home flying a helicopter.

In a 30-year career, he commanded HMS Gannet, the air base at Prestwick, served as the RN's director of aviation and as Queen's Harbourmaster Clyde.

Capt McKechnie died in 2003 aged just 60, with his impressive collection of papers, medals and other mementos of a remarkable career entrusted to his friend and colleague Commander Malcolm Warr, who worked with Ian on Dockyard takeovers.

With the consent of the late pilot's family, some of that collection, led by the Turkish decoration, was presented just a stone's throw from the air

station he commanded in the mid-80s, HMS Gannet, at the County Building in Ayr during the international air show at neighbouring Prestwick.

Fittingly, the medal and memorabilia were brought back to Yeovilton by a Wasp from naval aviation charity Navy Wings which had been displaying at the show in front of nearly a quarter of a million spectators.

Cdr Warr hopes that Capt McKechnie's qualities – "Ian's sense of humour and his willingness to subjugate his own interests for the good of the team" – not to mention his deeds and selfless will inspire current and future generations of young people to join the Royal Navy, but also explain to them the contributions and sacrifices which have been (and continue to be) made on their behalf to keep them safe."

Remembering the 'sailor of Arnhem'

IT IS one of the signature actions in the proud annals of the Red Berets.

And the 80th anniversary of the airborne landings at Arnhem – Operation Market Garden – was marked with full military ceremony by today's Paras.

Although Arnhem is largely (and rightly) seen as an air/land battle (Market was the codename for the aerial assault, Garden for the ground forces) and the parachute/glider landings in particular rightly commemorated, there were a small number of Royal Navy personnel supporting the abortive operation.

Andrew Batten, who's served in both the Royal Navy and RAF and now works as a civilian at RAF Brize Norton, has delved into the history of the battle and says though small in number, sailors played their part in the epic.

Not least Air Mechanic Leonard Augustus Hooker, the only Senior Serviceman buried in the Commonwealth War Graves Cemetery in Oosterbeek – the principal resting place for Allied

servicemen killed in September 1944 trying to seize the bridge over the Rhine.

The eight-day Operation Market Garden sought to bring the war in western Europe to an end in 1944 by opening a route into Germany's industrial heartland of the Rhine and Ruhr valleys by capturing a series of key river crossings, the last at Arnhem in the Netherlands.

Despite the bravery of the Allied forces, the operation fell short of its goal and Arnhem proved to be 'a bridge too far' – as the later book and Hollywood blockbuster were named.

"The Royal Air Force were stretched and were loaned Fleet Air Arm mechanics to help service their aircraft," Andrew explains.

"Subsequently some of these mechanics volunteered to assist the Royal Army Service Corps in despatching supplies to the 1st Airborne Division at Arnhem."

Among them was 23-year-old Leonard Augustus Hooker,



an Air Mechanic 2nd Class from West Drayton, serving at HMS Daedalus.

On the third day of the battle, Hooker joined a Stirling Mk IV four-engine bomber from 196 Squadron flying a resupply missions for the troops dropped at Arnhem.

He was due to assist two air dispatchers – in charge of the cargo – from the 63rd Airborne Division Composite Company but never had the opportunity.

The Stirling was hit by flak that Tuesday afternoon, September 17 1944, and caught fire. Due to the flames, Hooker was unable to reach his parachute and died with six colleagues; three men managed to bail out.

As with all the graves at Oosterbeek – which lies about five miles west of Arnhem and served as the focal point for much of the fighting away from the Rhine bridge – Leonard Hooker's has been adopted by a Dutch family.

Although it's the only naval grave in the cemetery, Andrew says that's not the end of the Royal Navy involvement in Market Garden.

"During the operation Sailors were present at RAF bases where gliders were flown from. They were used to splice and repair the glider tow ropes," he adds.

"There is anecdotal

evidence that there were at least two other Royal Naval personnel flying with the RAF and the air dispatchers.

"One veteran, John Bellamy, recounts meeting a Royal Navy lieutenant who flew as an unofficial despatcher, was shot down and taken prisoner of war."

And author/historian Sir Antony Beevor says the Germans were baffled by the sight of one Royal Navy sailor captured at Arnhem alongside the remnants of 10th Parachute Battalion.

He had joined a transporter to help drop supplies. It was shot down, but the sailor succeeded in bailing out, then joined the Paras on the ground. The Germans who captured him thought he was French because of his blue uniform.

Failure of Market Garden cost the Allies around 17,000 casualties and effectively ended large-scale offensive operations on the Western Front until the Rhine was forced in March 1945.

Picture: Andrew Batten

Atlantic veteran regains her title

TO MARK the 85th anniversary of the beginning of the Navy's hardest – and greatest – victory, a vintage warship is once again an HMS.

His Majesty the King agreed to the renaming of Wellington – for threequarters of a century a regular sight on London's Embankment.

Wellington is the last of 13 Grimsbyclass sloops built between the wars for the Royal, Royal Australian and Royal Indian Navies for escort/antisubmarine duties.

Although there is a handful of Battle of the Atlantic survivors left – cruiser HMS Belfast, destroyer HMS Cavalier and corvette HMCS Sackville – none quite have Wellington's pedigree (103 convoys escorted and more than 400 fellow mariners saved after enemy attack).

When she was no longer needed by the Admiralty, Wellington was paid off and sent to Pembroke Broke for breaking up – only to be saved by the Honourable Company of Master Mariners.

Instead, she was converted into a floating events venue/headquarters of a livery company/floating classroom and rebadged HQS (HeadQuarters Ship) Wellington, a title she's lived with for more than 75 years... until now.

She'll now be officially known as HMS Wellington (1934) to mark both her 90th birthday and 85th anniversary of Britain's declaration of war on September 3 1939.

The Battle of the Atlantic began that very Sunday with the sinking of the liner Athenia and ended just hours before the Germans surrendered in May 1945.

"This change of name in her 90th anniversary year is a true testament to her heritage as the sole surviving dedicated Battle of the Atlantic warship in Europe," said Professor Dominic Tweddle, chairman of the Trust which looks after the ship.

"There is no better day for HMS Wellington (1934) to adopt her new name, on the 85th anniversary of the start of the Battle of the Atlantic."

The trust is looking to raise £50,000 to maintain the vessel at her Temple Stairs mooring to help with Wellington's ongoing maintenance: www.gofundme.com/f/wellington90





Farewell to the Farnella

One of the last ships left from the Falklands task force is being broken up after a remarkable 50-year-career.

Former trawler Farnella was one of five Hull-based fishing vessels pressed into service as makeshift minesweepers in 1982 to deal with minefields laid around the islands to prevent a British invasion.

The Navy's existing – and elderly – Ton-class minesweepers were not deemed suitable for making the 8,000-mile voyage to the Falklands and operating in the South Atlantic in midwinter, while the first of the Fleet's then-new Hunt-class were not fully operational.

As it had done in both world wars to bolster the minehunting/patrol fleet, the Navy turned to the fishing fleet and requisitioned five deep sea trawlers from Hull – Farnella plus Cordella, Junella, Northella and Pict.

The catches were emptied from the holds into waiting freezer lorries at Rosyth (they didn't get them all as crew found dead fish aboard months later), temporary sweeping gear and minehunting equipment and the fishermen replaced with crews from five Ton-class ships from Rosyth.

Just four weeks after the Argentine invasion the newly-formed 11th Mine Counter Measures Squadron under Lieutenant Commander Martyn Holloway sailed for the South Atlantic.

One month later they arrived in already-liberated South Georgia where they found some of the more famous ships in the Falklands task force such as liner QE2. The trawlers were used to move men and kit between the various ships "working tirelessly," says former mine warfare officer/historian Rob Hoole, "in atrocious Antarctic weather with wind speeds in excess of 100 knots" before eventually heading for the Falklands themselves.

Amid great ships like HMS Invincible, Fearless, Intrepid and the latest destroyers and frigates, the sight of five North Sea trawlers provoked some light-hearted banter, with sailors calling out to the mine crews: "You mean those rust buckets are warships and on our side?"

Yet the men in the makeshift sweepers were brave – there were only the most basic damage control facilities; even a near miss with a mine would have knocked out all communications, leaving crews to fire flares to signal for help.

The flotilla was committed in the final days of the campaign to search for mines in Berkeley Sound (none were found), or delivered supplies to scattered SAS and SBS raiding parties.

And in the days following the Argentine surrender, the trawlers swept the minefields laid by the invader at the entrance to Stanley harbour.

They found ten of the 21 moored mines dropped into the Atlantic (the other 11 had either broken free and drifted away, or never deployed properly. Farnella herself recovered a solitary mine.

The trawlers were subsequently returned to their original owners, but not necessarily their original role.

The Farnella carved out a second career as a survey/research vessel for the remainder of her life, first helping to chart the Exclusive Economic Zone – the seabed extending 200 miles from the coastline – of the United States, operating in the Atlantic, Caribbean and Pacific, including the forbidding Bering Strait between Alaska and Russia.

The ship later was involved in salvage/wreck operations, in particular the recovery of valuable cargoes, notably silver, from the seabed.

Farnella's remarkable career came to an end as the Empire Persia, an offshore support vessel, operating out of Denmark.

She is now being 'recycled' by Danish firm Smedegaarden in Esbjerg on the country's North Sea coast.

Of the 127 ships gathered for Operation Corporate in 1982, 62 were merchant vessels, the rest split between the Royal Navy (43) and Royal Fleet Auxiliary (22).

At least one not only survives, but continues in service, RFA Argus (in 1982 the civilian Contender Bezant), which has most recently supported the Royal Marines on exercise in Australia.



Ganges revival

SIX Ganges veterans were given a unique behind-the-fence tour of the old naval establishment to mark 60 years since joining up.

Bernard Harrison, Nigel Guilfoyle, Jeff Fox, David Carter, Mick Hudson, and Jim Creasy arrived at Ganges on August 24 1964, completing their training 11 months later.

And six decades to the day they returned – as the site is finally brought back to life.

Ganges served as a boys' training establishment in various guises/locations for more than a century. It is most famously associated with Shotley Gate in Suffolk where the Rivers Stour and Orwell meet.

Despite closing in June 1976 when all entry training for ratings was concentrated at HMS Raleigh in Torpoint (where it remains today), many of the buildings and structures – including the iconic mast – still intact.

With the site – now known as Barrelman's Point – finally being redeveloped, half a dozen veterans of Drake 39 Mess were invited on site to reminisce, see some of the old structures being brought back to life, and witness the changes being made across the 58-acre site.

"For six of us who walked through those imposing Ganges iron gates together on August 24 1964, to have the opportunity to meet up and walk through them again 60 years to the day has been one of the greatest highlights of my retirement," said Bernard, who organised the reunion.

He went on to serve his nation for 25 years, retiring as a Chief Communications Yeoman, serving in Singapore (HMS Loch Fada) and aboard HMS Hermes in the Falklands.

"We were all 15 when we left home to commence our naval training. At Ganges, we learnt the basics of seamanship, a solid grounding in our different trades, while also cramming in school lessons in maths, English, navigation and naval history.

"The swimming and sports training was intensive and being able to step back inside the now-Grade-II-listed swimming pool brought memories flooding back."

The site is part way through a major £130m redevelopment by Wavensmere Homes and Galliard Homes which will see more than 303 energy-efficient houses and apartments constructed when finished. Some already are – and inhabited – bring life back to the Ganges site for the first time in nearly five decades. In time, amenities such as shops will be added, public open spaces and play areas.

Central to the redevelopment is making use of several original Ganges buildings and structure which are being either preserved or revamped and brought back into use.

The 142ft iron, steel and timber mast which became the symbol of the establishment has recently been overhauled specialist restorers and painstakingly refurbished on site. It still sends shivers down the spine six decades later.

"It was compulsory that all recruits had to climb the mast as far as the half-moon, which is about 120 feet up," explained Nigel, who served in the RN until 1972.

"All those that were scared were given a little help of a hard broom up your backside. All of us here for the Drake 39 Mess reunion took part in the filmed ceremonial manning of the mast



in 1965, with Bernard trained as a reserve 'button boy'."

Terrifying though climbing the mast was for many a Ganges boy, it was a trip to the base's dentist which was even more fearful for Nigel.

"Having been to my local dentist prior to joining, I thought that I was all clear and needed no treatment. Unfortunately not! My civvy street fillings did not reach the service standards, so the dentist then proceeded to remove and replace them," he said.

"As my appointment was late afternoon, they had run out of cocaine so this was done without any anaesthetic. I was only 15."

In addition to the swimming and diving pool, the veterans also inspected Nelson Hall – a former drill hall – which is set to be restored and redeveloped to create a potential public library, meeting hall, and large café.

The Drake 39s thoroughly enjoyed the chance to step back in time – and were delighted that making use of their old haunts is fundamental to the next chapter of the Shotley Gate story.

"We are all so grateful to the team at Wavensmere for making our dreams come true with this trip down memory lane, while most of the abandoned training base is still out of bounds and awaiting redevelopment," said Bernard.

"I am especially thrilled that their passion and knowledge of the living history here is meticulously shaping their redevelopment strategy. The six of us are all very motivated to stay fit and healthy, so that we can return in years to come when all the restoration work is complete."



Choirs rise to national challenge

DEMONSTRATING her flexibility and dexterity (which you can see) and her singing ability (which you can't hear in this medium) is military wife Lizzie McWhirter.

She turned to ballet when the gauntlet was laid down to members of the Military Wives Choir for the community singers' annual fundraising push.

Between the beginning of July and September, the members of all 72 choirs are set a '72' challenge, either individually or in teams – e.g. wingwalking for 7.2 minutes, running or walking 72 miles – to bolster the charity's coffers.

Lizzie, who's married to long-serving Royal Navy chaplain James (whose drafts include Collingwood, Devonport and Culdrose and now Northwood) is one of two members of the Cottesmore MWC with a Senior Service connection.

Although the base at Cottesmore has closed (it was home to the Harriers of the Naval Strike Wing in the second half of the Noughties), the choir continues.

It's a tri-Service affair (like all the choirs), serving military personnel/families in the Rutland/Oakham/Stamford area open not just to wives/partners, but also mothers, daughters, sisters and grandmas.

She champions the impact of the choirs, the importance of music and wellbeing and generally acts as an ambassador for the MWC cause...

... which means getting stuck in on its main fundraising event.

The inaugural 72 Challenge raised just over £5,500; this year the collective choirs were hoping to double that figure.

Lizzie chose 72 ballet moves (tendu and grand battements) while singing Stronger Together (the title track from the choir's second album back in 2012) as her contribution.

The money raised by the three month drive will be shared among the choirs to help attend events, drum up new members or fund new songs/arrangements and generally support one another.

You can show your support for the MWC and its challenge at www.militarywiveschoirs.org/support-us

Tot Time is dit time...

IS THERE someone in your life that just will not shut up about being in the Navy?

Then the Royal Naval Association's 'Tot Time' might be the place to direct them... to give you peace... and let them recount dits you've heard 1,000 times to a new audience.

Beginning at 6.30pm every Saturday, it's a Zoom meeting for matelots to chat, reminisce and relive their salad days under the White Ensign.

You don't need to be a member of the RNA to log into the virtual dit spinning (although they'd appreciate it if you did join), and they'd love to hear feedback if you do dial in.

Visit www.royal-naval-association.co.uk/virtual-events for the link to Tot Time.



MUSICIANS GATHER FOR NATIONAL COMP



YOUNGSTERS gathered from across the UK for the long-awaited return of the National Band Competition.

The event returned for the first time since the Tower of London hosted the occasion in 2019.

The historic Old Royal Naval College in Greenwich provided an equally stunning stage for seven of Sea Cadets' finest bands who had travelled from around the UK, having impressed at their regional contests.

The first performances of the day came from the solo buglers and drummers, who overcame any nerves to set a terrific standard.

Able Cadet George (pictured below) of Padstow Unit delivered a near faultless demonstration of his skills to win the Silver Bugle Trophy, showing remarkable control of his instrument and impeccable musical awareness.

Among the drummers, Able Cadet Sam (pictured below) of Ellesmere Port Unit stood out for his accuracy and technique in winning the Ali Bowen-Davies Drum.

Sam was later honoured to deliver another solo performance.

He said: "As well as winning the solo drummer competition, another highlight was

leading the March Past and representing North West Area after the rest of the band had to leave early.

"Marching past the Dias filled me with excitement and pride."

The arena competition followed the soloists, with the bands determined to bring all the hours of practice together in their displays for the spectators, judges and VIP guests – including Commander Maritime Reserve and Cadets, Commodore Jo Adey RN.

Each band demonstrated a level of teamwork and coordination they could be really proud of, but in the end, the musical impact generated by the South West Area Massed Band was simply unbeatable, as they powered to the Eason-Bassett Goblet for Best All Round Band with the Best Musical Display, Best Marching Display and Best Corp of Drums.

A major contribution to this team effort came from Torpoint Unit's Leading Cadet Chris, 16, who was also named Best Drum Major.

"It was a pleasure to perform and win the national band competition in such a scenic venue as Greenwich," he said.

"The day was not without a hitch, as the position to march

on was not where expected, but after quickly pacing out the new route and briefing the band, the issue was rectified.

"The last-minute hurdle meant the pay-off of winning best drum major was all the more rewarding."

The band was clearly inspired by the standards set by Chris and his brother, Petty Officer Cadet Will, 17, who won Best Musician and Best Original Composition (pictured below).

Will said: "The 2024 National Band Competition at Greenwich has to be a highlight of my cadet career."

"Having come second at the last competition in 2019, to be able to better that result by winning the overall band prize, as well as best musician, makes the band's countless hours of practice all worth it."

As well as a core of Torpoint musicians, the South West Area Massed Band also featured members from Sutton Coldfield, Weston-Super-Mare, Chippenham, Llanelli, Telford, Redditch & Bromsgrove, Fishguard, Nuneaton & Bedworth, Swansea and Padstow Units.

The South West Area was also well represented by Bridgwater Unit's band (also featuring

cadets from Burnham and Yeovil Units), which took bronze medals overall, along with the City of Plymouth Cup for Best Dressed Band.

Both bands were pushed hard by a commendable display from the Ellesmere Port Unit Band, who finished as runners-up despite having the smallest band – with their one bugler, Ordinary Cadet George, 15, single-handedly winning the Best Bugle Section Trophy.

"My experience at national band competition was unreal," said George.

"Seeing bands competing from up and down the country was really special."

"When my name was called to come forward to receive my trophy, I was filled with pride at representing the unit and town. It is something I will always remember."

The National Band Competition was a brilliant showcase for all the musical talent being developed by Sea Cadets, with many of these young people only taking up an instrument after joining.

BZ to all the participants at Greenwich, and to the outstanding efforts of the volunteers who have supported their musical journeys.



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Cadets explore UK waterways



THE Sea Cadets Offshore Fleet continued its annual journey around the UK, with three of its five vessels spending much of the summer navigating the waters of Scotland, Northern Ireland, the North of England and Wales.

TS John Jerwood kicked off by participating in recruitment events near Anglesey before heading north to visit Belfast.

The ship undertook a challenging first: transiting through the very tight passage of the nine-mile Crinan Canal, with minimal clearance between the 15 locks.

Cadets and crew received lots of attention and well-wishes during a six-hour effort, with canal staff suggesting that TS John Jerwood was the biggest vessel to ever navigate the canal – a testament to the skill of the ship's company.

"It was an honour to be welcomed aboard TS John Jerwood for the first voyage through the canal," said AC Cody, 16, of Whitehaven Sea Cadets.

"It was an incredible experience to learn the fundamentals of navigation and see the beautiful scenery of the Scottish Highlands."

Whitehaven's AC Connor, 14, said his favourite part was "expanding my knowledge with the onboard engineer who taught me more about the systems onboard."

"The cadets at Whitehaven unit love to go offshore," added Whitehaven Unit's Officer in Charge, CPO (SCC) Maureen McEuan.

"They really see it as the pinnacle of their time in Sea Cadets – it gives them an opportunity to visit new places and experience a completely different way of life that can never be replicated in a unit."

The fleet's flagship, TS Royalist, timed its arrival in Aberdeen perfectly to coincide with the city's Festival of the Sea.

This event also served as a countdown to Aberdeen hosting the Tall Ships Race in July next year. This major occasion will bring together up to 100 of the world's largest sail training vessels, with TS Royalist poised to take a prominent place amongst the fleet.

The visit provided an excellent opportunity for local council members and key event sponsors to

witness the impact of sail training and see the Sea Cadets in action. After Aberdeen, TS Royalist transited north through the Caledonian Canal then headed to Belfast before returning to more southerly waters.

Among those enjoying the voyage were two very happy cadets from Middlesbrough Unit.

"Sailing through the Caledonian Canal was an unforgettable journey, blending the thrill of exploration with the joy of making new friends," said Leading Cadet Lacey, 17.

"The voyage helped me develop and improve my Seamanship skills as well as my communication and teamworking".

TS Jack Petchey charted a similar course, following a few weeks behind and taking in the spectacular settings of Loch Ness and Ben Nevis.

"A highlight was going through Loch Ness," said AC Tigerlilly, 16, of Stonehaven Unit.

"For me Sea Cadets is not just about the ocean but being able to see the beautiful scenery of the world in a unique way. The voyage helped me to work on my independence, gain a nautical skill set and work towards my Gold DofE."

After this memorable voyage, the crew of TS Jack Petchey began to prepare for a series of training sessions to equip Sea Cadets volunteers with the skills needed to help cadets like these to get the most out of their offshore experience.

In the meantime, the yachts, TS Sir Stelios and TS City of London, spent much of the summer exploring the Channel Islands and preparing for the Association of Sail Training Organisation's (ASTO) annual race.

This year's race, an ambitious course from Guernsey to Poole, was held in honour of the 200th anniversary of the formation of the RNLI. Prior to the race, the combined ASTO fleets were greeted by HRH, the Duchess of Edinburgh.

The race got underway despite incredibly light winds, which meant that it took the yachts over 36 hours to complete the 150km route – providing a real test of endurance for the cadets taking part.

The yachts finished fourth and fifth in their class, with only a few minutes separating the two Sea Cadets vessels.



New experiences and qualifications as Cadets volunteer at camps

THE school holidays brought the return of some fantastic summer camps and activity weeks delivered by Sea Cadets volunteers at area and district level.

Thanks to their hard work and preparation, hundreds of young people were able to accelerate their development in exciting new surroundings – gaining new experiences, qualifications and promotions.

A great summer camp for Eastern Area Sea Cadets saw 145 cadets learn new skills and make friends during a week of adventure at HMS Raleigh in Devon.

As well as learning about mechanical engineering with Area Officer Cdr Sara Collen RN, and leadership with the Royal Navy Engagement Team, the highlight of the week was being able to get on the water in such prestigious surroundings, supported by 81 dedicated adult volunteers.

"At Eastern Area Summer Camp we strive very hard to give all the cadets at camp an opportunity to attend a range of afloat activities, including sailing, powerboating and rowing," says Eastern Area Training

Officer Lt Cdr (SCC) Sean Stevens RNR.

"The cadets absolutely love coming and boating from Jupiter Point, where they get to see what the Royal Navy does and feel like they're part of it."

Lots of new promotions were earned during the week while qualifications were awarded in everything from Mountain Biking to Adventure Training, with several new sailors gaining their RYA Youth Sailing Level 1 and 2.

At the other end of the country, Noreastlancs District Sea Cadets enjoyed a brilliant week of adventure at Port Edgar Boat Station at Queensferry in Scotland.

"My two days of keelboating was such an amazing experience," said AC Melissa, 14, of Wigan Unit.

"I got to learn the parts of this boat, how to rig the boat, and most importantly, how to sail the boat – I even got the opportunity to go race sailing."

"Thanks to the instructors and all the staff for one of the best camps I have ever been on."

Wigan Unit's LC William, 16, added: "The Trinity 500rowing course taught us everything from the process of how to launch the boat to what issues are presented by the tide."

"After a day of theory we moved on to the practical part, where we learnt the orders and how to come alongside. On the water, the instruction was amazing and by the last day we were able to coxswain a boat with supervision."

As well as the water-based activities, which also included powerboating, sailing and seamanship, cadets had the chance to gain new skills and qualifications in catering and first aid – all against the spectacular backdrop of the Forth Road Bridge, Forth Bridge (rail) and Queensferry Crossing.

"It was amazing to see cadets experiencing some of the boating activities they've never done before," said Sgt Angle.

"I had the chance to visit all training serials and saw outstanding achievements by all the cadets."



OAR INSPIRING AS KAYAKERS MAKE HISTORY

THE Royal Navy have won the Freestyle Kayak Inter-Services competition for the first time in history.

Over 40 competitors from the Armed Forces took part in the event, three of whom (two RAF and one Army) are on the elite athlete programme.

Despite their fierce competition, the Royal Navy managed to outscore overall and claim individual bronze medals in the Extreme Slalom (Toby Evans) and Freestyle (Caleb Newsome and Charlotte Fife).

Team member and Royal Navy Paddlesport Association (RNPA) Performance Coach & Committee member, Lieutenant Commander Oliver Taylor-Wood said: "This is the first ever win by the Royal Navy in a sport discipline



which requires substantial prior experience in paddlesport to be able to compete, you must be able to paddle on whitewater before you can learn freestyle moves.

"We also frequently struggle comparatively to other services in releasing enough personnel for training and competition, emphasising the dedication from across the team to this year's Inter-Service success."

The RNPA team of 14 was the largest inter-service team fielded in paddlesport for some time and shows the results of a tangible uptake in whitewater kayaking across the Royal Navy over the past 24 months.

The activity has been supported by both Adventurous Training (AT) and Sport funding and will hopefully continue to be supported



going forward.

Oliver added: "There is a real opportunity to become a 'service powerhouse' on the inter-service stage in Whitewater, Freestyle and new Olympic Extreme Slalom disciplines with the right infrastructure and support in place.

"The success is almost certainly a result of RNPA/AT/Sport collaboration through Project Rapid whitewater development over the past 18 months (including Ex Rapid Rhone, Ex Rapid Oetz, Ex Rapid Trywern and Ex Rapid Zambezi) and shows the sport benefits of pragmatically linking AT and sport funding and activity through paddlesport."

If you want to get involved, contact your local PTI/ATI or get in touch for more details.

MICKY WITH THE NOUSE IN PARIS

ROYAL Navy officer Lieutenant Commander Micky Norford has just returned from officiating the boxing at the Paris Olympics.

The Olympic Games are the pinnacle of sport, but not just for the athletes who train for years to be selected to compete for their country.

Those who officiated at any of the 32 sports at this year's Games must also operate at the highest level - including Micky.

After a naval career spanning 37 years - in which he was the UK Armed Forces Boxing Champion - Micky took some time off from his Civil Service role as Ships Facilities Manager based at Semaphore Tower in Portsmouth to bring his boxing expertise to the Paris Olympics.

A veteran official from the Tokyo Games and a key member of the local organising team involved in delivering the boxing element of the London 2012 Games, Paris was his third involvement in the Greatest Show on Earth.

He honed his technical skills as an official in the UK Armed Forces before sharing his knowledge in the civilian boxing community across the country as a Director for England and GB Boxing.

Micky is the highest qualified amateur boxing technical official in the country and the only English official to have taken charge of a major international tournament in more than 30 years when he was appointed as the Technical Delegate for the boxing competition in the 2022 Commonwealth Games.

At the Paris Games, he was appointed as the Deputy to the Technical Delegate where he was responsible for ensuring that all activity in and around the ring was carried out in accordance with the rules of Olympic boxing.

Inside the ring he looked for anything that might have been out of the ordinary, ensuring that neither boxer got an advantage over the other by using illegal procedures or practices.

Outside the ring, he made sure that officials and support staff were carrying out their duties to the best of



their ability.

Micky said: "Being part of the Olympics is almost certainly the dream of every sportsperson at any level. Clearly only a very small minority ever realise that dream.

"Having been an international official for more than 20 years, reaching the very highest level as an international referee, I can tell you it is equally as difficult getting to the Games as an official.

"You must be at the top of your game, know the rules inside out and more importantly be able to apply them fairly, consistently, and correctly. I have no doubt

that my many years of working within the Ministry of Defence both in the navy and as a civil servant have been extremely valuable in being able to carry out my Olympic duties in a fair and even-handed way.

"The Ministry of Defence and the Armed Forces have been incredibly supportive to me and all those able to participate in elite level sport - not just athletes but also elite level officials.

"I truly believe that sport played at a higher level brings so much to service life by providing genuine role models, while adding real value to an organisation or unit."

THUNDER CRACKS AS SHOOTERS TAKE AIM

THE Royal Navy shooters entered the Surrey County Open, held at Worplesdon Rifle Club just a few miles from Bisley Shooting Grounds.

The competition taking place was between 50 and 100 yards, with 40 scoring shots counting at each distance.

Seeing the weather getting worse during the match, thunder crackling overhead and lightning adding to the day, didn't deter the Royal Navy Shooters.

With competitors coming across the Surrey County and beyond it was a close competition with ever-changing conditions of heavy rain and brief periods of sunshine.

After having a successful time at the NSRA National Meeting, PO Robynne Brown came first place in competitions one and two with a first place overall in competition three.

To add to the success, the Royal Navy

Small-bore Shooting Club (RNSSC) achieved third place in the Club Pairs Match with PO Robynne Brown and Lt Neil Umpleby making the pair. These pairs could be made up by shooters in any classes from A to D.

The day also saw one of the Royal Navy's newer shooters Lt Dominic Berry take part in his first outdoor range competition and his first time competing on 50 and a 100-yard targets.

Dominic said: "It was great to get the experience at Worplesdon, very different to the Lord Roberts Electronic range, having to rely on using a scope to spot your shots on the target. I really enjoyed it and want to do it again."

The Small-bore team continues to look to compete in various matches, raising the wider awareness of the Royal Navy in competitive events and improving its squad experience and shooting abilities.



BOOTNECKS
TRAIN WITH
TOP COACHES

ROYAL Marines Brazilian Jiu Jitsu fighters travelled to London to train with some of the top coaches in the UK.

After settling in to the accommodation at RMR London and setting out mats in the main hall, the team kicked off the weeks training at Roger Gracie's Headquarters in Hammersmith for a private seminar with full time coach Alex Smith.

The Roger Gracie academy is world renowned for its exceptional competitors, as well as its enjoyable and relaxed atmosphere to train.

The following day began with a seminar hosted at RNR London with two of the top coaches within the UK; London Grapple Head Mixed Martial Art Coach, Mat Inman, and London Grapple Co-owner Aidan Woodhouse.

With just a few hours rest in the afternoon to explore London, the team headed to Submission Grappling Club, an elite dojo run out of south-west London.

Submission Grappling is home to acclaimed Jiu Jitsu competitors Silviu Nastasa and Eoghan O'Flanagan. Still



highly active in the competitive scene, Eoghan is regarded as one of the best grapplers globally at his weight class.

The team had an evening of hard sparring and benefited greatly from the combined knowledge of 40 years+ grappling from the coaches.

In the morning, the team headed to Richmond to the club Elevate, which has a great facility and coaching style, offering a change in pace for the team to focus on positional sparring and round.

In the evening the team headed to the HQ of London Grapple in order to attend the class of head coach Ross Nicholls, a legend in UK Martial Arts who is at the cutting edge of the latest BJJ techniques.

For the final training session of the week, the team headed to one of the newest clubs in London and the hot spot for competitive athletes to train, Los Banditos Grappling Club.

This rounded off the week focused on exposing the Royal Marines to some of the best athletes, coaches, and clubs within the game.

The feedback from the team reflected the skill development learned within the week, the enthusiasm for training with high-calibre athletes, and the excitement and interest in future training camps.

BIKER BRIAN FIGHTS
HARD FOR A POINT

ROYAL Navy Royal Marines Road Racing Team rider Brian Fuidge's account of Round 5 of the International Road Racing Championships at Horice - Czech Republic...

The most anticipated race of the season, with its dash through the town and the twisty roads of the local woods, to the exuberant and effervescent nature of the fans. All started with the 13-hour drive from the port in Holland.

Well, we arrived in time to get our spot in the paddock before heading off to find the accommodation. However, we did have to travel round parts of the track to get to the accom, and boy was this an eye opener. After watching hours of onboard videos, it was clear that they did no justice to the elevation changes and twistiness of the track. This was going to take some learning, and some hold your breath moments.

Day One

Well up early and off to the track to meet up with fellow brit rider Michael Mace who had saved us space. Quick dash to get the paddock setup done and the bike out to get checked over. Due to the long day before we were behind our usual routine, but we were set up in good time. It was then time to go see what the full track was like and try work out some markers. Pit Crew was off to the shops for supplies and myself and Mike were off on the pit bikes to investigate.

Needless to say, the first lap had both of us head scratching and aghast at what the challenge was. Mike has done the Manx GP (Isle of Man) a few times and even he was commenting on the similarities, saying that only the length was the difference between courses. It took some time, but we got our start points and headed back in to get the bikes ready for technical control and the Rider Parade.

Once through technical control we had time for the team to head into town so they could meet us at the parade end point, and always it was a very crowded affair. The end point was in an old castle courtyard, which made for a great atmosphere with the usual poster signing and photos with the fans.

Qualifying Day

So with the nature of this event there was no practice laps, straight to qualifying. This meant I had to find my feet quickly, with the memory of not qualifying for the race in Chimay still fresh, I had to work quickly. Mike and I went out together to try help each other.

Heading down the hill into the first three corners soon showed we had not got out markers anywhere near what we needed.

Hitting all the manhole covers and almost running wide into the bails, meant the first three laps were a calibration. The parts of the track through the town proved the easiest to learn, with the woods and super tight turns taking loads of brain power to figure out.

Ten laps done and we were back in the pits to try and take in what had just happened.

After some video analysis and looking at the data we made some gearing changes, I gave my head a shake so I could be ready for the second qualifying. I was five seconds short of qualifying, and on top of that there were 32 grid slots and 36 trying to qualify.

Session 2 got started and I was in a better place, however, six mins in and unfortunately one of the riders had an incident and the session was red flagged. This meant we were brought to pitlane in the searing heat to wait for the restart.

After 20 mins we were good to go, and this was it. Although I'd taken five seconds off my first session, everyone else had improved too.



So, time to make sure the new rubber was used to good effect. Keeping an eye on the pit board each lap I was improving until I saw that there was only 20 seconds left of the session so knew I was on my last lap and had to push.

On getting back to the paddock it was a wait to see what we had gotten. Overall, we had made up 12 seconds from the first time out which fits in with our usual progression. Then we got the news: We had made the grid! Wow that was hard work.

Race Day

Race one was also the first race of the event. Not my best time of the day for getting up to speed, but we rolled out and got set to go.

Mike had qualified directly ahead of me so the plan was to follow and get dragged along so I could improve my times and hopefully grid position.

Lights out and a good start, into the first corner and wow this was going to be tight. One knee on the bike next to me and their knee on the floor with elbows rubbing wheels, before flip flopping to the other side where the favour was returned.

Heading into the town it was side by side with buildings whipping by. Unfortunately, I missed a gear coming out the town so lost some ground

and by the time we made it to the start line I was battling with one other ride at the back.

With a best time of 2'32" I finished 28th which I was not happy with, but with the strength of the field and having never been to the track before it was a good place to finish.

Race two and we were awake and raring to go. The lights went out and it was a slightly worse start as the front wheel came up and going into the first corner I got squeezed to the back.

Into the second corner a rider was stood up and headed off road, which lead to a red flag (rider was ok). This meant another scorching wait in the pitlane for the race to be restarted.

The second start was much better, and I was in a battle for the next three laps, but I was stuck in a rut and just getting frustrated so struggled to improve. Finishing in 26th but with corrections we got our second point of the season.

What a place and the track invasion from the fans made this a very special place. Thanks to the whole team for all their efforts and the banter. Next is the final round in Frohburg Germany.

If you want to get involved with the team either on two wheels on our pit crew, get in touch via social media @RNRMRRT or RNRMRRT@hotmail.com.

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Tributes paid to consummate professional

"A CONSUMMATE professional and a shining light" – that is how helicopter pilot Rhodri Leyshon has been described by colleagues.

The 31-year-old aviator died when his Merlin Mk4 ditched in Lyme Bay while conducting training with carrier HMS Queen Elizabeth on September 4.

All three personnel from 846 Naval Air Squadron – based with the Commando Helicopter Force at RNAS Yeovilton – were recovered, but Lt Leyshon was pronounced dead.

The keen rugby player had 14 years in the Royal Navy to his name – four in Wales URNU before commissioning as an officer four years later.

He earned his wings with the CHF in 2018, since when he has served around the globe – including the Caribbean, USA and Norway – with the front-line battlefield Merlin squadron, 845 NAS.

The final 18 months of his career were spent imparting his knowledge and experience to new CHF aviators.

He was one of the Force's most trusted and highly capable aircraft captains and instructors.

"Rhod was so immeasurably loved by his parents, siblings, partner, friends and family and he was devoted to them. Our lives will never be the same without him," his family said in tribute.

"We are all so very proud of the talented, passionate, strong and loyal man he was. We will always have him in our hearts. Our wonderful boy.

Colonel Mark Johnson, CHF's Commanding Officer, said the Force – which provides aerial support to the Royal Marines on operations and exercises – had "lost one of our family".

He continued: "Lieutenant Leyshon was a consummate professional and a shining light with a bright future.

"He epitomised the Jungle spirit and his loss leaves a huge hole in all our hearts."

Investigations into the accident are ongoing.



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■ Entries are free to non-commercial organisations. Items pertaining to commercial work, books and publications for profit can only appear as paid-for advertising.

■ The Editor reserves the right to edit or refuse publication of submitted notices.

Deaths

Herbert (Bert) Draisey: Born in Swansea Bert served as an Army Cadet during the war manning a Bofors gun in the Mumbles during the Swansea Blitz and could have become an Army officer but decided to join the Royal Navy as a Stoker. Bert served onboard HMS Vanguard 1947-49 doing work ups in the Mediterranean ready for a royal tour of Africa by King George VI which was cancelled due to the King's ill health and later saw action in the Korean war when the ship was fired upon by Chinese junks killing the aft gun crew. Bert

served seven years in the Royal Navy and five in the Reserves and also served onboard HMS Cockade 1951-1953 spending two years in Korea, Japan, Hong Kong, Singapore and China. Bert died on July 3, aged 95.

Robin 'George' Thompson, CPO. Served from 1958 to 1995 on HMS Greatham, Lion, Victorious, Berry Head, Ariadne, Rhyl and Dido. Had strong links to the RBL. Died August 14, aged 85.

Sheila Davies, WRNR. Former member of Wansbeck and District Branch of the RNA. Died

August 24, aged 82.

Michael Wayne Rowe, former CPOMEM Submariner. Served February 4 1964 to March 31 1993. Extensive service in diesel boats including Onslaught, Rorqual, Alliance and Oberon. Also an instructor at the SETT in Gosport. Died September 6.

Leonard 'Len'Barrowdale, Fleet Chief (WO). Joined RN in 1956 as electrical artificer. Served for 45 years, initially on HMS Hermes, but then on many RN Submarines. Died September 14, aged 83

Ask Jack

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

Ray Lavall, ex LMEM
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

Hugh Kepple Harry Jeans: I am researching my great-grandfather who served as an engineer on Royal Navy submarines during World War 2. I know he served on HMS Sybil. I would love to hear from anyone who can help me.

Noah Studeman
Noahstudeman@gmail.com

HMS Hurworth: I possess a 1:50 scale model of HMS Hurworth, scratch-built, motorised, ready for powered sailing. It is 4 feet long and lovingly made. If anyone is interested in acquiring the model could they email me on robhutch7@gmail.com

HMS Gloworm: Proposed Norwegian memorial (Navy News June 2024). I have had a personal interest in researching this gallant ship's action for almost 70 years. Anyone who is also of a like mind is asked to contact me, as I am in contact with the Norwegian project organiser.

Chris Green
Green943@btinternet.com

Warship World: 162 copies of the magazine from 1985-2016 in mint condition seeking an appreciative home ideally in the Havant-Waterloo-Portsmouth area. 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

Reunions

HMS Troubridge (Final Commission) Association 1966-69. The 2024 reunion will be at The Queens Hotel, Osborne Road, Southsea, Portsmouth PO5 3LJ October 7-11. Contact Bryan Pace at Romft1@GMail.com.

HMS Mermaid: The 2024 reunion takes place at the Holiday Inn, Portsmouth, on October 25. For details contact Phil 'Nick' Nichols on philnichols21@gmail.com

Royal Navy Photographic Branch: – Week-end Reunion at The Doubletree By Hilton Hotel, Bristol from October 4 to 7. All 'Ex & Serving Photos' plus wives/partners & guests are very welcome to help celebrate 105 years since the Branch was formed. Meet and greet on Friday evening. Saturday, visits and tours around Bristol City & SS Great Britain. Saturday evening consists of a nautical extravaganza experience, gala dinner and traditional Up Spirits enactment, in the Southville Suite followed by dancing & entertainment. For further details please contact Social Secretary: Danny du Feu, email: ddf.photography@gmail.com; Tel: 07711 083465.

HMS Undaunted, Eagle and Yarmouth Association: The final reunion will take place from Friday 25 October to Monday 28 October 2024 at the Derby Mickleover Hotel, Etwell Road, Derby DE3 0XX. Sadly this will be the final reunion due to dwindling numbers. Cost for 3 nights is £420 for

a double room or £140 per night. Further details available from Alan (Whiskey) Walker by email whiskey666@outlook.com Tel: 01268 548041. Come and join us for the final bash.

HMS Medway Queen. Are you connected with the Medway Queen – one of the last large ships involved with the Dunkirk evacuation still with us? The team lovingly restoring the paddle steamer want to celebrate her 100th birthday this year by involving every one who has played a part in bringing her back to life. 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 or Medway Queen Preservation Society, Gillingham Pier, Pier Approach Road, Gillingham, Kent, ME7 1RX.

Friends of HMS Eagle. Reunion weekend will be held at the Inn at Charlestown, Fife Friday Oct 25 to Sun 27. All Commissions, plus wives/partners & guests welcome to help celebrate 52 years since HMS Eagle was decommissioned in Portsmouth. Meet & Greet Friday; Saturday, Visits & Tours around Charlestown, Dunfermline & Edinburgh.

Nautical Gala Dinner & traditional Up Spirits enactment and followed by dancing and entertainment in the ballroom Saturday evening. For details contact Danny du Feu, Email: ddf.photography@gmail.com. Mob: 07711 083465.

HMS Lowestoft Association: The 2024 reunion will take place at the Queens Hotel, Southsea PO5 3LJ on Tues/Wed 15/16 October. All who served in Lowestoft during her RN service (1961-1985) are welcome (including wives/partners/guests). Bookings direct with Events at the Queens Hotel on 02392 822466.

For further details and a booking form please email: admin@hmslowestoft.uk

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.

T-boaters interested should contact Richard

'Figgy' Figgins and Ian 'Tally Ho' Talbot at

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



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