



NAVY NEWS

JANUARY 2026



HOME TIME

A SAILOR from HMS Dauntless is reunited with his family after the Carrier Strike Group returned to the UK following its eight-month deployment.

See pages 15-18

Picture: CPO Jay Allen

Inside: ■ Marines in Baltic ■ Farewell to HMS Lancaster ■ Pacific paradise





A NEW DAWN

ROYAL Marines launched covert boarding missions in the eastern Baltic Sea as they sharpened specialist skills ahead of operating with NATO in an entirely new way.

The Commandos are working towards fielding the UK Special Operations Maritime Task Group (SOMTG), which, from this year, will provide the alliance with elite troops able to deploy at extremely short notice to carry out missions such as recapturing vessels and oil rigs, as well as covert coastal raids to pave the way for allied amphibious landings.

Within the task group are a range of specialist teams drawn from across the Royal Navy and UK Commando Force who each bring unique skills to the equation – pilots, boarding teams, engineers and boat operators to name but a few.

To be able to validate that the SOMTG is ready for front-line duties with NATO's Allied Reaction Force, Plymouth-based 42 and 47 Commando carried out boarding drills, launching small boats from support ship RFA Lyme Bay, before a joint raiding operation with the British Army's 3 Ranger on Saaremaa, an island on Estonia's west coast.

"Exercise Baltic Dawn reaffirmed what Commando Forces have always stood for – the ability to strike unpredictably from the sea, anywhere, at any time," said Major

Adam Kidson, Officer Commanding SOMTG.

"What's different today is how we're evolving that timeless capability. By operating from a Royal Fleet Auxiliary platform and conducting complex Maritime Interdiction Operations, we've expanded our reach and flexibility.

"With the support of our maritime planners, we've shown that we can adapt to any platform and any mission – a hallmark of the Commando mindset. That spirit of adaptability and relentless pursuit of excellence is what has ensured we're ready for NATO's evaluation in January – and ready for the challenges that lie ahead."

The deployment – named Exercise Baltic Dawn – is the culmination of months of hard work to prepare the 150-strong SOMTG for the front line – the first time the Royal Marines have created a task group such as this.

The force has taken on a number of tests on their journey to be validated to deploy with the Allied Reaction Force from June, including cold weather training in Norway, intensive staff planning training, and workouts across the UK at Scraesdon Fort and Goonhilly Earth station in Cornwall and Spadeadam in Cumbria before heading to the Baltic to hone their Maritime Interdiction (military parlance for boarding operations)

skills.

The training off Estonia's coast is the latest of a series of smaller exercises under the banner of the much larger Tarassis.

Spread across a vast area (Norway, Latvia, Finland and the eastern Baltic) and embracing operations by land, sea and air, Exercise Tarassis is the most ambitious live activity by the Joint Expeditionary Force since it was established over a decade ago.

It is not confined to the Baltic – or even just the coastlines. Thousands of troops, marines, sailors and aircrew, and dozens of ships and aircraft are committed across the Arctic, North Atlantic and Scandinavia as well as the eastern Baltic.

JEF is formed by a coalition of 10 nations committed to the safety, security and prosperity of northern European waters, in particular the Scandinavian-Baltic region.

The Commandos carried out the raid with 3 Ranger, who will make up the Army's contribution to NATO's Allied Reaction Force, under the Special Operations Land Task Group.

"The Army Special Operations Brigade has been conducting activity across Estonia under Exercise Tarassis, demonstrating our commitment to supporting our NATO SOF allies in competition, crisis and conflict," said Officer Commanding Special Operations

Task Group B – who cannot be named for operational reasons.

"The Army Special Operations Brigade is part of the Army's Advance Force and a key responsibility for deployed Special Operations Land Task Groups is to support the Joint Force.

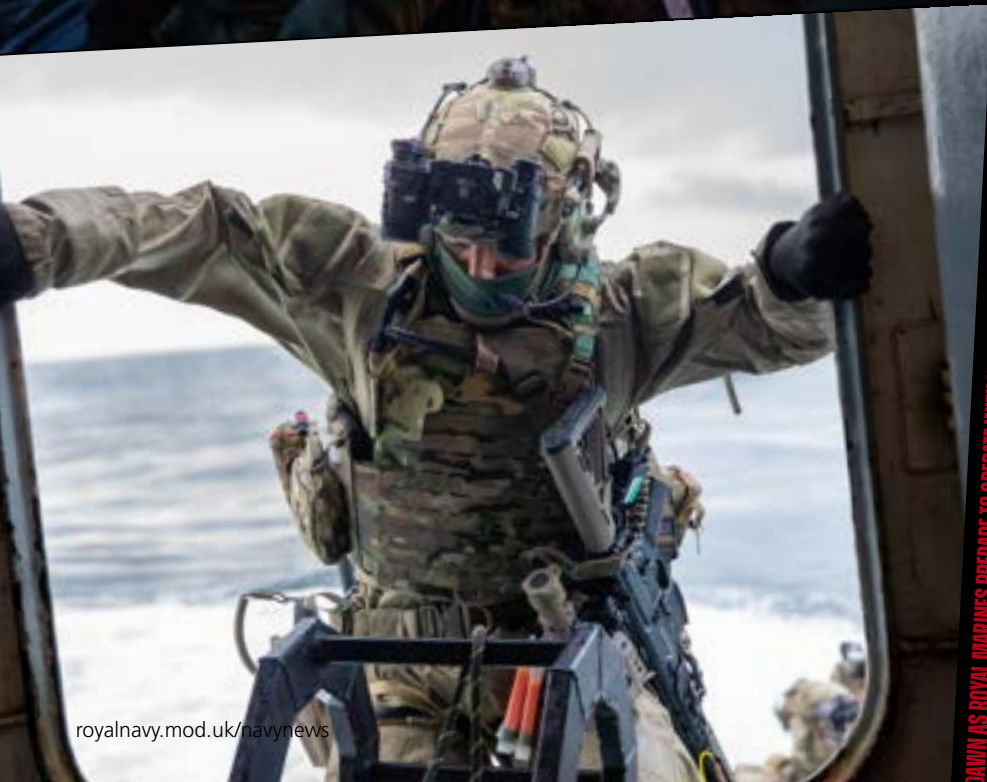
"Exercise Baltic Dawn provided an opportunity for a Special Operations Land Task Group to enable a Maritime Task Group infiltrating over the beach to successfully conduct a joint raid, with the Land Task Group collecting intelligence on the target prior to the link-up, securing the landing point, providing ground transportation to the target and then together conducting the assault."

Royal Marines recently completed another Tarassis exercise in the Arctic – testing their ability to carry out amphibious operations anywhere in northern Europe as part of notable allied military drills.

A 10-day workout in the Arctic fjords around Troms County in Northern Norway looked at how the UK's commandos – and Norwegian allies – can, in event of an attack or invasion, bring their leading troops to bear, protect them once they've landed ashore and, critically, keep them supplied for combat using traditional logistics and uncrewed technology.



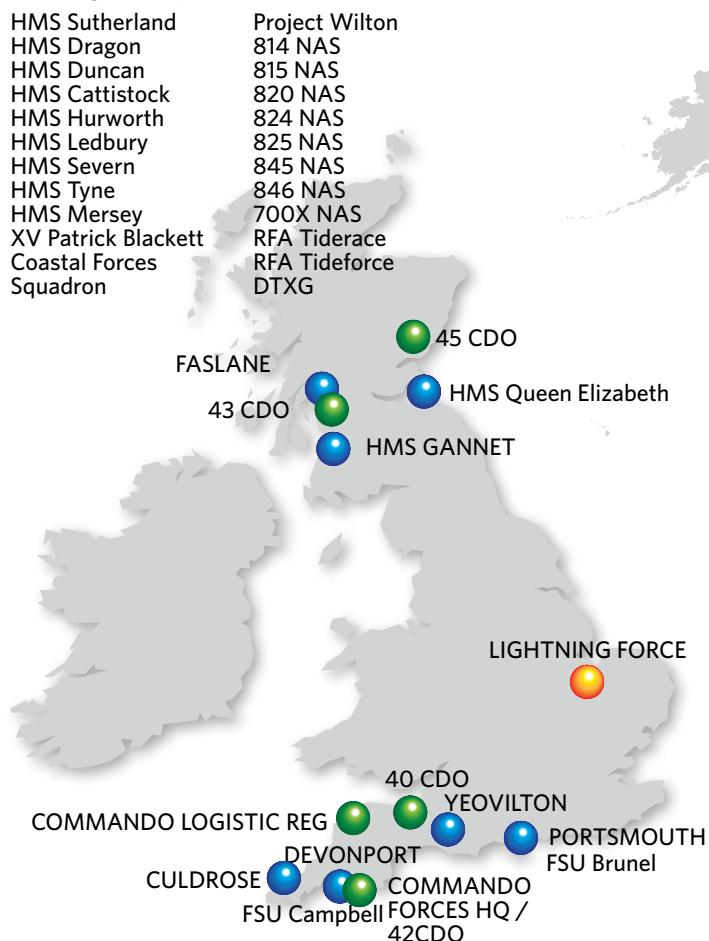
Imagery by: PO Phot Jim Gibson RNR



royalnavy.mod.uk/navynews



Training or on patrol around the UK



LEAD FIGHT WIN

WE MARK the start of 2026 with a look back at the Royal Navy's premier deployment of 2025 as the personnel and units returned from **Operation Highmast** (see pages 1, 15-18).

Led by **HMS Prince of Wales**, the Fleet Flagship returned to Portsmouth along with Type 45 destroyer **HMS Dauntless** (and the Norwegian frigate **HNoMS Roald Amudsen**. Royal Navy frigate **HMS Richmond** returned to Devonport while the air squadrons returned to **Culdrose**, **Yeovilton** and **RAF Marham**. There were emotional scenes as personnel, some of whom had been away since April, were reunited with their loved ones.

RFA Tidespring, which was part of the Carrier Strike Group for six of the eight phases, remains deployed and, following a successful visit to Cape Town, sailed to remote South Atlantic island St Helena (see page 13).

Marking the end of nearly 35 years of service was **HMS Lancaster** (see page 6) as she arrived in Bahrain for the final time. During her final three years in the Kingdom, the frigate intercepted seven illegal narcotic cargoes and was the first ship on taks in the Red Sea during heightened threat activity in 2023.

The Royal Navy's first crewless helicopter – **Proteus** – is one step from taking to the skies after completing successful trials on the ground (see page 13).

The construction of the first of three **Royal Fleet Auxiliary** support ships has begun at Appledore in North Devon (see page 25) where steel was cut for **RFA Resurgent**.

Over to the Baltic and **Royal Marines** launched covert boarding missions as they sharpened specialist skills ahead of operating with NATO in an entirely different way (see pages 2-3). The Commandos are working towards fielding the UK Special Operations Maritime Task Group later this year.

The Royal Navy carried out two interceptions in a fortnight of Russian vessels in UK waters (see page 5), including monitoring an intelligence-gathering ship. **HMS Somerset** shadowed Russian research ship Yantar in the North Sea, working with NATO allies.

Patrol ship **HMS Severn** was dispatched to monitor Russian Steregushchiy-class corvette RFN Stoikiy and tanker Yelnya off the UK coast.

Dutch and British pilots have completed intensive sorties over Salisbury Plain as they prepare to operate on NATO's northern flank together next year. (see page 9). Flying from Royal Naval Air Station Yeovilton in Somerset, aviators from the UK's **Commando Helicopter Force** (CHF) and Royal Netherlands Air Force's 860 Squadron launched missions that build on four years of training together as they prepare for a major allied Arctic exercise in 2026.

Traillblazing nurse **Abigail Wright** was hailed Defence's 'woman of the year' for championing the mental health of submariners (see page 20). The Leading Naval Nurse was deployed on HMS Prince of Wales and watched her moment of stardom on a livestream.

Royal Navy chefs and stewards scooped 44 awards for their expert cookery as they took on their counterparts from the RAF and Army in **Exercise Joint Caterer** (see page 11).

Finally, **Royal Marine Colonel Matt Churchward** had the honour of being deputy commander of **Pacific Partnership** (see pages 22-23) as the US-led naval force moved around nations and islands in the region, offering assistance, health care and delivering aid.

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

Warfighting Ready

1SL launches blueprint for Royal Navy

THE head of the Royal Navy has launched the RN Warfighting Ready Plan – the blueprint to sharpen the service's warfighting edge over the next four years.

General Sir Gwyn Jenkins revealed his vision at his annual Seapower Conference in London.

The conference also unveiled work on the ground-breaking Atlantic Bastion programme, which will make Britain more secure from Russian undersea threats in the North Atlantic through a transformation of the Royal Navy and its submarine-hunting capabilities.

Atlantic Bastion is in direct response to a resurgence in Russian submarine and underwater activity, including those of Russian spy ship Yantar around UK waters. UK Defence Intelligence has identified that Putin is currently modernising his fleet to target critical undersea cables and pipelines.

Atlantic Bastion will create an advanced hybrid naval force to defend the UK and NATO allies against evolving threats. It will enable the UK to find, track and, if required, act against adversaries with unprecedented effectiveness across vast areas of ocean.

"Our main effort is to urgently enhance our warfighting readiness across the Royal Navy," the First Sea Lord said.

"Our adversaries are challenging our reach, probing our resolve, testing our resilience and contesting our advantage at sea, in the air, across cyber, and into space.

"The pace of competition is unrelenting, but we will respond decisively to prove we are able to fight the whole Royal Navy.

"Over the next four years we will hone our ability to warfight with what we have and build for the future."

Atlantic Bastion will see ships, submarines, aircraft and unmanned vessels connected through AI-powered acoustic detection technology and integrated into a digital targeting web – a pioneering network of weapons systems that allow battlefield decisions for targeting enemy threats to be made and executed faster.

There has been huge appetite from industry, with combined MOD/industry seedcorn investment of £14 million already committed to testing and development. Twenty-six firms from the UK and Europe have submitted proposals to develop anti-submarine sensor technology, and



First Sea Lord General Sir Gwyn Jenkins hosted Defence Secretary John Healey and his Norwegian counterpart Tore O. Sandvik during a visit to HMNB Portsmouth; Right, the Russian vessel Yantar



20 companies from major to small and medium enterprises are already showcasing technology demonstrators, with public investment matched by private investment so far at a 4:1 ratio.

The next phase of the development and testing will see successful companies take forward development work from concept to frontline – with capabilities due to be deployed in the water this year, and further investment to accelerate and expand the programme to follow.

Defence Secretary, John Healey said: "People should be in no doubt of the new threats facing the UK and our allies under the sea, where

adversaries are targeting infrastructure that is so critical to our way of life.

"This new era of threat demands a new era for defence, and we must rapidly innovate at a wartime pace to maintain the battlefield edge as we deliver on the Strategic Defence Review.

"Our pioneering Atlantic Bastion programme is a blueprint for the future of the Royal Navy. It combines the latest autonomous and AI technologies with world-class warships and aircraft to create a highly advanced hybrid fighting force to detect, deter and defeat those who threaten us."



HMS Severn tracks RFN Stoikiy and tanker Yelnya off the UK coast



HMS Somerset shadows Yantar



HMS SEVERN AND SOMERSET DISPATCHED TO SHADOW RUSSIANS

THE Royal Navy carried out two interceptions in a fortnight of Russian vessels in UK waters – including monitoring an intelligence gathering vessel.

Plymouth-based HMS Somerset shadowed Russian research ship Yantar in the North Sea and kept watch round-the-clock for eight days as the vessel sailed northwards towards the Faroe Islands.

Type 23 frigate Somerset worked closely with NATO allies, employing a range of powerful sensors and radars to report on every move.

As Yantar lingered in the UK's wider waters, its crew directed lasers at the RAF P-8 pilots tracking it in a reckless and dangerous act. While tracking Yantar, Somerset and other civilian ships in the area experienced GPS jamming in a further demonstration of unprofessional behaviour, intended to be disruptive and a nuisance. HMS Somerset's combat capabilities were not affected.

HMS Somerset's Commanding Officer, Commander Matt Millyard said: "HMS Somerset has spent the last year operating in the North Atlantic, protecting the UK's Continuous at

Sea Deterrent, and defending the Exclusive Economic Zone.

"The Royal Navy always has a ship held at notice to conduct these missions and HMS Somerset has been called upon to shadow the Yantar on two occasions as it entered UK waters.

"In the most recent operation HMS Somerset, working alongside RAF maritime patrol aircraft, maintained 24-hour surveillance of the Yantar to provide evidence of their activities."

Patrol ship HMS Severn meanwhile was dispatched to monitor Russian Steregushchiy-class corvette RFN Stoikiy and tanker Yelnya off the UK coast, joining allies in a 24-hour shadowing operation as the Russian vessels sailed through the Dover Strait and westward through the English Channel.

Portsmouth-based Severn subsequently handed over monitoring duties to a NATO ally off the coast of Brittany, continuing to observe from a distance and remaining poised to react in the event of any unexpected activity.

The Russian ships passed through UK waters without incident and followed recognised

maritime routes.

Both operations are routine for the Royal Navy but are nonetheless essential for the continuing security of the UK.

Commander Grant Dalglish, HMS Severn's Commanding Officer, said: "This tasking shows the value of our patrol ships and reinforces the Royal Navy's close liaison with our NATO allies in safeguarding the British people and protecting the internationally recognised waterways.

"I'm immensely proud of the way the ship's company reacted to this activation, especially coming so quickly after a demanding period of regeneration and operational training."

HMS Severn has recently returned to front-line duties after extensive training and trials of new equipment in waters of the South Coast.

Following a brief visit to Zeebrugge in Belgium, the ship underwent two weeks of Operational Sea Training in October to be ready to rejoin the fleet.

Sailors were put through a range of emergencies and operational scenarios, from fires and floods to providing assistance to

other ships and rapid intelligence gathering.

"This has equipped us as a team to prepare for all eventualities we may face as a front-line unit, including escort operations," said Lieutenant Calum McGill, the ship's First Lieutenant.

"After two weeks of exercises we didn't think we'd do it for real so soon – but that's the exciting nature of Homeland Defence tasking."

Once her work shadowing the Russians was complete, Severn headed to Falmouth for a scheduled maintenance as they prepare for further operations.

This latest shadowing operation comes less than a month after HMS Duncan was activated alongside naval helicopters to watch the movements of Russian destroyer Vice Admiral Kulakov and frigate HMS Iron Duke was dispatched to monitor Russian Kilo-class submarine Novorossiysk.

It was the second time in 2025 Yantar was tracked by the Royal Navy. Back in January, HMS Somerset and HMS Tyne shadowed the research ship through the English Channel and Dover Strait.



ALWAYS WATCHING

After nearly 35 years of exceptional Royal Navy service Lancaster bows out

HMS LANCASTER arrived in Bahrain for the final time – ending one of the busiest and longest careers of any major British warship.

The frigate was draped with her 470ft paying-off pennant – a ribbon-like White Ensign whose length reflects her length plus 1ft for every 34 years of service – as she sailed into harbour.

She was greeted by a 34-gun salute and the Band of His Majesty's Royal Marines from HMS Collingwood in Fareham providing the appropriate musical accompaniment.

The 4,500-tonne warship powered down her engines after completing 4,097 days at sea and travelling 816,000 nautical miles – equivalent to 37½ times around the world or almost two return trips to the Moon.

Launched by Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II on the Clyde in 1990 and named after the Duke of Lancaster – a title held by the monarch – HMS Lancaster was commissioned into the Royal Navy in May 1992.

The late Queen remained a frequent visitor throughout the ship's service, attending key milestones and private visits. Her Majesty's sponsorship helped ensure Lancaster regularly made headlines, most notably in 2014 when she posed with nearly 200 sailors in a famous photograph on the ship's bow.

Based in Portsmouth for the vast majority of her career before transferring to Plymouth, HMS Lancaster spent her final three years operating from the UK Naval Support Facility in Bahrain, where she proved to be exceptionally effective on operations.

She was the first ship on task in the Red Sea during heightened threat activity in December 2023, and completed numerous narcotics seizures totalling around £150 million. Her most recent drug bust saw Royal Marines snipers disabling a fast boat from the ship's Wildcat helicopter.

Bringing Lancaster into Bahrain was Commander Sam Stephens. "A proud moment as the last Commanding Officer, putting HMS Lancaster alongside for the final time, marking an end to a long and illustrious history of operational success and links to the late Queen Elizabeth II," he said.

"This final period at sea has proved the ship continues to perform at the same exceptional standard as when she first commissioned, which stands as a testament, not only to this crew, but to every crew who have served in her over the past 34 years of distinguished service."

For her final arrival at the UK Naval Support Facility, Lancaster was greeted by Fleet Commander Vice Admiral Steve Moorhouse, who commanded the ship between 2011 and 2013, and the Royal Navy's senior officer in the Middle East, UK Maritime Component Commander Commodore Ben Aldous.

"Having had the privilege of commanding Lancaster myself, it is deeply poignant to be onboard for her final port entry after 34 years of outstanding service – almost double her original 18-year lifespan.

Her operational output has been exceptional, particularly during her final three years in the Middle East supporting allies and partners," Admiral Moorhouse said.

"I pay particular tribute to the ship's company for their professionalism and their families for their unwavering support as we prepare the ship for disposal and look to return personnel to the UK for Christmas."

The ship has played a big role in the life and career of Chief Petty Officer Jack Edwards-Lawlor who also served in her as a petty officer.

He's gone from being responsible for the diesel

engines to being the most senior marine engineer at his rank on board.

"The challenges that the marine engineer department have faced since I first joined during upkeep have been enormous, but each challenge has brought its own learning opportunity and I am immensely proud of my team for the part that they have played in keeping the propulsion system operational on the oldest Type 23 frigate in the fleet," he said.

"My favourite memory of Lancaster is when we were on operations in the High North in 2021 - a little different to our period of being deployed in the Gulf region.

"From entering the Arctic Circle and conducting the 'Blue Nose Ceremony', to seeing the natural beauties of the Northern Lights and the Norwegian Fjords, it is something that not many people outside the Royal Navy will have seen, and I am grateful to have been given the opportunity to experience it."

The fourth Type 23 frigate built for the Fleet, HMS Lancaster was designed to track hostile submarines as well as perform general duties around the globe. The bulk of the ship's active career has been spent either in the Caribbean or Middle East, interspersed with duties in the USA, South Atlantic, Arctic, Mediterranean and Baltic.

Throughout her service, HMS Lancaster achieved everything asked of her, with millions of pounds of illegal narcotics intercepted by her sailors and Royal Marines boarding teams on patrols across the world. Her duties ranged from counter-piracy operations and drug interdiction to protecting commercial shipping and evacuating civilians from war-torn Sudan.

The frigate also undertook some unusual taskings including escorting the Royal Yacht Britannia on one of her final winter tours of the Caribbean and accompanying the legendary liner QE2 on her final voyage into Dubai.

For a period, the ship also had a memorable mascot – a parrot named Sunny, donated by a national newspaper, who became known for her colourful language, film quotes and whistling the *Great Escape* theme, though she was on her best behaviour during royal visits. Sunny left the ship without replacement in 2005 for a new life in South Wales.

Throughout her life, the ship has been affiliated with both her namesake city of Lancaster and the RAF's Battle of Britain Memorial Flight, whose Lancaster bomber would fly over Portsmouth Harbour when the frigate sailed on or returned from deployment.

The final plans for Lancaster are to be confirmed and the majority of her crew were able to return home for Christmas.



Queen Elizabeth II poses with crew for a photograph on a visit in 2014

Among HMS Lancaster's career highlights:

- 1990 – Launched on the Clyde with Her Majesty The Queen present
- 1994 – Maiden deployment to the Caribbean, including escorting the Royal Yacht Britannia around the West Indies. Supported UN operations in Haiti to reinstate the president who had been deposed by a coup
- 1996-97 – Patrol of the South Atlantic
- 2001 – Enforced sanctions against Saddam Hussein's Iraq in the northern Gulf
- 2006 – Escorted the French Navy's carrier group led by FS Charles de Gaulle to the Indian Ocean for five months
- 2008-10 – Counter-piracy operations, capturing and disrupting Somali pirates off the Horn of Africa
- 2013 – Series of drugs busts on Caribbean patrol including two resulting in £155m illegal narcotics seized

- 2014 – Queen Elizabeth II posed on the bow for a unique ship's company photograph. First at sea trials with the Navy's new Merlin Mk2 and Wildcat helicopters
- 2020-21 – Extensive patrols in the Arctic, Norway and North Atlantic
- 2022 – Deployed to Bahrain to replace her sister ship HMS Montrose
- 2023-24 – Seized missile components and anti-tank missiles being smuggled. Helped evacuate civilians from Sudan amid widespread fighting and unrest. Safeguarded ships in both the Strait of Hormuz and Bab al Mandeb in the wake of the Israel-Gaza conflict
- 2023-25 – Intercepted seven illegal narcotic cargoes, preventing approx. £150 m drugs reaching the West
- 2025 – Provided air defence for UK and Coalition forces in the Gulf



ROYAL Navy specialists worked alongside French and Norwegian counterparts to test their ability to rescue stricken submarines during a two-week exercise in Scotland.

The NATO Submarine Rescue System (NSRS) and 150 expert personnel are poised at all times to deploy wherever in the world they are needed to provide a lifeline for submarine stranded beneath the waves.

Fifty divers and medics from the three nations headed to Loch Long near the Firth of Clyde, taking the system – including remote-controlled vehicle and crewed submersible Nemo – aboard auxiliary ship SD Northern River from Glasgow.

Once in the loch, the NSRS crew were tasked with a rescue mission, ultimately ensuring their equipment is safe to use and their skills are kept at the highest standard for their crucial operations.

The main focus was to launch, dive and recover the system's submarine rescue vehicle (SRV), Nemo, which can carry up to 12 people and is designed to bring submariners back to the surface and includes a chamber for safe decompression.

NSRS Operations Officer and Senior Rescue Element Commander, Commander Chris Baldwin, said: "These exercises are key to assuring the Fleet Commander that NSRS is operationally poised and available as a global submarine rescue capability; ready to respond and support the rescue of submariners wherever it may be needed."

Nemo conducted "mating" procedures – the process in which it attaches to a distressed submarine.

The vessel was manoeuvred carefully to a simulated submarine casing, onto which the pilot positioned the "mating skirt" to achieve a watertight seal between Nemo and the target.

Then, the rescue chamber operator – working in the back of Nemo – opened the hatch just as if it was a distressed submarine on the seabed.

In the event of a real incident with a submarine, this is how a crew could be rescued. For this exercise, two Norwegian Naval personnel were acting as rescue chamber operators.

NSRS Engineering and Logistics Support Manager and Authority Deployment Officer, Rob Penfold, said: "In addition to demonstrating the rescue operational capability, these exercises provide real evidence of how multiple engineering safety standards are interfaced."

"From logistic delivery and mobilisation to the ship, to installation, test and commissioning of equipment, providing confidence that the system is safe to operate even in operational emergency situations at sea."

Additionally, senior officers from the French

Navy completed their qualification as Rescue Element Commanders (REC) during the exercise.

HM Naval Base Clyde's Diving Threat and Exploitation Group, Charlie Squadron, provided unique diving and recompression chamber expertise throughout.

The exercise also provided the opportunity for Charlie Squadron's Commanding Officer, Lieutenant Commander Ross Balfour to qualify as a REC.

The NSRS, which is operated by the Submarine Delivery Agency, is a tri-nationally resourced capability.

Collectively known as the NSRS Operations Group, it comprises divers and medics from the UK, French, and Norwegian Navies, as well as medics and contractors from JFD Ltd. This year, personnel were joined by an observer from the Chilean Navy.

Finding Nemo

NATO Submarine Rescue system put through its paces



Equinox The Project Delivery Partner to the Ministry of Defence and UK Armed Forces.

Equinox offers flexible delivery with expertise from our 26 supply chain partners, covering Project Management, Project Controls, Operational Delivery and an extensive list of Specialist Capabilities.

With our seamless engagement across the Ministry of Defence, we will partner with you to define your requirements, rapidly apply our collective resources and deliver quality assured outputs to enhance front line capability.

Contact us to discuss your requirements:
DESCEO-Equinox-AM-Team@mod.gov.uk

More information on our capabilities, how to access the project delivery framework and to view case studies can be found here:



One Person Joins, but the Whole Family Serves



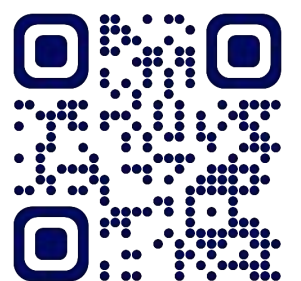
The Royal Navy and Royal Marines Charity is at the heart of supporting our Royal Navy, Royal Marines and Royal Fleet Auxiliary personnel and their families, past, present and future.



One Navy. One Family. By Your Side.

rnrmc.org.uk

For more
information,
visit our website
by scanning the
QR code



The Royal Navy and Royal Marines Charity is a company limited by guarantee registered in England and Wales (no. 6047294) and is a registered charity (no. 1117794) and Scotland (SC041898).

ROYAL Navy pilots and engineers spent just over two weeks operating with a Royal Netherlands Navy amphibious ship as two close NATO navies prepared for further missions protecting the alliance's frontiers.

Yeovilton-based 846 Naval Air Squadron of the Commando Helicopter Force took two of their Merlin Mk4 helicopters and a 100-strong team to HNLMS Johan de Witt for missions off the UK and French coasts.

This intensive training aimed to bring Dutch and UK personnel closer together, enhancing their understanding of each other's ways of operating, with the ultimate goal of working seamlessly together – building on more than 50 years of joint operations.

It also provided an opportunity for 846 Naval Air Squadron's pilots to complete deck landing qualifications – carrying out day and night landings and vertical replenishments (lifting supplies to and from the ship) during 50 hours of sorties.

"This was a huge success, achieved by a small team of professionals who understand the value of partner nations being stronger together," said 846 Naval Air Squadron's Commanding Officer, Commander James Coleman.

"The Commando Helicopter Force is more capable and better qualified thanks to the hard work of HNLMS Johan de Witt and 846 Naval Air Squadron."

The training – known as Exercise Merlin Trident – was also an opportunity for instructors to regain valuable embarked aviation experience. It was also the first deployment on a ship for 40 of the squadron's 100 engineers.

The hulking Rotterdam-class vessel is currently the flagship of Standing Maritime NATO Group 1, the alliance's premier task force patrolling northern European waters. It conducts an intensive programme of scheduled exercises, manoeuvres, and port visits to strengthen bonds between NATO navies.

As the focal point of the task group, Royal Marines also practised amphibious operations with HNLMS Johan de Witt – with 42 Commando conducting boarding operations and 47 Commando operating their landing craft from the ship's dock.

While the Merlins were aboard Johan de Witt, they flew in tandem with the Dutch NH-90s embarked on the ship and operated with the a German Lynx helicopter from frigate FGS Hamburg, which is part of the SNMG1 force.

A Commando Merlin carrying out operations from the Dutch ship HNLMS Johan de Witt
Imagery by: POPhot Lee Blease



SHIP TO SHORE



Dutch NH90s fly with a Commando Merlin helicopter during Exercise Guardian Defender
Imagery by: POPhot Lee Blease

DUTCH and British pilots have completed intensive sorties over Salisbury Plain as they prepare to operate on NATO's northern flank together next year.

Flying from Royal Naval Air Station Yeovilton in Somerset, aviators from the UK's Commando Helicopter Force (CHF) and Royal Netherlands Air Force's 860 Squadron launched missions that build on four years of training together as they prepare for a major allied Arctic exercise in 2026.

The joint workout – the fourth in a series of exercises codenamed Guardian Defender – saw the UK's Commando Merlin and Commando Wildcat and Dutch NH-90 helicopters operate together, deepening operational understanding, sharing knowledge and

expertise to ultimately create a joint force able of working side-by-side on the front line.

It builds on more than 50 years of operations together under the command of the UK Netherland Amphibious Force – Europe's oldest force of its kind, which has seen the two nations share training, tactics and kit since 1973.

That historic relationship has been reinvigorated in recent times as the two NATO allies draw closer together, with Guardian Defender one of the cornerstones of this. Lieutenant Commander Peter Straker, 845 Naval Air Squadron's Warfare Officer, said: "Guardian Defender continues to strengthen and deepen interoperability between UK and Netherlands aviation, ground, and other elements within the strategic framework of the

UK–Netherlands Amphibious partnership.

"The training provides a realistic and demanding environment that enables participating aircrew, engineers, and support personnel to refine tactics, techniques, and procedures essential to joint amphibious operations."

860 Naval Air Squadron (as it was previously known) was in British service in World War 2 but comprised of Dutch pilots who had escaped mainland Europe to take the fight back to the Nazis.

The squadron was transferred to the Netherlands in 1946 after operating the Fairey Swordfish and later the Fairey Barracuda as a bomber/reconnaissance squadron.

The modern version of 860 have kept strong links

to the UK and organised this year's Guardian Defender, which saw them work with 846, 845 and 847 Naval Air Squadrons – which make up the Commando Helicopter Force.

The exercise also included CHF's Mobile Air Operations Teams and Military Training Unit, with the aircraft practising a range of operational scenarios, including extraction of casualties and captured personnel.

All of this leads up to joint operations during the major NATO Arctic exercise – named Cold Response, which will see up to 25,000 allied personnel, ships and aircraft come together across the waters and coastlines of Northern Norway to show the strength and unity of the alliance in the region.



Our estate is a haven of **care, community, and comfort** for seafarers. Our modern nursing home delivers **exceptional care, nurtures camaraderie, and honours individuality.**

Contact us to find out more about our community

☎ 01737 360 106

✉ admin@royalalfred.org.uk

🌐 www.royalalfredseafarers.co.uk



BY APPOINTMENT TO
HIS MAJESTY KING CHARLES III
MEDALISTS
WORCESTERSHIRE MEDAL SERVICE LTD
BROMSGROVE



WORCESTERSHIRE MEDAL SERVICE LTD

Specialists in the manufacture and supply of full and miniature size medals, medal mounting and framing.

Visit Our Website:

www.worcmedals.com

+44(0)1527 835375

sales@worcmedals.com

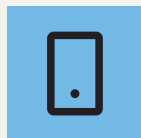
124 High Street, Bromsgrove, B61 8HJ



When every day feels like a battle, **Forcesline** is here to back you up.

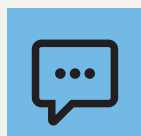
We're not here to judge –
**we're here to listen, so you
never have to battle alone.**

Contact Forcesline.



We're open 09:00–17:00
Monday to Thursday,
and 09:00–16:00 on Friday

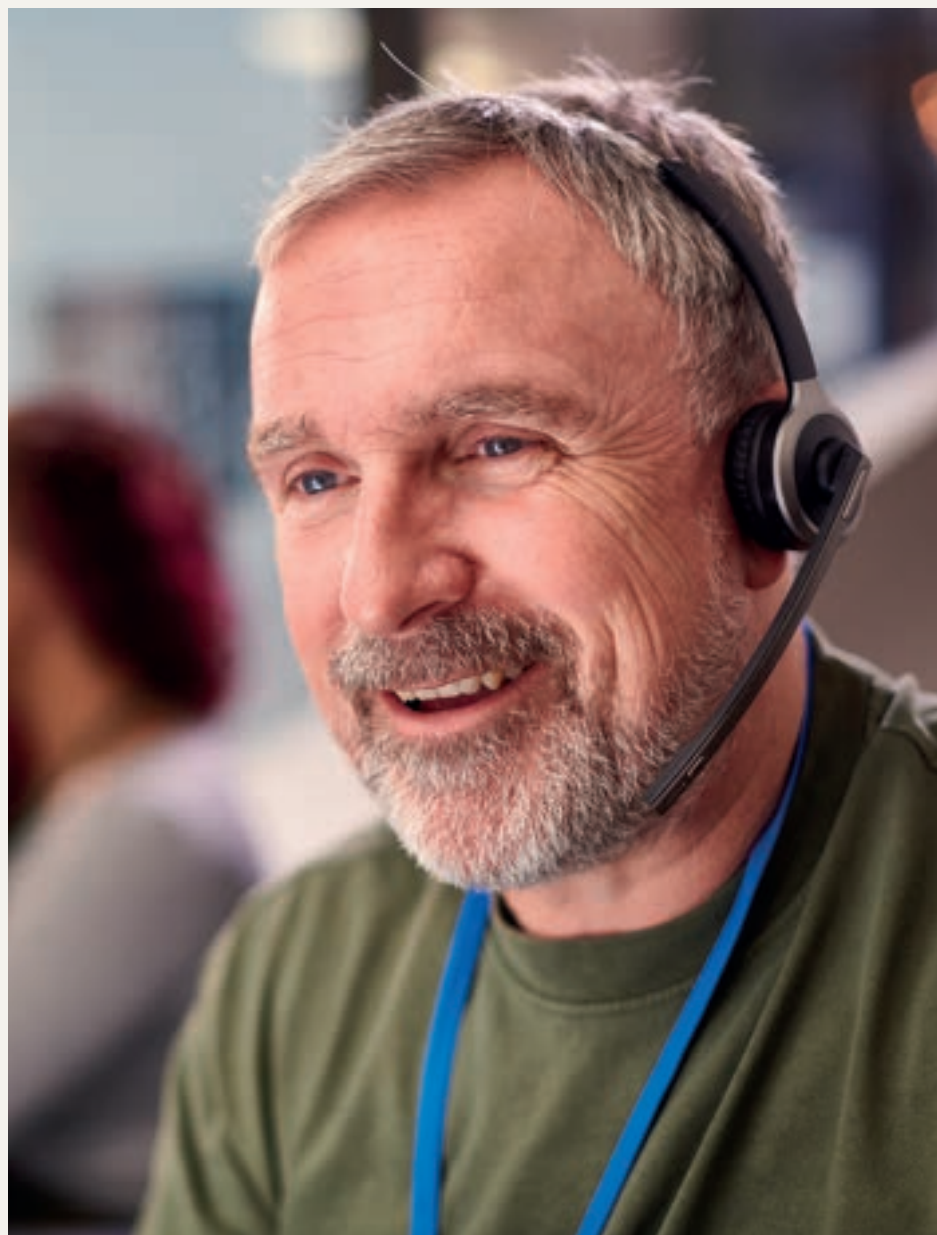
0800 260 6780



Talk to an advisor via
our **live chat** service

ssafa.org.uk

Forcesline is a free, independent helpline,
that's outside of the chain of command
for the Armed Forces and their families.



Imagery by: LPhot Kayleigh Stephenson



A plate of beef tacos prepared by the Commando Logistic Regiment



LH Kevin Cyrus Open Plated Furred or Feathered Game entry. Vension with hispi cabbage, confit beetroot, confit potato and black berry pickle



PO Alexis Jones with his dish he calls "The Sermon" - Pan-fried mackerel with spinach dumpling and a herb and lemon emulsion with a curried sauce



Elegance in every layer, flavour in every crumb, a pie awaits tasting

CULINARY DELIGHTS

Royal Navy chefs and stewards scooped 44 awards for their expert cookery as they took on their counterparts from the Royal Air Force and British Army in an Armed Forces cook off.

The RAF came out on top at the two-day Exercise Joint Caterer competition at the National Agricultural and Exhibition Centre near Coventry, but the Royal Navy team did themselves proud.

The 40-strong Culinary Arts Team showed off the stunning cookery, professionalism and creativity that they bring to galleys on warships across the globe, bringing home two gold, nine silver, 14 bronze, nine merit and seven best in class titles.

They won Best Galley Team in the Senior Cook and Serve category, Junior Steward of the Year and Best Galley Team in the Parade de Chefs competition.

Team captain Chief Petty Officer Shaun Willis said: "I couldn't be prouder of the entire team and the journey each of them has been on throughout the two-week workshop and the competition itself.

"From those who stepped up to mentor our newest team members, to individuals entering the arena for the first time, the level of professional and personal growth has been outstanding. I'm already excited to see how we continue to build on this success and attack the competition full on next time."

The team served stunning dishes from around the world, including street food, fine dining courses and incredible celebratory cakes.

Competitor Catering Services Able Rating Tate Creese said: "Having competed for the first time, I enjoyed the rush of adrenaline when stood on the stage and looking out upon the crowd."

The chefs demonstrated technical ability, teamwork and resilience, reflecting two weeks of preparation delivered through a workshop at Worthy Down.

Culinary Arts Team Director Warrant Officer 1 Wes Cain added: "Exercise Joint Caterer is a cornerstone event for Defence catering, and this year's competition has once again highlighted the exceptional skill and dedication of our Royal Navy team.

"What we saw at Stoneleigh was more than culinary excellence, it was teamwork, resilience, and innovation under pressure."

Wes continued: "These qualities are vital in the operational environment, where our catering services personnel deliver world-class support to the Fleet every day.

"I am immensely proud of how our competitors represented the Service, and I know the experience gained here will strengthen capability across the Royal Navy. This is about raising standards, inspiring confidence, and ensuring our people continue to deliver

the very best."

A number of chefs from the Royal Fleet Auxiliary were part of the RN team, including Assistant Chef Kirstie Adams, Assistant Chef Catherine Cowley and Petty Officer Chef Gaynor, as the joining and welcoming coordinator.

Assistant Chef Adams created a pasta dish from scratch that was awarded bronze in the pasta classes.

And Assistant Chef Cowley drew upon all her knowledge and experience gained over the past six years with the RFA to produce an exceptional pastry dish in the Great British Pie Challenge: a Highlands Heartbeat Steak Pie, served with triple-cooked homemade chips, whisky ketchup, with a smashed peas garnish. It earned her a merit and fourth place.

"I could not have been prouder of the RN team," said Fleet Logistics Officer Commander Alex Savage. "They have not only performed to the highest of standards, but they have done so by bonding as a team and supporting each other.

"They overcame nerves which come from performing on the big stage, against their RAF and Army rivals, to produce excellent dishes and service and will have learned so much about themselves.

"I hope they will now go back to the Fleet to spread the message of this wonderful competition and raise both standards and morale for our Chefs on the front line."



Smiles all around as LH Wesley Wilks, AB Nichollos Dannon, and AB Emily Errington receive their silver awards in the Inter-Service Junior Cook and Serve competition



Flambé in action AB Niamh Harker lights up the Defence Field Cookery Challenge with her skills



Celebrity chef Si King of "The Hairy Bikers" stops for a photograph with PO Lewis White and LH Sam May

ROYAL NAVY AWARDS AT EXERCISE JOINT CATERER 2025:

Bronze in the Junior Chef of the Year: ABCS Tate Crees

Silver in the Senior Chef of the Year: LCS Sam May

Bronze in the Senior Chef of the Year: POCS Lewis White

Bronze in the Junior Plated Chicken: LCS Wesley Wilks

Merit in the Open Plated Furred/Game: ABCS Ben Rimmer and ABCS Kevin Cyrus

Gold in the Open Plated Lamb: POCS Gina Towler-Harbor

Silver in the Open Plated Lamb: LCS Mhari Coghlan

Silver in the Open Plated Fish: POCS Alexis Jones

Bronze in the Open Plated Fish: LCS Morgan Spencer-George

Bronze in the Open Plated Pasta: Asst Cook Kirstie Adams

Merit in the Open Plated Pasta: ABCS Charlotte Perry

Silver in the Open Plated Vegan: LCS Siobhan Kent

Merit in the Open Street Food: ABCS Ryan Evans and ABCS Kevin Cyrus

Silver in the Open Hot Dessert: ABCS Michael Snelgrove

Silver in the Junior Omelette Challenge: ABCS Emily Errington

Bronze in the Junior Omelette Challenge: ABCS Tate Crees

Bronze in the Plated World Food: ABCS Dannon Nicholls and POCS Alexis Jones

Gold in the Gateaux Decorating Class: LCS Bitiah Dopwell

Bronze in the Gateaux Decorating Class: ABCS Nham Harker

Merit in the Open Pie Challenge: Asst Cook Kirstie Adams and Asst Cook Cathrine Cowley

Silver in the Junior Cook and Serve: LCS Wesley Wilks, ABCS Dannon

Nicholls, ABCS Emily Errington

Junior Steward of the Year: ABCS Emily Errington

Silver in the Senior Cook and Serve: POCS Gina Towler-Harbor, LCS Mhari Coghlan, LCS Siobhan Kent

Bronze in the Flambe: ABCS Nham Harker

Bronze in the Open Mixology: ABCS Miles Hindom

Merit in the Bakery Class: ABCS Ryan Evans

Merit in the Mini Buffet Table: C/Sgt Tristian Merrick, LCS Wesley Wilks, ABCS Michael Snelgrove

Bronze in the Open Restaurant Plated Vegan Starter: C/Sgt Tristian Merrick, LCS Wesley Wilks, ABCS Michael Snelgrove

Bronze in the Open Restaurant Plated Main Course: C/Sgt Tristian Merrick, LCS Wesley Wilks, ABCS Michael Snelgrove

Merit in the Open Restaurant Plated Main Course: C/Sgt Tristian Merrick, LCS Wesley Wilks, ABCS Michael Snelgrove

Bronze in the Defence Field Cookery Challenge: Commando Logistic Regiment

Silver in the Parade De Chefs: Commando Logistic Regiment



A global force in ship design

With design credentials including the QEC aircraft carriers, Tide class tankers, Type 31 frigates, and the Fleet Solid Support programme – we draw on our rich maritime heritage and excellence in naval architecture to provide trusted design solutions for the defence market.



Find out more
visit our website
or scan the QR code

www.bmt.org



Pilot-lite flight a whisker away

ANCHORED by several tonnes of metal on the test pad at Leonardo's facility in Yeovil, blades and tail rotor spinning for the first time, this is the Navy's – and possibly the world's – first full-size truly crewless helicopter.

Proteus, which is a demonstration model of the art of the possible in the skies of tomorrow, is just one step from taking to the skies after completing successful trials on the ground in Somerset.

The helicopter, roughly as big as a Wildcat but with a pilot tasking the aircraft rather than flying it, has been 'flashed up', testing her engines, systems rotors/tail rotor.

Designed and manufactured in less than two-and-a-half years at the home of British helicopters in Yeovil, the Proteus technology demonstrator is being developed by Leonardo under a £60m programme.

It's the first step towards creating a truly autonomous Vertical Take-off and Landing (VTOL) aircraft in this weight class.

Proteus will help both the designers and the Royal Navy understand what similar machines will be needed in the future and how they will operate, either individually or more likely working in tandem with crewless and crewed aircraft as part of a 'hybrid air wing'.

Senior officers and experts from the MOD were invited to Leonardo's Yeovil site to see Proteus 'ground running' – as well as learn about the leading-edge technology, programming and Artificial Intelligence which is key to the helicopter's success.

"It's been a huge pleasure to work with Leonardo and across Defence, as one team, to deliver Proteus," said Captain David Gillett, head of Maritime Aviation and Carrier Strike in the Royal Navy's Develop Directorate.

"It combines cutting-edge technology, the experience of recent conflicts and has enormous potential to shape the Royal Navy's future hybrid air wing."

Nigel Colman, Managing Director Helicopters UK, Leonardo added: "Leonardo is leading the way globally in autonomy, supported by the Royal Navy.

"Proteus is equipped with cutting-edge onboard software capabilities, carrying a suite of sensors and systems that allow it to sense its environment, make decisions and act accordingly. All of this processing is conducted onboard the aircraft, while operating in the most extreme environments, including high sea states and strong winds – just where the Royal Navy needs this kind of capability."

With a payload bay capable of carrying up to one tonne of equipment, a helicopter like Proteus could perform other missions including airborne surveillance and control, search and rescue, logistics re-supply for ground forces, weapon delivery and intelligence gathering.

Initially, the demonstrator is being assessed for the ability of autonomous systems to support anti-submarine operations. It will be tasked to patrol specific maritime areas, drawing on information provided by other allied ships, helicopters, submarines, and detection systems to calculate the best chance of success in finding an underwater foe.

To detect submarines Proteus will drop sonobuoy listening devices into the ocean to search the depths for the tell-tale acoustic signs that emanate from submarines. Once found the system has the ability to report its findings back to the mission commander.

By embracing drone helicopters, the Navy aims to search wider stretches of ocean for longer periods without putting strain on aircrew, who could be deployed on other critical sorties.

While Proteus isn't flown by a pilot, the technology demonstrator always has an operator in control of the system, operating within pre-designated safe limits and customer defined rules of engagement.

Pictures: LPhot Unaisi Luke and Leonardo



INFREQUENT ISLANDERS

IF YOU don't recognise the coastline or the settlement nestling in the valley between the two cliffs, that's probably because visits by the Grey Funnel Line are infrequent.

The settlement is Jamestown, the waters James Bay, the island St Helena.

The rather large slice of battleship grey in the foreground is RFA Tidespring, the first RFA to call on the remote British Territory in nearly a decade, the first naval vessel since ice patrol ship HMS Protector in 2021.

There's a good reason why the Royal Navy doesn't call in very often: St Helena is among the most remote islands on the planet.

About the size of Swindon but home to fewer than 4,500 inhabitants, St Helena could only be reached by sea until an airport opened a decade ago. The nearest land – Angola in West Africa – is 1,150 miles away. Harbour facilities are limited and certainly cannot accommodate a 660ft/37,000-tonne tanker (second only in size in the UK Fleet to a Queen Elizabeth-class aircraft carrier).

Which is why the auxiliary dropped anchor here for her whistle-stop visit to St Helena.

The tanker came to a stop just four cables – ¾km – from the wreck of RFA Darkdale, which was torpedoed and sunk by a U-boat in 1941.

Commanding Officer Captain James Wingrove RFA laid a wreath both over the wreck site and at the Cenotaph to commemorate all those perished on



the Darkdale prior to proceeding to Plantation House for a reception with the Acting Governor Tasha Harris.

As well as the governor, Plantation House is also home to Jonathan the Giant Seychelles Tortoise, the oldest living creature on Earth (circa 194 years old) who was joined on his daily ramble around the grounds by some of Tidespring's crew (above).

Despite the brevity of the visit, 100 of the 107-strong ship's company managed to get ashore, many opting to have a crack at the infamous Jacob's Ladder (699 steps rising 600ft on a 2:5 incline, linking Jamestown with an historic fort above the town). The record for the ascent (4m 40.75s) was never in danger.

Many crew wandered off to visit the

tomb of Napoleon (Boney spent his final years exiled on the island after Waterloo; his body was subsequently returned to France and its present home in Paris), bought souvenirs (fridge magnets and the world's rarest and purest honey), and were warmly received by the Jamestown community throughout.

A few members of the crew enjoyed a bird's eye view of the island – an acquaint flight in the Merlin from Culdrose's 814 Naval Air Squadron.

That proved a treat as much for some of the youngest residents of the island as it did the sailors: many children had never seen a helicopter before.

Though brief, the 24-hour stopover provided a welcome break in Tidespring's voyage up the western seaboard of Africa.

Captain Wingrove said the break in St Helena was "a brief but fantastic visit, offering the ship's company a rare opportunity to visit of one the most remote islands in the world, and highlights the UK's commitment to its overseas territories," said.

"The hospitality and the warm welcome was greatly received by all, hopefully ships can visit sooner and more often."

The ship spent half of last year assigned to the UK supporting the Carrier Strike Group's deployment. She parted company when the warships headed for Suez and instead made a beeline for Cape Town in South Africa before continuing her patrol in the South Atlantic.

Staff prepare for key NATO mission

THE road to the Royal Navy taking charge of NATO's premier naval force has begun with the battleship due to lead it being put through their paces.

On July 1 the Royal Navy will assume command of the Allied Reaction Force (Maritime) – the nautical element of NATO's response to an international crisis, deploying land, sea and air forces anywhere in the alliance's area of responsibility to defend and deter.

Currently commanded by the Spanish Navy, the maritime force will transfer to Rear Admiral Mark Anderson, Commander of the United Kingdom Strike Force, and his staff, based in Portsmouth.

The first step towards that 12-month tenure of the force – successor to the long-standing NATO Reaction Force – was Exercise Steadfast Dagger, a table top/planning exercise.

It's one of several Steadfast exercises building up to Steadfast

Deterrence this spring which will validate the UK staff's readiness to take command.

If activated at the direction of NATO's Supreme Allied Commander Europe, ARF(M) would muster the relevant warships, naval air power and support vessels to intervene in a crisis within ten days. The force is intended to be as large – or small – as the situation demands.

Offering advice and experience to the UK staff as their preparations began was Allied Reaction Force overall commander Lieutenant General Gianluca Carai, an Italian red beret.

"I am impressed by the extraordinary level of professionalism and commitment

of the COMUKSTRIKEFORCE to address all NATO core tasks," General Carai said.

"In particular, I would emphasise the amazing level of innovation and technology of the modern UK naval assets.

"For this, I would express my greatest gratitude to the British Royal Navy, Armed Forces and National Authorities for all the efforts and resources invested to achieve and sustain this so relevant capability for NATO."

Rear Admiral Anderson said the UK remained committed to both NATO and taking command of the maritime component of the ARF.

"It is a clear demonstration to all our partners and Allies that



the Royal Navy will play its part in responding to crisis, conflict and competition," he added.

"Steadfast Dagger is the crucial first step in our journey to demonstrating the world-class capabilities of the CSF Battlestaff.

"I am extremely proud of my team and the effort they have put into preparing and delivering this exercise and it is a real privilege to represent that to General Carai."

The training of the UK Strike Force staff is not merely confined to theoretical/desktop exercises.

Later this winter they will have real warships, aircraft and ground forces – including Royal Marines of the UK Commando Force – to direct during Exercise Dynamic Mariner 2026, part of the UK's Cold Response winter deployment/training in the Norwegian Arctic, testing and enhancing command and control capabilities and operational effectiveness of the maritime components of the ARF.



You don't write a Will for yourself

**For the security they deserve, write
your Will with RBL today**

In the Armed Forces you never let your comrades down. Now you can protect the people you care about by making a Will. It's easily done in 30 minutes through our trusted partner's Will-writing service, which we make available free to you.

You can write your Will online or face-to-face with a solicitor. Please consider including a gift in your Will to support our vital support services for the Armed Forces community in the future.

Write your Will online today with our trusted partner at
farewill.com/rbl-gift

Or for a **Free Wills Network** guide to participating solicitors in your area,
please call our Supporter Care team on 0345 845 1945.



Registered Charity Number: 219279



Scan this code to write your Will
at www.farewill.com/rbl-gift



HIGHMAST FACTS

The Carrier Air Group has flown more than **2,500** sorties

Ships visited 15 countries and interacted with **30** nations

The core group sailed more than **40,000** nautical miles

It was the first UK carrier group to
visit Australia since **1997**

take part in Exercise Bersama Lima, the Five Powers Defence Arrangement main annual
workout, since **1997**

berth at Tokyo and Singapore cruise liner terminals

host the prime minister at sea overnight in a generation

HNoMS Roald Amundsen sailed further east than any Norwegian warship before her and
became the first to visit: India, Japan, and Singapore

The force has operated with **9** different carrier groups

First UK F-35B to land on the Japanese ship Kaga

First UK-India dual carrier exercise

Largest ever fifth-generation sovereign air wing embarked on any aircraft carrier (**24** jets)

UK F-35B Lightning jets operated from **4** other aircraft carriers

28 VVIPs have been hosted

HMS Richmond alone welcomed aboard

50 VIPs, including

16 heads of service/armed forces,

13 ministers and

90 diplomats from **45** embassies, high commissions and consulates

V-Pop (Vietnamese pop) bands, Bollywood film stars and the Premier League

Trophy

The whole task group welcomed **4,230** registered visitors and guests

82 UK companies used the ships to showcase their products at industry/export events
with the prospect of generating more than **£17bn** for the UK economy

And HMS Richmond's crew downed enough sausages to stretch for more than **2** miles
laid end-to-end



Over one memorable weekend at the end of November, the ships, squadrons, units and above all men and women of the UK Carrier Strike group came

HOME ON A HIGH



HOME.
There's nowhere better.
And getting there a day earlier than planned after nearly eight months away, well that's the icing on the cake. Instead of the

forecast wind and heavy rain along the South Coast on December 1, the long-planned end of the premier deployment of 2025, there were near perfect skies, a not-especially-warming winter sun, a raw westerly breeze but, most importantly, a crowd of thousands in Portsmouth, hundreds in Plymouth, on Sunday November 30.
The thunder of guns echoing around the Hoe alerted Devonians

to the return of HMS Richmond (and perhaps roused them from a post-Sunday roast snooze) as a salute was fired passing Drake Island.
In Portsmouth, whether it was for the dawn arrival of HMS Dauntless or the lunchtime entry of flagship HMS Prince of Wales there was a waiting crowd (admittedly a *bit* larger for the carrier), water jets of appreciation from the tugs helping the warships into harbour, banners

and, a relatively new addition to homecomings, a flurry of flags, raised on thin poles which bent in the stiff breeze: several White Ensigns. A Welsh dragon. The Ulster standard. The county flag of Lincolnshire (we had to look that one up). The Devon Ensign (that too).
Overhead, a Merlin Mk2. And a Mk4. And a Wildcat HMA buzzing around (capturing imagery).
It made for a memorable ending

to the Carrier Strike Group mission – memorable for the right reasons.
And as the ships returned, so too their air power, Airfields in Cornwall, Somerset and Norfolk buzzed with excitement – and the sound of aircraft engines – as helicopters and fast jets landed back at base.
All came home with a sense of mission accomplished – and delight at being reunited with families.

Continued overleaf ➡





Continued from previous page

The F-35B Lightning jets were safely back at RAF Marham two days ahead of the ships, the Merlins of 820 Naval Squadron to Culdrose, four Wildcats from 815 NAS (deployed with HMS Prince of Wales, Dauntless and the Amundsen) to Yeovilton (the Merlins of 845 arrived a week ahead of the rest, their work done).

Commander Nick Smith led 809 Naval Air Squadron, nicknamed The Immortals, on its maiden deployment, bringing them back to Norfolk alongside their RAF sister Lightning squadron 617.

He said “the range and breadth of the activity the squadron have been part of is truly amazing”.

He continued: “I am incredibly proud of the Immortal Team who have done such a fantastic job in delivering everything asked of them throughout the year, but most importantly full operating capability of Carrier Strike.

“We have operated day and night, in fair weather and torrential downpours, from HMS Prince of Wales as well as the Japanese and Italian ships Kaga and Cavour.”

After being reunited with families, air and ground crew – as in 617 Sqn, drawn from the RAF and Royal Navy in equal measure – now enjoy a month’s leave “before regrouping in 2026 for another year of adventures.”

Guiding one of the Merlins on to dispersal at Culdrose was Air Engineering Technician Taylor Kiltie. Aboard, his dad and fellow aviation engineer Petty Officer Andrew Kiltie.

“I am absolutely delighted to be back here with my family. It’s such a long time to be away, so to come

back straight into their arms – it’s very emotional,” dad said.

Commander Al Woodward, who took command of the anti-submarine/airborne surveillance squadron just before the deployment, said the eight months away would live long in the memory for many reasons.

“It’s been a superb deployment looking at what we’ve achieved. The squadron has been incredible. They’ve worked so hard at the challenge of keeping the aircraft serviceable and safe so we can fly.

“There have been a lot of exercises and we’ve been half-way around the world and back.

“We’ve also been to some incredible places. These are the memories, as well as the successes. I hope people will look back fondly on this deployment. And it’s great to be home.”

In Plymouth, HMS Richmond’s families waited at Devil’s Point and on the jetty.

Richmond’s Navigator Lieutenant Oliver Thomas safely guided the frigate around the port and a string of ports British warships visited infrequently.

“In South Korea you had skyscrapers all along the front, and in the background stunning mountains – something we had never seen,” he said.

“The hardest part of the deployment was coping with temperatures. Crew working for six hours on the upper deck in 40-degree heat and 90 per cent humidity – really intense conditions we are not used to in Britain.

“So some people have been looking forward to colder climes, including

myself, and even a little bit of rain.

“At times knowing what food you were going to get when eating ashore could be interesting – some of the crew had a few surprises when struggling with translations!”

Chef Able Seaman William Diffu said he and his colleagues in HMS Richmond’s galley had enjoyed the challenge of showing what they can do – for VIPs and guests during diplomatic events, but above all for their shipmates.

“I hope people will look back fondly on this deployment. It’s been superb – looking back at what we’ve achieved and we’ve been to some incredible places.

COMMANDER AL WOODWARD,
820 NAS

“Making people happy with good food, especially if they might be feeling a bit low – that’s our job. Bringing joy to people,” he said.

His shipmates loved beans and sausages for breakfast (and complained if the latter weren’t British), were served up shark on one ‘fish Friday’ (“surprisingly enjoyable”) and above all relished a steak.

“It’s been a great deployment, but it’s lovely to be home. I am overwhelmed with joy to be back.”

For the frigate’s Commanding Officer Commander Rich Kemp, the

deployment reaffirmed the concept of the Carrier Strike Group – which was declared ‘fully operational’ shortly before Highmast ended.

“We can do this – we’ve done it before, we can do it again and we can do these deployments with our partners. That’s the best lesson which could be learned,” he said.

He hoped the men and women under his charge would walk down the gangway in Devonport “with a bit of a swagger knowing they have made a difference for their country”.

He continued: “Everyone aboard has an important role to play and everyone has done the Navy proud. I’ve been impressed on a daily basis. We have been to a part of the world the Royal Navy doesn’t regularly visit, worked with some countries we do not regularly work with and we’ve delivered in spades.”

Despite the early hour – just after sunrise on a Sunday – HMS Dauntless’ return was well attended with a good smattering of early birds both on the waterfront and family members on the jetty waiting for the ship, such as Jenny Walley’s family who all donned masks featuring the leading hand’s face.

As for the big one, well as many as 6,000 family members had been expected quayside originally for HMS Prince of Wales; bringing the carrier in 24 hours earlier than planned meant some couldn’t make the make the occasion.

Among those who were able to rearrange plans was Lieutenant Simon Hall from Yeovilton, whose wife Lieutenant Commander Phoebe Hall joined the flagship at the half-way point of the deployment. The

couple’s five-year-old daughter held a banner aloft so mum could spot her easily. She’s now looking forward to decorating the family home for Christmas with her mum.

“Having her back for the special season is the icing on the cake,” said Simon. “Phoebe joined in Japan so it’s been four months of solo daddying whilst maintaining the day job but Ophelia has made it easy for me.”

Chief Petty Officer Chris Aspin’s family – wife Anne and children Jessica, 13, and nine-year-old William – had made the 250-mile trip from Manchester to be reunited.

“We haven’t seen him for the whole eight months, it’s been hard,” said mum. As for his eldest child: “I haven’t missed beard rash and him standing in front of the TV, but I’ve missed him a lot.”

Led by HMS Prince of Wales, the Carrier Strike Group has comprised a core defensive ring of steel, provided by HMS Dauntless (air defence), HMS Richmond and HNoMS Roald Amundsen (anti-submarine and surface defence).

Tanker RFA Tideforce supported the final month of the deployment, while her sister ship RFA Tidespring, provided fuel for the force through three-quarters of the Highmast mission and Norway’s HNoMS Maud performed tanker duties during the opening weeks.

In all, the strike group comprised warships and support vessels from ten nations – Australia, Canada, France, Italy, Japan, New Zealand, Norway, Portugal, Spain and the USA – and worked with more than 30, sailing more than 40,000 miles (more than 1½ times around the world) to the





western Indo-Pacific; more than half the mission was spent east of Suez. The Carrier Air Group – F-35Bs, Merlin Mk2s, Merlin Mk4s, Wildcat HMAs, plus drones from 700X – collectively flew more than 2,500 sorties in support of the deployment which sought to demonstrate the UK’s commitment to global security with its allies. They returned home with the Carrier Strike Group concept declared fully operational – and ready to assume NATO duties, testament said Commodore James Blackmore, the Commander UK Carrier Strike Group, “to the hard work both on Operation Highmast and of those who have served before us to reach this milestone. “The Strike Group has come home stronger for NATO than it departed and I am incredibly proud of all those who have taken part in Operation Highmast.” The final major workout of the deployment once again underscored the striking power and versatility of the F-35B Lightning.. Falcon Strike in the central Mediterranean saw Italian F-35s call HMS Prince of Wales their home – with RAF and Fleet Air Arm jets doing the same from ITS Cavour. British fifth-generation jets had already worked with their US and Japanese counterparts earlier in the deployment. Jets from both 617 and 809 Squadrons joined the Cavour – which is roughly half the size of HMS Prince

of Wales and operates up to ten F-35s alongside a dozen AW101 helicopters (the Italian variant of the Merlin). “It was an awesome opportunity and privilege to be welcomed aboard and operate UK jets from the Cavour,” said Cdr Smith.. “The activity is hugely important to prove the true interoperability that is available between F-35 partners who, with shared common procedures and tactics, can effortlessly operate together from one another’s platforms. “It also sounds a powerful message of NATO’s capability to project fifth-generation combat air power at a time and place of its choosing, whether that be a land base or a range of maritime platforms operated by member states.” His words were echoed by his counterpart in command of The Dambusters, Lieutenant Colonel Mike Carty RM. “This is a powerful demonstration of how seamlessly NATO forces can operate as one team, proving that when we work together, we present a capable, credible, and united front against any threat,” he added. “This sends a clear message to any would-be aggressor about our unity and resolve.” One British F-35B pilot was given the job of ‘paddles’ (aka ‘batman’) on the Cavour – officially Landing Signal Officer – safely guiding returning jets

on to the deck of the Italian carrier. “The language of controlling aircraft in the carrier environment is equal, the procedures and practices are aligned and an Italian Landing Signal Officer could just as easily control F-35s aboard HMS Prince of Wales as I can control aircraft aboard an Italian carrier,” ‘Paddles’ explained. “With European militaries shrinking and the ever increasing threat from our adversaries, the interoperability between NATO allies is more crucial than ever.”

“Everyone has done the Navy proud. I’ve been impressed on a daily basis. We’ve delivered in spades.

COMMANDER RICH KEMP, HMS RICHMOND

When airborne, the F-35s came under the direction of fighter controllers (nicknamed ‘Freddies’ in the Royal Navy), whose job it is to tactically handle the fifth-generation fighters – directing them on to targets and acting as the vital, seamless link with the carrier group ships. Freddies can be found aboard both the flagship and her escorting destroyer HMS Dauntless, which has provided air defence to the task group throughout the eight-month deployment. The variety and complexity of the workout with the Italian, US Marine Corps and UK F-35s – plus some Italian

AV8-B Harriers thrown in for good measure – plus air-to-air refuelling and airborne early warning aircraft played out against a detailed real-world scenario tested everyone involved in Falcon Strike. Lt Jack Hammond, Fighter Controller 2 on Dauntless, said the F-35B and Type 45 with its world-leading radars and sensors made for a formidable combination. “Falcon Strike 25 was an invaluable opportunity to work with NATO allies whilst demonstrating the superior capability and interoperability of fifth-generation aircraft with Daring-class destroyers,” he added. In all the force operated/exercised with nine different carrier groups, with its jets landing on four different aircraft carriers. Ships helped to enforce UN sanctions against North Korea, supported NATO security operations in the Mediterranean and promoted British interests and industry wherever they have visited. Personnel were able to enjoy some unforgettable experiences and opportunities: climbing Mount Fiji in Japan, encountering crocodiles in northern Australia, a string of international cookery contests, sporting fixtures, and visits to some of the world’s great cities including Tokyo, Singapore, Ho Chi Minh City, Manila, Mumbai. There have been celebrations – the traditional naval ceremonies of Crossing the Line (Equator) and Trafalgar Night – while HMS Prince of Wales’ rock band were invited to play their debut public gig at Singapore’s Hard Rock Café. And there were solemn moments with commemorations at military

cemeteries and sacred sites throughout the deployment, including a service of remembrance for the crew of the previous HMS Prince of Wales over the wreck site in the South China Sea – the first time today’s ship has visited. HMS Richmond has been this way before – her maiden deployment was the 1997 Ocean Wave mission, the last time a British carrier visited Australia. Twenty-eight years (and many nautical miles, experiences, upgrades) later and the return to the Indo-Pacific for an extended period demonstrated she remains a formidable front-line warrior. Petty Officer James Smith, one of HMS Richmond’s warfare specialist, enjoyed the deployment on every level. “Professionally, Op Highmast has been fantastic and full of opportunity to test our skills in real life scenarios,” he said. “Personally, the chance to play golf all over the world has been a real highlight! I’m now very excited to get home and have a family holiday, and a proper Cornish pasty.” The frigate’s Executive Officer Lieutenant Commander James Callender, said he “could not be prouder” of his shipmates for all they had achieved. “Whether it be supporting UN Security Council resolutions in the Yellow Sea or hosting dignitaries and VIPs for high level engagement, Richmond has continued to deliver in spades.” Which almost certainly applies equally to everyone on the deployment...



New Phyz pass out at Temeraire

AT HMS Temeraire, newly qualified Royal Navy Physical Training Instructors took centre stage as they marked the end of an intense six-month journey with the LPTQC 71 Passout Display.

The event was more than a showcase of strength and skill – it represented months of dedication, teamwork, and resilience.

Family, friends, and esteemed guests gathered to witness the qualifiers demonstrate the physical excellence and leadership that define the Royal Navy's Physical Training Branch.

The display offered an insight into the specialist training that underpins the Royal Navy's approach to operational fitness and wellbeing, celebrating the individuals who will go on to inspire sailors across the fleet.

Royal Navy & Royal Marines Charity was proud to support this event in collaboration with Greenwich Hospital and other contributors.

Together, this joint support helped ensure that the qualifiers could celebrate their remarkable achievements in a fitting way – recognising the hard work, pride, and professionalism that the PT Branch embodies.

Events like these strengthen morale across the Service, honouring the next generation of instructors who will continue to motivate, educate, and lead physical training in the Royal Navy.



Recognising the best in the business

THE Royal Marines Sports Association gathered at CTCRM for the annual Sportspersons' Dinner and Awards – an evening that recognises outstanding achievement and celebrates the power of sport across the Royal Marines.

The Sportspersons' Dinner has long been a highlight in the Royal Marines sporting calendar.

The event shines a light on individuals and teams who have demonstrated exceptional dedication, teamwork and resilience, both on and off the field.

The awards acknowledge the breadth of sport throughout the Royal Marines – from grassroots participation to elite-level performance – and recognise those who champion sport as a vital part of Royal Marines life.

Sport plays a significant role across the Naval Service.

It builds physical and mental resilience, strengthens unit cohesion, and enhances wellbeing, morale and retention.

The evening offers the chance to reflect on these benefits, celebrate shared accomplishments, and recognise the volunteers and administrators who give their time to develop sport for others.

This year's dinner featured guest speakers and award presentations, as well as opportunities to acknowledge the individuals and units who continue to drive Royal Marines sport forward. Some of this year's award highlights were:

- Administrator of the year
- Sportsperson of the year
- Lifetime achievement award

Hands across the sea

Inaugural international powerlifting event a huge success



THE Royal Navy & Royal Marines Charity (RNRMC) is proud to celebrate the success of the inaugural International Powerlifting Federation (IPF) Hands Across the Sea event, held at HMNB Devonport.

The groundbreaking competition brought together 30 of the strongest UK Armed Forces powerlifters and 30 elite American military powerlifters for a transatlantic showdown in pursuit of the title Strongest Force.

Both serving personnel and veterans took part, showcasing not only extraordinary athletic achievement but also deep camaraderie, shared values, and the unbreakable bond between allied forces.

The atmosphere throughout the event was electric, with athletes and spectators alike demonstrating immense pride in the spirit of cooperation and resilience that defines both nations' military communities.

Seeing this idea come to life has been genuinely inspiring," said Petty Officer Wesley McGuinness, the driving force behind the event.

"Bringing together serving personnel and veterans from both sides of the Atlantic - united through strength, competition and mutual respect - has created something truly special.

"This first event has exceeded expectation and I'm incredibly proud of every athlete who stepped onto the platform. This is only the beginning."

Amy Reynolds, RNRMC South West and Wales Engagement Officer, added: "The energy and pride in the room were incredible.

"This event highlighted not just world-class strength, but also the unity and shared purpose that binds our Armed Forces communities across borders.

"The generous support shown for Royal Navy & Royal Marines Charity throughout the day was truly inspiring, and it means so much to the serving personnel, veterans, and families we exist to support. Being part of an initiative that brings people together so powerfully—while also championing the work of RNRMC—has been a real privilege."

RNRMC was delighted to support the event, and thanks all the athletes who helped raise funds during the dinner through some fun games and a luxury raffle.

The event so powerfully reflects the dedication, determination, and spirit of the Armed Forces community. Plans are already underway for future editions, building on the success of this remarkable first year.

Photo credit RNRMC and Alligin Photography / © Jarrad Hulm

Evaluation will help families

THE Royal Navy and Royal Marines Charity announced the launch of the full research evaluation report into its ambitious Strengthening Families: By Your Side Programme at the University of Birmingham.

Designed to support Royal Navy and Royal Marines families — no matter where they are living — the Strengthening Families: By Your Side Programme is a core programme for RNRMC ensuring beneficiaries have integrated, meaningful support.

The independent research evaluation, undertaken by Emeritus Professor Jan Walker, of Newcastle University and Dr Gabriela Misca, of the University of Birmingham, examined the implementation of the programme, the challenges facing naval families and the ways in which the interventions supported them.

Their research report points to the valuable learning from this ambitious programme. In 2019, four charities—Relate, Kings Active Foundation, Home-Start, and the Naval Families Federation (NFF)—were invited to take part in the programme. Each organisation brings specialist expertise and delivers a range of services and activities directly to families, including targeted support for children and young people.

Emeritus Professor Jan Walker and Dr Gabriela Misca said: "The Strengthening Families Programme and the research evaluation were very ambitious and proved challenging for the charities involved.

"This report was finalised early in 2025, before the publication of the government's programme for Defence Reform and the Strategic Defence Review 2025, both of which herald radical changes in a new era for Defence at a time of increasing geopolitical uncertainty.

"We believe that the lessons learned from this evaluation will be invaluable in informing future programmes to support and strengthen Royal Navy personnel and their families, and we wish RNRMC well at it continues this important work."

Mandy Lindley, Director of Relationships and Funding at RNRMC said: "We knew this programme was ambitious, and we knew that taking a bold, collaborative approach was the right thing to do. The findings from this evaluation highlight both the challenges and the real value of working collectively to support families of those who serve. We remain steadfast in our commitment to evolve this work and meet the changing needs of the naval community."

To read the report in full: <https://research.birmingham.ac.uk/en/publications/strengthening-families-by-your-side-programme-research-evaluation/>

Children's charity best in business

The Naval Children's Charity has been named the best charity in the south of England when it comes to offering family support.

The Portsmouth-based charity, which began life in 1825 running an orphanage, was singled out at the SME Southern Enterprise Awards.

It has expanded far beyond its original remit over the past two centuries to provide support to children/ naval families – Royal Navy, Royal Marines, Royal Fleet Auxiliary and Maritime Reserve – nationwide.

Aside from its HQ in Twyford Avenue, it has outreach caseworkers in Plymouth and Helensburgh, helping around 2,000 children every year directly – and many more indirectly through community work and other organisations.

In addition, it's recently established a 'youth council' of young people who are helping the charity to develop its strategy.

Running for the past eight years, the awards recognise the best of new or long-established small and medium businesses/enterprises across the UK, breaking the country into regions: the Southern Area includes Hampshire, Surrey and Sussex.

1SL reflects on RNRMC

THE Royal Navy & Royal Marines Charity welcomed supporters, partners and friends to its annual evening reception at St Martin-in-the-Fields, Trafalgar Square, following the Admiralty Carol Service.

Sponsored by MBDA, Navy Leaders and SiXworks, the reception provided an important opportunity for the charity to thank its community for their continued commitment to improving the lives of sailors, marines and their families.

The Admiralty Service – attended by the First Sea Lord, General Sir Gwyn Jenkins, and members of the Navy Board – was the first to take place following his appointment. The service marked the beginning of the Royal Navy's festive season with the traditional lighting of the first Advent candle.

Musical performances by the brass quintet from the Band of HM Royal Marines Scotland and the Chapel Choir of the Royal Hospital School, added to the ceremonial atmosphere.

Lessons were read by Louise Sandher-Jones MP, Minister for Veterans and People; David Boyson, Maritime Account Lead at SiXworks; and Rear Admiral (Retd) Simon Charlier, Senior Defence and Political Advisor at MBDA.

Leading Medical Assistant Grace Huband of His Majesty's Submarines and Major James Poole RM, Chief of Staff to the Migration Team at the Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office, delivered the readings on behalf of the Royal Navy.

Following the service, guests gathered in the Crypt for the RNRMC reception, where the First Sea Lord reflected on the significant impact of the charity's work across the Naval Service and expressed his gratitude for the steadfast support of its donors, partners and advocates.

As the Principal Charity of the Royal Navy, RNRMC remains committed, ready and alongside the Royal Navy, Royal Marines and Royal Fleet Auxiliary communities - past, present and future.



From store to centre and fund to heritage collection

WHEN is a trophy not a trophy?

When it belongs to the Royal Naval Heritage Collection.

From January 5 what has been known by sailors for decades simply as 'the trophy store' (officially, the Royal Navy Trophy Centre) is being re-branded to better reflect both its impressive collection – and its role supporting today's ships, units and establishments.

It's part of a reinvigoration of one of the Senior Service's hidden treasures, allowing the trustees and custodians of the trophies – a word which embraces traditional

awards, cups, engraved plates, swords, paintings, portraits, photographs, models, even a puppet – to continue to care for and manage the remarkable collection, but also add to when required.

Every new Royal Navy ship is given £20,000 to acquire a silver centrepiece (and for those of you who don't own a £20k silver centrepiece, it's an object placed in the middle of the dining table to serve as both decoration and talking point while the ship's company are hosting or dining with guests), plus £3,000 to

commission a painting of the vessel.

As part of the reorganisation, trophies surplus to requirements are being sold off – creating space in the archive, raising money to help pay for new ones/maintain the existing collection.

The first auction which ended on October 9 after a three-month bidding process aimed at serving personnel initially, then veterans and association, saw 61 lots – EPNS silver items, ceramics and medallions – offered.

Some 620 booklets were sent out and 73 sealed bids were

received by closing date. The Auction Committee determined the winners not only on the amount bid, but also personal connections to the items; in some instances, the inclusion of a letter meant the bidder was successful, despite not necessarily making the highest offer.

The winners were informed on October 10 and for those of you were unsuccessful don't feel too disappointed as preparations are under way for similar auctions in the future.

The background to the reinvigoration of the collection

goes back two years as trustees of the Royal Navy Trophy Fund felt the title did not entirely capture what the charity does and the word 'trophy' was archaic, suggesting sporting cups and 'war trophies', rather than the myriad of interesting, historically-important artefacts that the collection includes.

Similarly, the word 'fund' – more akin to the banking/financial sector – didn't cover the mission and objectives of the charity, which have been modernised to serve today's Royal Navy.

The entire collection amounts to nearly 12,000 objects, almost half of them held in a secure location – henceforth known as the Royal Navy Heritage Collection Centre – in Portsmouth Naval Base, the rest on loan to/on display in ships, units, squadrons, and establishments, but also embassies and government buildings, city councils, museums.

For more details about the collection or loaning objects, contact Cdr David Cunningham david.cunningham898@mod.gov.uk.

Skills logged centrally

YOUR personal skills – and your proficiency – are being recorded as part of a Defence-wide database which should transform career management.

Under the Pan-Defence Skills Framework, the Royal Navy is moving towards becoming a Skills-Based organisation, recognising what you can do through the skills acquire in Service – not just rank or job title.

It will shape how the Navy manages people for generations to come, giving personnel more flexibility, more opportunities, and more control over their career.

PDSF is a Defence-wide programme designed to capture, recognise, and develop the skills of every member of the Whole Force

By the end of this year, all personnel will have an online Skills Profile. Whenever you complete a course, do a job or even gain an external qualification, you will be able to claim skills showing what you've achieved and allowing the Service to explore wider employment opportunities for you.

Since last month, every trainee who successfully completes Initial Naval Training at BRNC or HMS Raleigh, or Royal Marine Recruit and Young Officer Training at CTCRM Lympstone, has automatically received an Early Years Skills 'bundle' on their Skills Profile, recognising the skills gained during initial training – leadership, land navigation, human factors, SERE and more.

These skills aren't just words on a page. They're mapped against Defence's official standards and awarded at a proficiency level based on Knowledge, Skill application, Experience, and Behaviours (KSEB).

There are seven levels in total, starting at Level 1 (Awareness), progressing to Level 7 (Strategist). For Phase 1 trainees, most skills will be awarded at the lower levels but will provide the foundations upon which to grow and develop throughout their careers.

In Phase 2 (and Phase 3 for Royal Marines), more skills will be available in pre-approved bundles linked to the training. Over time, this profile will become a key part of how Defence supports your professional development, open doors to specialist roles, and determines how you progress through your career.

"Above all, this isn't extra admin," explained Lieutenant Robin Posner from the Future Peoples Programme. "It's about making sure your hard work is recognised – and giving you the tools to shape your future."

"Your skills matter – own them, build them, and use them to take control of your career."

EYS went live last month – see <https://modgovuk.sharepoint.com/sites/intranet/SitePages/Your-Skills-Your-Future-The-Pan-Defence-Skills-Framework.aspx?web=1&OR=Teams-HL&CT=1764082045044>.

Thank you for your service

SERVICE leavers from across the Royal Navy, Royal Marines, Royal Fleet Auxiliary and Civil Service were formally recognised at the latest Service Leavers Event held at the Senior Rates' Mess at HMS Excellent.

In addition, LGBTQ+ veterans dismissed from service because of their sexuality before the ban was lifted 25 years received their restorative measures as a result of the Etherton Review.

The event, overseen by Director People and Training and supported by the RNRMC, celebrated the dedication and contribution of those completing their service, while promoting a positive transition experience.

Attendees were presented with valedictory certificates and citations in recognition of their commitment and continued connection to the Naval family by Rear Admiral Robert Lauchlan from the Submarine Delivery Agency.

Among those thanked was Warrant Officer 2 Simon Kinnaird, who joined the RN as an Artificer Apprentice in 1977, spent his initial years in the Surface Fleet before becoming a submariner.

He served in HMS Revenge, completing DASO and several CASD patrols, then switched classes and spent ten years with S-boat HMS Splendid.

Simon then shared his extensive knowledge with a new generation of submarine engineers at HMS Sultan as an instructor on the Nuclear Training Staff, delivering bespoke classroom and simulator training to submariners and civilians.

After going back to sea in HMS Spartan and Tireless, he ended his time as an instructor for 'just one year' to fill a gap in the Nuclear School.

Thirteen extensions to his original contract, and twenty years later, he concluded his 48-year career as ME Requirements Manager as part of the project relocating submarine training to the Clyde. He leaves a legacy of skill, professionalism and dedication



to the submarine service in his wake.

RFA CPO Chef Martin Etwell (pictured right) has appeared in these pages on several occasions due to his astounding career spanning more than five decades.

He joined the RFA as a galley boy at the age of 16 and became a contracted employee at 18... and stayed for the next 51 years, finally hanging up his apron in May last year.

His career highlights including cooking for HRH Princess Margaret, being presented with the Merchant Navy Medal of Meritorious Service by the Princess Royal in 2023 and being awarded the Second Sea Lord's Commendation in 2016 for his commitment to the RFA have been matched in operational output as he saw service during the Falklands conflict, the Iran-Iraq/tanker wars and Operation Ellamy (Libya 2011).

CPO Etwell's unwavering service to the RFA will never be matched in terms of longevity and dedication to RFA Ceremonial Duties. His lasting legacy continues in the numerous RFA and RN chefs he has trained and developed over his illustrious career.

Another career spanning five decades was Neil Paddon, who began his service as a soldier at the age of 16 when he joined the Royal Artillery.



His 13 years in the ranks frequently involved humanitarian work, such as building hospitals in Gambia and Senegal.

In 1991, he swapped the Army for the Ministry of Defence Guard Service at HMS Dryad. Since then he's stood guard at establishments in South Hampshire, notably Portsmouth Naval Base and HMS Excellent, earning commendations from the Chief Constable (1993) and Second Sea Lord (2015).

And his life of service has been emulated by his son Max, who is a marine officer with the Ministry of Defence Police.

Pictures: LPhoto Jennifer Cox

Symposium to shape future

MORE than 200 career management professionals from across the Royal Navy, Royal Marines, Royal Fleet Auxiliary, Reserves and civilian support teams gathered at HMS Excellent for the Career Management Symposium.

The pivotal event was aimed at shaping the future of personnel strategy across the Naval Service, providing a dynamic platform for sharing best practices, exploring innovative initiatives, and strengthening collaboration across the Career Management (CM) community.

Throughout the day, attendees received comprehensive updates from sub-teams and senior leaders:

- Career Delivery, highlighting efforts to reduce outflow and increase inflow, with targeted support for submariners, engineers, and warfare officers;
- Potential Service Leavers and Academic Scrutiny Boards, focusing on recovery options and retention strategies.
- Career Field and Warfare Updates showcased initiatives such as the Fighter Controller secondments and reintegration of EW/INT/CT roles.
- Logistics CM Update introduced Project Interchange, aimed at career secondment opportunities within Defence and industry.
- Holistic Support and Wellbeing. A standout session explored Holistic Transition, underscoring the importance of through-career support for service personnel and their families and a compelling brief on mental fitness, encouraging both personal responsibility and organisational leadership in promoting resilience.
- Recognition and Community. The symposium also celebrated excellence through the CM Annual Awards, recognising outstanding contributions across the career management community: Deanna Bumstead, WO1 Bugbee RM, CPO Knights, CPO Temperton, PO Hastie, LH Capel and LH Rawlins.

The event was a great success, supported by grants from the RMA – The Royal Marines Charity (£1,226.64), The Royal Navy and Royal Marines Charity (£400) and Greenwich Hospital (£400).

Throughout the symposium, members of the Royal Marines Career Management Team advertised their upcoming Triathlon event, looking to raise money for RMA – TRMC. Fourteen team members completed a one-mile pool swim, ten-mile road run and 15-mile road cycle in under 4h10m – totalling in excess of 361 miles to celebrate the Corps birthday. More than £5,500 was raised.

MEGS road trip reaps dividends

THE Marine Engineering General Service (MEGS) Professions Team spent two days on the road visiting Maritime College Cadetship students in South Shields and Glasgow.

The first day on Tyneside provided an invaluable opportunity to explore the state-of-the-art simulators and workshops that MCC students use to hone their skills.

The team were particularly impressed by the advanced training facilities, which mirror real-world maritime environments, allowing cadets to practise critical scenarios in a safe and controlled setting.

The visit also served as a platform for knowledge exchange. The team shared insights into the training conducted at HMS Sultan and explored potential areas for collaboration. By learning from each other's practices, both institutions aim to enhance the training experience for cadets and ensure they are equipped with the skills needed to excel in their careers.

The second day of the tour saw the MEGS Professions Team joining forces with the MEGS Shadow Board and members of the ME Department from HMS Glasgow. Together, they visited the City of Glasgow College, a hub of

maritime education and innovation.

The highlight of the visit was undoubtedly the chance to experience the college's cutting-edge simulators first-hand. The team not only observed the technology in action but also had the opportunity to test their skills on the simulators. This hands-on experience provided valuable insight into the training environment MCC students are immersed in.

Following the simulator session, the team toured the college's workshops, which are equipped with modern facilities designed to provide practical, hands-on training. The visit underscored

the high standard of education and resources available to cadets, reinforcing the importance of the partnership between the Royal Navy and maritime colleges.

The afternoon was dedicated to delivering an ME Branch Update brief: an overview of the latest developments within the branch.

Day 2 concluded with a meeting of the MEGS Shadow Board, hosted by Lieutenant Commander Rich Brennan. focused on addressing key branch issues, exploring innovative ideas, and discussing potential ways forward. The collaborative atmosphere encouraged

open dialogue and the exchange of ideas, ensuring that the voices of junior ranks were heard and considered.

Reflecting on the visit, WO1 Lee Paterson, MEGS Warrant Officer Profession Manager (WOPM), expressed his enthusiasm:

"It's great to have the opportunity to see our students in the colleges, but equally, getting the Shadow Board and members of HMS Glasgow together to deliver a branch update brief in a great location at the college overlooking the River Clyde has been amazing."

"Getting feedback from the junior rates who attended was important too."

Trailblazing. Inspirational. Winning.

TRAILBLAZING nurse Abigail Wright has been hailed Defence’s ‘woman of the year’ for championing the mental health of submariners.

Her outstanding efforts earned her a string of citations/nominations from across the Service – resulting in her being named ‘woman of the year’ at the 2025 Women in Defence Awards.

The Leading Naval Nurse was unable to attend the ceremony in London as she is deployed with the UK’s flagship HMS Prince of Wales, which returns to Portsmouth next month after an eight-month deployment to the western Pacific.

Instead, she watched proceedings streamed live to the cabin of the carrier’s captain, joined by the Royal Navy’s Director of People and Training Rear Admiral Jude Terry who officially presented the award (pictured inset).

It’s the first time in the ten-year history of the awards that a member of the Naval Service has taken home the top title.

“It hasn’t fully sunk in yet – what an experience it was,” said



the 33-year-old from Nottingham.

“I was surprised to find out I had been nominated in the Outstanding Contribution Category – then to be shortlisted... and then a finalist, I could not believe it.

“I know there are some incredible Women in Defence, I’ve met them, I’ve had the pleasure of working with them, these are the women who have inspired me, and I never expected to see my name amongst theirs.”

Already a trained mental health nurse working in a civilian hospital – she holds a degree in psychology and masters in

nursing – Abigail joined the Navy in September 2020, since when she’s worked at hospitals in Portsmouth, supported Royal Marines training in Norway, and then went to Faslane.

It’s her time there – she describes it as “some fantastic and eye-opening experiences supporting the submarine population” – which features most prominently in her award nominations.

As the sole dedicated mental health nurse assigned to the Submarine Service – a community of around 5,000 souls performing demanding tasks on a daily basis, not merely separated from loved ones for weeks on end, but for much – or all – of that time completely cut off from the outside world.

With some particularly lengthy patrols by some boats recently, the mental wellbeing for crews has assumed even greater importance.

To better understand that world, Abigail volunteered to undertake submarine escape training to allow her to go to sea on boats and experience what crews go through.

And when boats have come back from their missions, the

nurse has ensured the returning submariners receive the support and understanding they need to reintegrate into everyday life.

In addition to the support Abigail has provided to the Silent Service, she’s a fierce advocate for Women in Defence, organised the first International Women’s Day at Faslane, organised weekly ‘mindfulness’ sessions, quickly became the Faslane representative of the Naval Service Women’s Network (and is now national co-secretary), dedicating much of her personal time to raising awareness of opportunities for women in the Royal Navy.

All of which, say colleagues, makes her a tremendous asset to fellow female sailors, to Clyde Naval Base, to the Submarine Service and to the Royal Navy as a whole.

The glowing testimonials provided by colleagues to the awards’ judges describe her as “committed”, “diligent”, “welcoming” and “supportive”, possessing an ability to talk freely with admirals and able ratings, veteran submariners and those like herself relatively new to the Silent Service on delicate issues and, quite simply, “a beacon of

inspiration within the Royal Navy”.

Abigail has been assigned to the medical team on HMS Prince of Wales since August and in the new year, promoted to petty officer, will move to Plymouth to use her expertise working in the Department for Community Mental Health.



RNRM Sports Lottery results

The results for November 2025:

November 1 2025

£5,000 – A MacDonald (33-43-57); £1,800 – M Tysoe (09-11-29); £800 – A Blakley (11-28-56); £600 – C Ansell (08-37-48); £500 – D Lyndon (03-06-34); £400 – S Turner (03-53-70)

November 8 2025

£5000 – F Prentice (13-31-65) £1800 – O Davenport (02-29-62); £800 – P Prior (11-43-62); £600 – C Andrew (12-24-27); £500 – R Garty (15-27-64); £400 – R Herbert (15-38-62)

November 15 2025

£5,000 – M Rolli (16-28-68); £1,800 – C Lamb (19-48-62); £800 – H Keenan (26-32-58); £600 – D Whitehead (02-33-53); £500 – H Wilkinson (27-44-50); £400 – R Gobeys (09-31-47)

November 22 2025

£5,000 – M Fannen (27-42-52); £1,800 – D Everett (32-47-60); £800 – N Wheeler (10-22-28); £600 – D McCaffrey (04-21-70); £500 – L Townsend (09-21-60); £400 – A Lockwood (21-36-63)

November 29 2025

£5,000 – O Ruane (31-36-58); £1,800 – M Blewett (21-34-69); £800 – B Rowlands (28-55-58); £600 – K Lister (05-32-45); £500 – C Burgess (09-43-46); £400 – C Peters (08-23-54)

November Xtra Draw

£100 each to S Allen (17-22-46); E Carberry (07-54-65); A McMillan (03-08-10); P Deane-Hall (31-35-45); P Linehan (10-27-57); H Western (18-46-55); L Bannister (28-51-60); B Fice (11-30-33); A Munro (09-16-64); D Routledge (22-56-63).

Going in-house saves £1¼m

SAILORS responsible for neutralising underwater threats are getting tailored, in-house training in a scheme saving thousands of pounds.

The Mine and Threat Exploitation Group set up its Operational Conversion Unit – a team of seven to deliver training on the specialist equipment used in minehunting operations – in late 2024.

The team have had a successful first year, having delivering 12 courses and generating savings of around £280,000 (previously, the unit would have relied on external contractors, manufacturer training or commercial training providers to learn how to use the cutting-edge kit).

But they can now deliver the training courses in-house for nine autonomous or crewless systems as MTXG transitions from traditional mine hunting methods and embraces autonomy as the future of mine warfare.

Officer-in-Charge (OiC) of the OCU, Lieutenant Commander Dan Chandos-Hall, said: “We are a small team with a big task and the guys have worked incredibly hard to bring a training solution to fruition without reliance on contractor support in a really short space of time.”

The MTXG OCU was formally stood up in November last year, operating with just seven personnel. The unit is based in the

Sail Loft at HMNB Portsmouth, a location previously occupied by the Maritime Autonomous Systems Trials Team (MASTT).

Despite its modest size, the OCU has quickly become a vital component in the Navy’s transition to autonomous mine warfare.

They offer a broadly cost-neutral solution in delivering the training which supports the wider Mine Hunting Capability programme and the future of mine hunting operations.

From 2028, career training for the Mine Warfare Cadre will undergo a major transformation but the pace of system procurement meant an interim training solution was needed and so the OCU was developed and implemented swiftly to meet operational demands.

Lt Cdr Chandos-Hall added: “There are only seven of us to design and deliver upwards of nine different courses as quickly as possible, so we’ve had to identify agile ways of bringing compliant training to life.

“It’s a testament to the experience and relentless work ethic of the team that we’ve made the progress we have, especially when they’re still being trained in the systems themselves; we should be delivering training in five of those systems by the end of next year.”

The OCU has successfully delivered 12 iterations of training, covering the Remotely



CPO (MW) Matthew Routliff and PO (MW) Phil Channon from the Operational Conversion Unit check a SeaCat autonomous underwater surveillance device
Picture: LPhot Jennifer Cox

Operated Vehicle (ROV) Video Ray Defender and the command system software Seetrack.

Looking ahead, the team will receive training on the Seacat Medium Uncrewed Underwater Vehicle (MUUV) this month, followed by the ARCIMS

Uncrewed Surface Vessel (USV) in February 2026, with internal delivery of these systems scheduled to begin next year.

The MTXG OCU’s work not only supports the immediate operational needs of the Royal Navy but also lays the

groundwork for a sustainable, scalable training model that will underpin the future of autonomous mine warfare.

Their efforts exemplify innovation, agility, and dedication in the face of evolving maritime threats.

Seal makes it feel real

ENGINE/engineering giant Wärtsilä has donated a stern seal to improve practical training for sailors maintaining them.

The Finnish firm, which provides engines and machinery for ships across the Fleet – including the mighty diesel generators on the two aircraft carriers – has refurbished stern seals from HMS Kent and donated them to the Marine Engineering Training Group at HMS Sultan.

When fitted to transmissions and shaft lines on ships, the seals prevent the escape of lubricating oil – and the influx of seawater.

The components, which have been completely overhauled, and look new, are now serving as invaluable visual aids for the next generation of naval engineers passing through the Gosport establishment at the able/leading hand level, as well as senior engineering maintenance controllers.

This hands-on approach to learning hydrodynamic seal construction provides trainees with physical confirmation of

theoretical knowledge, reinforcing textbook learning through tangible experience, providing the crucial context that brings together theoretical knowledge during machinery space walk-arounds and helping the transition from classroom to ship..

“People learn in different ways, and being able to physically see these components in front of them really reinforces what they’ve studied,” explained Lieutenant Bradley ‘Jonah’ Johnson.

The training programme covers routine maintenance procedures as well as common faults and checks carried out during maintenance operations.

Instructors discuss operational scenarios – including stern seal failure – which represents a practised machinery breakdown that engineers may encounter at sea.

For those destined for Type 23 frigates, where these seals are still fitted to commissioned vessels, the relevance is particularly significant.



200 years of providing help to Naval children

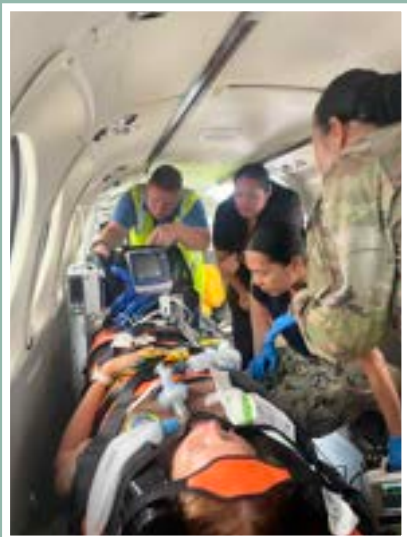
To continue to make a difference in their lives, improving their wellbeing and development, we need your support – donate today using the QR code below. To help us or to see how we can help you visit our website to find out more.

www.navalchildrenscharity.org.uk
023 9263 9534



Registered CIO: 1160182 and SC052322 in Scotland.





THE FIREFLY SCHEME

FROM REGULAR TO RESERVES

- The Firefly Scheme offers the Royal Navy (RN) trained service leaver the opportunity to join the Royal Naval Reserve (RNR) or Royal Marines Reserve (RMR) through a seamless fast track process. (You will be ineligible if you left as an Untrained or Part trained Rank)
- The maximum joining age for RNR is 56 and RMR is 51 and you need to have a JMES of Medically Fully Deployable (MFD) or Medically Limited Deployable (MLD) on Discharge.
- RN/RM trained Ex-Regulars, who are within 36 months of Service Discharge date and trained service leavers from other Armed Services may also apply.
- The scheme offers the opportunity to remain or become part of the RN/Corps Family with its unique camaraderie.
- As a Reservist for an annual commitment of just 24 Reserve Days (achieved through your spare time) you will be well rewarded. Earning extra money, accruing an **additional pension** and subject to meeting the specified criteria, receive an **annual tax free bounty**.
- A stable work-life balance is also offered, with an initial two-year harmony period, meaning that you are **exempt from operational duties** for this period, unless you wish to volunteer.
- Please note that during this period you will still be expected to meet your annual number of Reserve Service Days (ideally 24).

For further information, contact
W02 Kenny Williamson RM at kenneth.williamson479@mod.gov.uk



PRESERVING PARADISE

BECAUSE paradise isn't perfect.

The beaches and waters might be pristine, the weather near flawless. But not always.

The Pacific suffered two of its strongest typhoons as 2025 drew to a close.

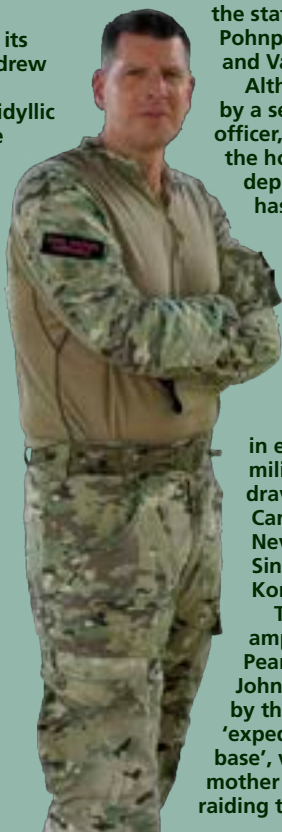
Community life may seem idyllic - filled with a spirit and sense of belonging we've perhaps lost.

But the infrastructure is often less resilient, the facilities and services not as comprehensive.

The shortcomings were exposed devastatingly by the Boxing Day tsunami in 2004, which ravaged thousands of communities large and small across the Indo-Pacific.

The tragedy was the catalyst for the ultimate 'soft power' deployment: a US-led naval force moving around the nations and islands of the region, delivering aid, offering assistance, health care, offering guidance in coping with natural disasters and supporting cultural and community projects.

Pacific Partnership has just completed its 21st run, spreading goodwill across



swathes of the Pacific: Tonga, Fiji, the Philippines, Papua New Guinea, Micronesia - including the states of Chuuk and Pohnpei - Palau, Samoa and Vanuatu.

Although spearheaded by a senior US Navy officer, in recent years, the honour of being deputy commander has fallen to Royal Navy personnel, part of a small UK contingent assigned to the deployment, this year Royal Marine Colonel Matt Churchward.

The force comprises in excess of 1,500 military personnel, drawn from Australia, Canada, Germany, New Zealand, Japan, Singapore and South Korea.

They use the amphibious ship USS Pearl Harbour and USS John L Canley - classed by the US Navy as an 'expeditionary mobile base', which serve as mother ships for marine raiding teams, divers and

mine warfare experts and can also conduct humanitarian aid and disaster-relief missions.

"My role is to support the 1,500-strong mission staff and ensure effective planning and execution of activities to fulfil our aim of helping our regional partners prepare in calm, to be ready to respond in crisis," he said.

"I have spent more than eight years in the US on liaison and exchange roles, most recently working alongside the US Marine Corps, so it has been great to embed with the US Navy, and see how they work, and I have enjoyed bringing my experiences to help achieve success on this mission."

There is nothing like Pacific Partnership in the UK mission set. The Caribbean patrol ship (currently HMS Trent) performs aspects of disaster planning (and relief, such as in Jamaica recently) thanks to a combination of specially-trained personnel and ship's company.

Pacific Partnership is on far grander scale, calling upon a broad spectrum of specialisations and roles:

■ Vets, who taught livestock owners how to humanely neuter their beasts.

■ A multinational band to deliver concerts and music lessons.

■ Disaster planners to offer guidance to minimise the impact of hurricanes.

■ Doctors and dentists to provide medical care where it might be lacking, delivering clinics, provided specialist treatment and passed on training and advice to their local counterparts

■ Seabees, the US Navy's famous Construction Battalions (the nickname comes from the initials) to build or renovating community buildings, schools and medical centres.

■ And everyone joins in cultural events, school visits and ship tours.

Among the most interesting visits Pacific Partnership 2025 made was to the tiny republic of Palau, some 550 miles east of the Philippines. Despite comprising nearly 350 islands, it covers barely 180 square miles making it the sixth smallest nation on the planet - just slightly bigger than the Isle of Wight.

"It has been awesome to see the Seabees at work, they are a great bunch of people, and deliver any task you give them, they are real professionals," said Colonel Churchward.

Joining the Royal Marine in Palau was fellow Brit, junior Royal Navy

officer, Henry Dace. "It was a great experience to work and learn from our American allies, and to work with like-minded allies on a great mission."

The disaster management group worked with non-governmental organisations to improve the storage of disaster aid on the island, improve air-traffic control capacity and develop crisis communication skills should a natural catastrophe strike.

There was also time to reflect on sacrifices eight decades ago. Peleliu was scene of some of the fiercest fighting in the Pacific Campaign.

Nearly 50,000 US troops were thrown against a little over 12,000 Japanese defenders.

In two months of fighting in the autumn of 1944, all but 360 of the Japanese were killed, while one in four American servicemen became casualties.

Col Churchward laid a wreath jointly with Lieutenant Koki Sato of the Japan Maritime Self-Defence Force in a service of remembrance at Peleliu Peace Memorial Park.

"I would thoroughly recommend joining a future Pacific Partnership mission if you can," said Colonel Churchward. "It has been a fantastic opportunity to help support the US Navy, in this beautiful but remote part of the world."

Pictures: Lt Henry Dace and US Navy

Your Exclusive Official Royal Navy Calendar

12 AMAZING IMAGES OF THE FLEET The 2026 Royal Navy/Navy News Calendar

Order Now!

Our official calendar for 2026 'Protecting the Nation' features images that show The Royal Navy in its role sailing the world's seas protecting and helping in areas in much need of aid and assistance.

There are **3 ways** to purchase your copy -

- **Online** - click on onlinecalendarshop.com/navynews and go through the simple order procedure to secure your copy. Navy News readers please quote code (GLOBALMISSION26) when ordering online. Don't forget to have your credit card details handy when you go online.
- **By post** - send a cheque or postal order to **Onlinecalendarshop.com Ltd, 2 Ringway Business Park, Richard Street, Birmingham B7 4AA.** Please make your cheque payable to Onlinecalendarshop.com Ltd
- **By phone** - call **0121 333 1553** to place your order direct with one of our friendly customer service operators. Don't forget to have your credit card details handy when you call. Please allow 28 days from order for delivery.



Onlinecalendarshop.com Ltd,
2 Ringway Business Park,
Richard Street,
Birmingham B7 4AA



ONLY £10
inc p&p (UK)
(or overseas + p&p)
CODE
GLOBALMISSION26

AMAZING FREE
SHIPS OF THE FLEET
POSTER

MILITARY RANGE FOR 2026

Amazing official military calendars with powerful emotive images.

See opposite and choose one of our 3 easy ways to place your order

Only £10.00 inc p&p (UK).

Please don't forget to include your discount code when ordering.



This official calendar makes the ideal Christmas gift, order now to beat the Christmas rush whilst stocks last.

Family brings WW1 deeds back to life for Calliope

THE family of a Tyneside sailor shared his Great War experiences with his modern-day successors when they visited HMS Calliope. The descendants of Thomas Marshall Thompson brought an often forgotten chapter in naval history back to life for the Gateshead-based naval reservists through the papers and memories of the WW1 sailor – whose active career only lasted a couple of months.

Thomas was one of hundreds of thousands of Britons who volunteered in August 1914 when the Great War broke out.

He enlisted at the Royal Naval Volunteer Reserve's Tyneside Headquarters – forerunner of today's Calliope – as an Ordinary Seaman.

There were more volunteers for Naval Service than seagoing positions, so 'surplus' sailors and officers were hurriedly trained as naval infantry, brought together in the newly-formed Royal Naval Division and sent to the fledgling Western Front to support the Army – in particular to prevent the port of Antwerp falling into German hands.

The sailor soldiers were in action no more than seven days –

and were unable to prevent Antwerp's fall.

Some sailors managed to escape encirclement, but most of the 1,500-strong naval detachment was trapped. Rather than face imprisonment, their commander, Commodore Wilfred Henderson, took the difficult decision to march his men into neutral Holland where they were interned for the duration of the war – more than four years.

Thomas was interned near the town at Groningen in a camp consisting of wooden huts which became known as HMS Timbertown.

As the men were internees and not prisoners of war, they were allowed to return to the United Kingdom on leave for family occasions or to help with the harvest, provided that they returned to the camp when their leave ended.

At the war's end, Thomas returned to the United Kingdom. According to his service record, he demobilised at HMS Helicon (formerly the third HMS Calliope), the drill ship used by reservists on Tyneside at the time.

He went on to have 13 children, including Pam Bolam. "Our family was interested in finding out more about our

father's wartime service, so I contacted the team at HMS Calliope. They hosted us at their unit in Gateshead and we got to share stories and experiences with them," she said.

Commander David King, Calliope's Commanding Officer, added: "We are delighted and honoured that the Thompson family reached out to us to share their story."

"I am so proud of HMS Calliope's heritage and see it as a priority to maintain those strong links with the local community. The Thompson family's story shows what a pivotal role Calliope has played in people's lives across the North-East."

Mrs Bolam was one of seven of Thomas Thompson's children who made the pilgrimage to London to attend the rededication of the RN Division's Memorial on Horse Guard's Parade last month.

"Our family is pleased to have been given the chance to attend this service. It was a privilege, and we are proud that our father's wartime service is very much recognised and valued by today's Royal Navy," she said.

The Royal Navy Division was reconstituted after Antwerp and went on to serve with distinction at Gallipoli, the Somme, Arras, Third Ypres and the Somme again. Its casualties in those battles accounted for 40 per cent of the Senior Service's losses in WW1.



Time to honour 'Spitfires of sea'

THIS is the memorial to the 'Spitfires of the Sea' which could greet visitors to Portsmouth Historic Dockyard if £250,000 is raised.

Historians and enthusiasts want to install this statue just inside Victory Gate as a permanent tribute to the men and women of the Royal Navy's Coastal Forces and the Royal Naval Volunteer Reserve.

During both world wars, small, fast, nimble motor boats proved a constant thorn in the side of whichever enemy they faced, frequently grappling with much larger, more powerful vessels – and getting the better of them.

Coastal Forces personnel earned more than 3,000 bravery awards – including four Victoria Crosses, more proportionally than any other branch of the Royal Navy.

Coastal Forces craft fought in some 900 actions, fired more torpedoes than the Silent Service, and sank 400 enemy vessels – but at a heavy cost: some 300 craft (one in 12 boats) were lost in action.

The crews were a mix of reservists and wartime conscripts, renowned for both their youth (average age 21) camaraderie and sense of family. Veterans included future acting greats such as Avenger Patrick Macnee and Dr Who Patrick Troughton, Bond film director Guy Hamilton, and long-serving Chancellor of the Exchequer Nigel Lawson.

The memorial the Coastal Forces Heritage Trust hopes to install features two bronze figures poised on the bows of a motor gunboat, with a WRNS signaller alongside them.

Designed by celebrated Hampshire sculptor Amy Goodman, the monument has drawn inspiration for one of the figures from Coastal Forces legend

Lieutenant Commander Robert Hitchens, the most highly decorated RNVR officer with two Distinguished Service Orders, three Distinguished Service Cross and three Mentions in Dispatches. His death in 1943 sent shockwaves through the service.

There is an impressive modern gallery celebrating the Coastal Forces at Priddy's Hard in Gosport.

But the Coastal Forces Heritage Trust believes a striking memorial in Portsmouth – the harbour was home to HMS Hornet, the Coastal Forces HQ for 30 years until the mid-1950s – is "long overdue".

Rear Admiral Rex Cox, Chair of the trust, continued: "Coastal Forces, the RNVR, and the WRNS made extraordinary contributions in both world wars. The design reflects their courage and ingenuity – and this campaign is our opportunity to give them the recognition they deserve."

With Motor Gun Boat 81 and Coastal Motor Boat 4R part of the visitor experience in the dockyard, Hannah Prowse, chief executive of Portsmouth Historic Quarter, said the "interactive and inspiring monument" would "help bring the stories of courage and daring to life".

Standing four metres (13ft) tall, the monument will be unveiled in May 2027 if funding is secured. The Trust team will be travelling around the coast, telling some of the untold stories of Coastal Forces to schools, Cadet Forces, sailing clubs and industry groups to drum up support in the coming months.

You can find out more about the project at www.coastal-forces.org.uk and you can make donations via www.justgiving.com/charity/coastal-forces.



A night of Triumph at HMS Raleigh

SUBMARINERS at HMS Raleigh were given an in-depth dive into the heroics and sacrifices of their wartime forebears.

For 12 months HMS Triumph was the scourge of Axis forces in the Mediterranean, sinking or damaging a string of Italian merchant vessels and warships, then conducting covert missions to land and recover agents operating behind enemy lines.

It was on one such mission in the Aegean that she was lost with all hands at the end of 1941/ beginning of 1942.

Seven decades later former sailor Gav Don began researching the boat's history – his uncle served aboard her.

The 64-year-old from Northumberland joined the Navy as an Ordinary Seaman in 1981 and left six years later as a Warfare Lieutenant. He began looking into Triumph's story when he retired from his second career in investment, geopolitics and entrepreneurial finance.

Gav tracked down some 200 descendants of Triumph's crew, who've subsequently formed the Triumph Family Association, and gathered a wealth of narrative sources revealing the story of the boat's year in the Mediterranean in 1941 and the circumstances of her loss.

He presented the results of his 15 years' research – which have been captured in a book – to personnel from the RN Submarine School at Raleigh,

giving them an insight into life in a wartime boat, the challenges crew faced and not least the tension and danger of each patrol.

From his research into Triumph, Gav believes the intelligence gathering and special operations she carried out proved as effective in the fight against the Axis powers as the torpedoes fired at enemy shipping.

He concluded his Triumph talk by presenting Cdr Malcolm McCallum and the wardroom with a medal board – a commemorative board showing all of the medals won by Triumph's ship's company during the war and a message of love and affection from the Triumph families.

Also hosted by the Torpoint establishment on the same day was local resident Frances Impey, niece of an HMS Triumph crewman.

She presented the wardroom with a sketch of the heavy cruiser HMS Raleigh in Plymouth Sound, around 1921 (the base itself was established in 1940). The sketch was made by Sibyl Jerram, Frances' great aunt while she and her husband Charles were living in Stonehouse Barracks across the water in Plymouth.

Frances said: "It was extraordinary that I should find that sketch on the morning of my visit to HMS Raleigh, I was looking for something else, and it just fell out of the scrap book."

One Submarine's Secret War Against the Axis: HMS Triumph, SOE and MI9 in the Mediterranean 1941 is published by Pen and Sword, priced £25.



Resurgent revived as work starts

THE construction of the first of three Royal Fleet Auxiliary support ships that form the logistical backbone for UK aircraft carrier operations has begun at North Devon shipyard Appledore.

The steel cutting for RFA Resurgent marked the start of construction of the next-generation Fleet Solid Support vessels, which will provide munitions, stores and provisions to Royal Navy task groups – primarily those led by the Queen Elizabeth-class carriers – around the world.

His Majesty the King approved the names of the new ships, which are being built by Navantia UK in collaboration with Harland & Wolff, BMT and A&P Appledore.

Only Resurgent's name has been revealed so far, but all three titles are intended to convey values associated with the role that Fleet Solid Support ships will play.

The RFA celebrated its 120th anniversary in 2025 and continues to provide irreplaceable support to the Royal Navy.

Commodore Sam Shattock, Commodore RFA, said: "The ship is innovative, to meet the latest environmental protection standards and designed from the bottom up to deliver maritime sustainment as efficiently as possible.

"The construction will provide impetus to the UK shipbuilding industry, supporting jobs and local economies at the various construction and assembly locations in the UK.

"I'm excited to watch this ship join the RFA flotilla and demonstrate its capabilities in due course. A true warfighting enabler for the Royal Navy of tomorrow."

Keith Bethell, DE&S Director, Maritime Environment, said: "This is a significant moment for everyone involved in the delivery of this programme.

"The Fleet Solid Support ships represent a major investment in the RFA's ability to support frontline naval forces globally.

"Each vessel will serve as a crucial supply link for carrier-led operations, proudly built by skilled workers brought together for this shared mission."

While the steel cutting ceremony took place in North Devon, the £1.6bn Fleet Solid Support programme – which creates 1,200 shipyard jobs – will be undertaken across three sites.

At Appledore the bow sections of all three ships will be made – the forward 50 metres of each vessel containing crew accommodation and ship systems.

In Cadiz in Spain, Navantia will manufacture the central section of the ships, a 120-metre section with the main machinery, stores and operational systems.

This will all be brought together with the stern section at the Harland & Wolff yard in Belfast for final assembly – bringing together the bow sections from Appledore and central parts from Cadiz – creating the complete 216-metre vessels.

President of Navantia, Ricardo Domínguez, Sir Alan Massey, Non-Executive Chair of Navantia UK, Minister of Defence Readiness and Industry, Luke Pollard MP, and Cdre Shattock were all present at the ceremony alongside a number of other VIPs.

RFA Resurgent is the first in class and is a name that has been held by one ship previously, a merchant ship converted to a fleet replenishment ship in 1957 and decommissioned in 1979.

There is an islet named after her in the Three Brothers groups of coral islands in the Indian Ocean, after she supported a 1975 joint services scientific expedition to the area around Danger Island, within the British Indian Ocean Territory.



Names added to Liverpool's roll

THE names of 13 sailors have been added to Liverpool's Roll of Honour – more than a century after they gave their lives.

Accidentally omitted from the list of the city's war dead when compiled, the missing 13 – plus four soldiers – were ceremonially added to the Liverpool roll of honour as the board was rededicated in the town hall.

Among the names now included, reservist Able Seaman Alexander Campbell who drowned aged 19 after the ship he was serving on, a Danish steamer, SS Bogatyr, was torpedoed, and then ran aground in bad weather off the Lincolnshire coast in February 1916.

The teenager was buried in Bootle Cemetery and his name added to HMS Eaglet's roll of honour – but not the civic roll until now. His great niece Fiona Richards received a memorial scroll by Liverpool's Lord Mayor Barbara Murray.

And Chief Petty officer Steve Calderbank, Chairman of HMS Eaglet Old and Bold Affiliation, received a scroll on behalf of Wireman (electrical engineer) Alexander Mould, killed with 842 shipmates when battleship HMS Vanguard blew up at Scapa Flow in the summer of 1917.

Liverpool's list was compiled during and in the immediate aftermath of the Great War and was formally unveiled in the town hall in 1921 by the future Edward VIII.

Originally, the roll stretched to 13,245 men from the city who lost their lives between 1914 and 1918. In the century since, the number of dead has surpassed 13,500 as names were added by historians and relatives.

It was only when historians began researching the honours board at HMS Eaglet, Liverpool's naval reserve unit (originally



Fiona Richards receives a scroll honouring AB Alexander Campbell from Lord Mayor Cllr Barbara Murray in front of Liverpool's wall of honour

The names added are:

Able Seaman Birchall
Able Seaman Burrows
Leading Seaman Cass
Able Seaman Campbell
Leading Seaman Cullen
Signaller Cullington
Able Seaman Dunne
Petty Officer Horrigan
Private Kenny
Able Seaman Massey
Able Seaman Mclellan
Private Mccutcheon
Rifleman Mcgeachin
Able Seaman Mitchell
Wireman Mould
Leading Seaman Radcliffe
Private Weston

known as Eagle, but renamed when the aircraft carrier was built) that they realised 13 names were missing from the civic list.

A ceremony including prayers, an act of remembrance, the Last Post, minute's silence and the

Union Flag lowered to half-mast at the town hall saw the extended list dedicated in the presence of Naval Regional Commander Commodore Thomas Knowles, Eaglet's Commanding Officer Commander Richard Fletcher, Lieutenant Colonel David Hartley, commanding Merseyside RMR, members of the Royal Naval Reserve Officers' Club, Liverpool ('Sea Urchins') and HMS Eaglet Old and Bold Affiliation.

Most importantly relatives of the dead were invited to see their loved one's name belatedly added.

"It is incredibly important that names continue to be found and recorded alongside their fellow servicemen," Councillor Murray said.

"We will keep adding names for as long as we receive them, ensuring every serviceman receives recognition from the city for their courage and sacrifice."

Engineers take the Rohde to the future

ROHDE and Schwarz.

Not the two strikers leading the German attack at the 2026 World Cup... but a German-based firm with a base in Hampshire where next-generation communications kit for next-generation warships is being developed.

A group of young engineers from Forward Support Units (FSUs) Archimedes and Brunel, alongside colleagues from the Engineering Training Squadron (ETS) were invited to the firm's Fleet works to learn about that kit – and other advanced tech for which Rohde & Schwarz is renowned world over.

The firm specialises in

advanced technologies including radio communications, radio monitoring, radio location and cybersecurity.

It's been selected to provide the comms fit for all eight Type 26 frigates (five of which are under construction on the Clyde, led by HMS Glasgow) – hence the RN engineers' interest.

Rohde and Schwarz will also deliver training courses for future RN engineers at its secure facility in Fleet before transitioning to the delivery of instruction to HMS Collingwood trainers.

Having presented their

hosts with a FSU crest, crafted in the Portsmouth workshop, the visitors were then given exclusive access to the secure Communications Laboratory and Test and Measurement facilities.

That allowed them to watch demonstrations of cutting-edge communications and Wi-Fi technologies. These systems, manufactured entirely in Germany, are widely deployed across the global defence sector and will soon be integrated into Royal Navy vessels.

Hands-on sessions with Rohde and Schwarz specialists provided the engineers with practical exposure to advanced equipment and processes, reinforcing their technical knowledge and understanding of future naval capabilities.

"The visit reinforced the Forward Support Unit's commitment to broadening the engineering knowledge of our engineers by immersing them in high-performance environments," explained Commander Will Jones, Commander Operational Support for Surface Flotilla.

"Through engagement with leading industry partners such as Rohde and Schwarz, our engineers gain advanced technical insights and practical expertise that can be applied directly to future challenges."

Tap nurses' RN history

DO YOU want to know more about the rich history of naval nursing?

Then the custodians of the collection of ephemera, documents, records and accounts of Queen Alexandra's Royal Naval Nursing Service are keen to welcome you.

To mark the 45th anniversary of the QARNNS archive being founded, the team responsible for it want to raise its profile – and raise footfall.

Located in the Institute of Naval Medicine in Alverstoke, near Gosport, and administered by a team of volunteers, the archive owes its existence to the service's former Matron-in-Chief Patricia Gould.

Always interested in history, during her later career she became aware that fellow QARNNS personnel had little knowledge of the proud role naval nurses had played in their then nearly 100-year existence.

When she retired in 1980, a Miss Gould started collecting various items of memorabilia – mostly contributed by former QARNNS, particularly those who had served in World War 2 and Korea.

Assisted by a small group of volunteers, she built up an ever-growing collection/archive, constantly added to over the past 45 years via donations and by scouring national auctions and online sites for items of interest.

The archive now provides a comprehensive record of the history of the QARNNS, starting with events leading up to the inception of the Royal Naval Nursing Service in 1884, and the subsequent changes to it in 1902 when Queen Alexandra gave it her name and patronage.

The collection comprises documents, photographs, medals, uniforms and other artefacts, plus many records of the work of QARNNS in Royal Naval Hospitals and other establishments at home and abroad in peacetime, and of service ashore and afloat during time of war and crisis.

Custodians have developed close ties with the National Museum of the Royal Navy and the National Maritime Museum, London, and also liaise with archivists in other museums, including the Imperial War Museum, Museum of Military Medicine, and the Royal Naval Hospital Museum in Malta.

Archive material is used as a source for authors and researchers, including those seeking information for genealogy purposes.

Visitors welcome, but you must make an appointment to access the archive/site by emailing qarnnsarchive2@gmail.com.



It's a club NOT branch

FOR those of you interested in the activities of the Royal Naval Association Motorhome, Caravan and Camping Club published in last month's edition, the club have asked us to point out it's not a formal Branch of the RNA but a SCG – Special Comradeship Group of the RNA. Apologies for any confusion.

You can contact the team for details of upcoming events on email: adminrnamcc@outlook.com.





Vigil honours veterans

STEVENAGE Sea Cadets and Royal Marine Cadets were honoured to help their community remember its veterans by joining a poignant three-day Guard of Honour at the Stevenage War Memorial organised by The Muster Point veterans' group.

Supported by their adult volunteers and veterans, cadets took shifts in all weathers, day and night, for three days.

"It's a time where we remember not just those who fell in the World Wars, but why we still stand here today," said Cadet Corporal Hayden, 15, of the Stevenage Royal Marine Cadets.

"Speaking to the veterans, you get to see a different side of things – what service really means. Cadets has given me life experience, from fieldcraft to meeting royalty, but days like this show what it's really about: remembering why we stand, and who we stand with."

"For the cadets, this has broken down barriers," added volunteer Kelly Armstrong, who serves as Stevenage Unit Chair.

"They've met veterans, heard their stories, and seen that they're ordinary people who've done extraordinary things. It's that trans-generational learning, passing the baton down to the youth."

"For a lot of us who served, remembrance isn't just one day a year – it's every day," said a co-founder of The Muster Point community interest company, Stu Mendelson – a former Royal Engineer who was injured in Afghanistan.

"Standing here with other veterans and the cadets, [we're] honouring those we lost but also showing that sense of service and brotherhood... lives on."

Stevenage Unit expressed their sincere thanks to the veterans of The Muster Point for taking the time to share their experiences with cadets and providing hugely appreciated donations which will go towards vital educational equipment.



Wonderful show for first Lady Mayor of London



AS A regular participant in the City of London's most spectacular procession, the Sea Cadet Corps was proud to be part of the festivities to welcome the first Lady Mayor of London.

150 cadets and volunteers from the capital and further afield were led by the London Area Band, who put on a wonderful show for Dame Susan Langley having been expertly prepared by Lt Cdr (SCC) Ian Turner RNR.

The Lady Mayor's Show provided an incredible chance for the Corps to engage with 7,000 other participants, even more cheering spectators, and key supporters such as YOU London and the famous Livery Companies.

The Sea Cadets marching platoon was delighted to be joined by its kind sponsors from the Worshipful Company of Management Consultants, while Lima Company Royal Marines Cadets was honoured to line the parade route at St Paul's Cathedral.

On target at Pirbright

THE self-discipline, maturity and responsibility instilled by Sea Cadets' shooting training came to the fore at CISSAM 2025 – the Cadet Inter Service Skill at Arms Meeting at Pirbright.

For the second year in a row, Sea Cadets took the Falling Plate competition, with our North West Area A team triumphing over the best of the Army Cadet Force and Royal Air Force Air Cadets.

The team's AC Oskar from Crewe Unit also won the SCC Individual Trophy, while Cdt Cpl James of Bridgewater Unit was named best Royal Marines Cadet and reached the overall top ten just ahead of Cdt LCpl Ben of Bristol Adventure Unit.

James and Ben were also part of the South West Area B team which won the HMS Mercury Trophy as best SCC team, as well silver medals behind the RAFAC in the Defence Match.

Parliamentary plaudits for Josh

ABLE Cadet Josh, 16, of York Sea Cadets received a very rare honour following his outstanding contribution to the city's Remembrance Parade – being mentioned by name in Parliament by his local MP and the Veterans Minister.

AC Josh had received a special invitation to act as Lord Mayor's Cadet for the day by the Lord Mayor of York himself, Councillor Martin Rowley BEM – an Army veteran and a keen advocate for veterans in the city and council. Josh's duties involved meeting the Lord Mayor at the Guildhall and accompanying him and the civic party to the Museum Gardens.

There, Josh proudly laid the wreath on behalf of York Unit, which played its traditional full role in the proceedings, represented by 22 cadets and four adults led by Petty Officer Charles Gomersall RN, who is currently attached to HMS Glasgow.

All were then honoured to take part in the ceremonial procession past Mansion House, with Josh at the Lord Mayor's side as he took the salute.

Back at the Guildhall, Josh was delighted to be presented with a certificate from the Lord Mayor commemorating his role on the day. "I felt it was a real privilege and honour that the Lord Mayor picked me to represent him at the Remembrance Parade," said Josh.

"The most memorable moment of it all was being able to march with the Lord Mayor and being able to lay the wreath



on behalf of York Sea Cadets. Remembrance means a lot to me as my Grandad was ex-Royal Navy and served 22 years as a Marine Engineer but unfortunately passed away in 2023."

Having witnessed Josh's impeccable bearing and respectful conduct on the day, York Outer MP Luke Charters remarked that the city has "the very best of Britain [in] the new generation coming through – so well represented by the truly outstanding Able Cadet Joshua".

In the House of Commons Armed Forces Debate on Remembrance Day, Mr Charters asked the Veterans Minister, Al Carns MP, a decorated former Royal Marines Officer, to join him in commemorating Josh's "integral role in the York Service of Remembrance."

"The cadets play such an important part, with the sea cadets right at the forefront," replied the Minister. "Seeing Joshua thriving in that environment is absolutely superb."

"I felt a real privilege that I was mentioned in Parliament and a lot of my family and friends are proud of me," said Josh.

"I have been with York Sea Cadets since the age of 10 and I have always had a love for the Navy. Sea Cadets has encouraged me to join in with all the things I have done and I have enjoyed engineering, boating and piping the most."

An incredible 2025 for Josh also saw him experience voyages on Sea Cadets' tall ship TS Royalist and the 40ft powerboat TS Jack Petchey.

But his personal highlight was a very special week in Cornwall.

"The District Naval Experience Week at HMS Raleigh was my favourite thing as I got to experience what life would be like in the Royal Navy; my main ambition for the future is to join the Royal Navy and become a Warfare Specialist."

With Josh currently waiting for a joining date, his proud unit looks forward to following the progress of this remarkable young community servant.

GUIDE TO THE ROYAL NAVY 2026

A mixture of ship type & unit profiles, commentary and analysis, plus:

- Naval impact of the Strategic Defence Review
- The role of drones in current & future operations
- Indo-Pacific tilt versus NATO commitment debate
- Can the Royal Navy handle the Russian threat
- Fourth Battle of the Atlantic

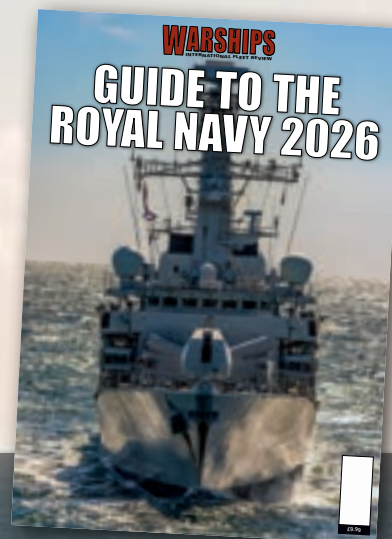
Published by:

WARSHIPS
INTERNATIONAL FLEET REVIEW

£9.99*
postage
incl.

Order your copy: <https://sundialmedia.escosubs.co.uk/GRN26>

Phone: **+44 (0)1371 853 637**. Available in the UK at all leading newsagents NOW!



*UK only. Overseas price may vary.

Cadets inspired me to want to be a Bandie

MARINE Society and Sea Cadets (MSSC) members and supporters gathered for their Annual Court in the historic surrounding of Trinity House.

Presiding over the meeting, MSSC President Admiral Philip Jones welcomed new CEO Guy Holloway to his first Annual Court and thanked his predecessor, Martin Coles, for his 15 years of dedicated service.

In his presentation on the work of the charity in 2024/25, Guy Holloway reflected on a year of achievement and progress overseen by Mr Coles, "whose impact over 15 years was truly transformational, producing some fantastic outcomes for many thousands of beneficiaries."

He also referred to the "hugely positive" appointment of Brigadier Ged Salzano as Commander Royal Navy Cadet Forces, saying "to have his experience and understanding of Sea Cadets in such an important role is a major boost for everyone in the organisation."

Moving on to the story of 2024/25, Mr Holloway noted HRH The Princess Royal's foreword to the Sea Cadets Annual Review. Writing as both MSSC Patron and Admiral of the Sea Cadet Corps, Her Royal Highness had reflected that the contributions of the Royal Navy "helped to make 2024/25 a pivotal year of renewal and growth" for Sea Cadets.

The CEO highlighted examples of this growth in the 15 per cent increase in days at sea which allowed over 1,500 cadets to experience an offshore voyage of a lifetime; the opening of the Midlands Boat Station, which will transform boating opportunities in the Birmingham region; and the creation of 35 new Sea Cadets and Royal Marines Cadets sections.

Mr Holloway concluded by paying tribute to the Sea Cadets volunteers "who are at the heart of everything we achieve" and offered his sincere thanks "to the whole Royal Navy for its unwavering commitment to young people".

A final special message of thanks – on behalf of everyone at MSSC – was reserved for Captain Neil Downing RN, "for his four years of outstanding service as Captain Sea Cadets, making a huge difference in strengthening the Sea Cadet Corps and forging closer links with the Royal Navy."

Annual Court then heard from the cadet speaker for the day: Leading Cadet Emily, 17, of Torpoint Unit, who gave an informative and entertaining presentation on her Sea Cadets experience.

This has included a week earning her Bronze Wings in aviation at RNAS Culdrose; marching up The Mall as part of the band for National Trafalgar Day on several occasions; and taking part in this year's Tall Ship Races on TS Royalist.

Emily explained how Sea Cadets has given her the confidence to take on new challenges, such as running the London Landmarks Half Marathon in April – raising money for the Royal Navy and Royal Marines Charity. She also spoke about the joy of being part of TS Rame Head's winning Continuity Team at the National Drill & Piping Competitions of 2023 and 2024 – with the latter triumph being particularly memorable as the trophy was presented by HRH The Princess Royal.

The audience of around 100 then heard a captivating account of the first leg of the Tall Ships Races. Emily's highlights including being escorted by a pod of dolphins; exploring the city of Le



Emily addressing the Annual Court and right, with Second Sea Lord Vice Admiral Paul Beattie

Havre and Dunkirk; becoming friends with the crew of Shabab Oman 2 of the Royal Navy of Oman; and winning 'Best Crew in Parade' at the opening event.

The race leg itself was a great example of triumph over adversity, with Emily and many of the crew experiencing sea sickness in rough conditions.

"By dinner, I had become a prisoner of the sea myself and experienced a very challenging twelve hours – not helped by having to brace the sails in the middle of the night," recalled Emily.

"Surviving to enjoy the next day, we crossed the finish line in second place overall, out of almost 40 top crews from around the world. I will never forget the thrill of speeding across the waves with so many incredible ships behind us. It was an achievement we were all proud of and on arriving in Dunkirk we received a hero's welcome from the French public."

Emily then explained how Sea Cadets has cultivated her passion for music, having joined the Torpoint Sea Cadet Band.

Emily has since performed many local community gigs with the band, as well as becoming part of the South West Area Band on prestigious occasions including the National Armed Forces Day Parade in Falmouth, the Dartmouth Royal Regatta, and the Sea Cadets National Band Competition at Greenwich in 2024.

"We nearly swept the board at the Old Royal Naval College, claiming almost all the trophies and being crowned National Band Champions," said Emily.

"Given that I had only started drumming four years before, it was a remarkable achievement, especially as it was at such a special venue with our families and members of the public watching."

Emily concluded by explaining how these musical experiences have informed her career



ambitions.

"I spent a week with His Majesty's Royal Marines Band Plymouth. This culminated in me performing with the Band Service in a concert at the Roebuck Theatre in HMS Raleigh.

"This amazing experience helped me to decide on my career path: I applied to join the Royal Marines Band Service. I am now just one step away, and all that stands between me and that goal is my audition in January. But with the support of my family and the unit staff, I am confident I will pass it!"

Emily received a huge round of applause from a very impressed audience and later represented the Sea Cadet Corps at St Paul's Cathedral for the Annual National Service for Seafarers.

Annual Court also gave Emily a unique chance to speak with the special guest speaker for the day: the new Second Sea Lord, Vice Admiral Paul Beattie.



Woking take part in US Veterans Day ceremony

CADETS from Woking Sea Cadets and Royal Marines Cadets joined dignitaries, veterans and US Scouts at Brookwood American Military Cemetery to take part in the annual US Veterans Day ceremony.

This was the Unit's first attendance at the event, having been invited to assume key ceremonial roles alongside US Scouts – serving as Colour Guard, reading the *Ode of Remembrance*, and acting as Wreath Bearers.

Brookwood American Military Cemetery, situated within the grounds of Brookwood Military Cemetery, provided a poignant setting for the international ceremony. Among the guests were the Lord-Lieutenant, the Sheriff of Surrey, along with military attachés from the United States, the Commonwealth and several European nations.

Able Cadet Daniel, who read the *Ode of Remembrance*, said: "I have family members in the US who have served in the forces, so being able to take part in this event was even more meaningful to me."

Cadet Lance Corporal Tom of the Unit's Royal Marines Cadets said: "To see so many nations represented here made me realise the global nature of remembrance."

Leading Cadet Austin, standing alongside a US Scout as Colour Guard and bearing the national flag, added: "Being part of both a UK and now a US remembrance ceremony shows how service and sacrifice unite nations. It's a privilege to be asked to carry our flag at this important ceremony."

Following positive feedback from the cadets, VIPs and the American Battle Monuments Commission, the event will now feature in the Unit's annual calendar.



Great show of stamina

FOLLOWING their achievement of first place in London Area's adventurous training competition, the Chosin Cup, Rickmansworth & Watford Sea Cadets were proud to represent Sea Cadets in the 2025 Elworthy Trophy Competition.

This tri-service adventurous training competition is named after the late Marshal of the Royal Air Force, Lord Elworthy, who presented his own Battle of Britain Commemorative Sword as a trophy.

The competition brought together nine top teams from across Greater London area to assess skills developed through their cadet training and general physical and mental ability.

The unit's team was presented with third place medals by Group Captain Kevin Walton, Regional Commandant London & South East RAFAC, after excelling in a range of challenges testing observation, teamwork, drill, first aid, and strength and stamina on the rowing machines.

Seeing double double at parade

KETTERING Sea and Royal Marines Cadet Unit, proudly named 800 Naval Air Squadron in 2012 after the squadron was decommissioned, was well represented at the Remembrance Parade in Kettering.

Among those in attendance were four sisters—two serving as Sea Cadets and two as Royal Marine Cadets—who marched together to honour the fallen.

The parade was a significant occasion, attended by local dignitaries and senior military figures, including Rear Admiral Andrew Kyte, President of Kettering Sea and Marines Cadet Unit, who laid a wreath during the ceremony and joined the community in paying respects to those who served and sacrificed.

Their participation highlighted the strong family ties and shared commitment to service within the cadet community. The event served as a poignant reminder of the values of remembrance, respect, and unity that the cadets uphold.

Pictured from left to right are Cdt Sgt Ramona, MC Cecilia, Cdt Marcella and NEC Bonnie



Milton Keynes are top of the First Aid charts

THE last national competition of the year gave cadets and young volunteers a chance to shine in one of Sea Cadets' most important specialisations – First Aid.

These vital skills were put to the test in a range of realistic scenarios at the Greater Manchester Fire and Rescue Service Training & Safety Centre, where cadets also showed great communication and collaboration under pressure.

A fast-paced and extremely challenging Saturday saw Milton Keynes Unit's cadets win the SCC title for Southern Area for the second year in a row, while Eastern Area's team from Scunthorpe Unit also repeated their 2024 achievement with silver medals.

Both went through to Sunday's Tri-Service Competition, where they gave their all against the top Army Cadet Force and Combined Cadet Force teams – with Milton Keynes finishing a very creditable fourth place out of 11 teams.



TRIUMPHS APLENTY FOR GOLFERS IN 2025

A LOOK back at the golfing exploits of the Royal Navy teams across 2025, continued from December's *Navy News*.

FLEET AIR ARM

The 2025 season has been a standout year for Fleet Air Arm (FAA) Golf.

For the first time, the FAA Championships were held at the prestigious Vale Resort in Wales from May 20-22, welcoming 72 FAA golfers for three days of thrilling competition.

Day one featured a Stableford round on the Wales National Course, setting the stage for the medal rounds to follow. PO Chris North led the pack with an outstanding opening round, while recognised interservice players struggled to find form.

The top 30 players advanced to the final medal round, while others enjoyed a Stableford on the Lakes Course. The afternoon of day two brought a lively Texas Scramble, with Nick Hill and Luke Rundle claiming victory through impressive teamwork and scoring.

The final day saw a tense battle unfold. CPO Chats Harris, PO Glen Raeburn, and AET Josh Bateman chased PO North's lead. Raeburn surged early, going 3-under through nine, but a misstep on the 11th hole tightened the race. Harris, Bateman, and Raeburn all finished tied, prompting a dramatic three-way playoff. Bateman clinched the title with a stunning approach shot to within a foot, securing his first FAA Championship win.

The event also had a charitable impact, raising over £2,500 through a raffle for former FAA golfer Jon Over, recently diagnosed with MND.

At the RN Championships, the FAA dominated across the board.

Led by FAA team captain Glen Raeburn, the FAA squad delivered a commanding performance at the Royal Navy Championships, sweeping every major category.

- CPO Nick Hill won the Nett competition, with AET Max Everett as runner-up.

- The team won all four matchplay fixtures, showcasing depth and consistency.

- In strokeplay, standout performances from CPO Chats Harris, AET Josh Bateman, and CPO Michael Clark secured the Strokeplay Trophy.

- SET Olivia Trehwela triumphed in the Ladies competition.

These results culminated in the FAA claiming the overall trophy, a clean sweep that reflects the team's strength and

cohesion. Contact PO Glen Raeburn (glen.raeburn626@mod.gov.uk) for more info.

WESTERN REGION

The RNGA Men's First Team entered the 2025 season with a clear mission: to continue rebuilding into a resilient, competitive, and cohesive unit, delivering results in the process.

The season began in March with a tough opening fixture against the Cornwall Golf Union at Perranporth. Despite a 12-3 defeat, the match provided valuable insight for WO Freddie Lomas, the team captain, who used the opportunity to trial early pairings. Seven of the players from this fixture would later represent the RN at the Inter-Service (IS)

to Hampshire for a fixture against Hayling Golf Club's 'A' Team. Known for fielding several scratch players, Hayling posed a stern test. The RN trailed 3-1 after the morning foursomes but rallied in the afternoon singles to secure a narrow 6.5-5.5 victory - a timely morale boost ahead of the Interservice Championship. Contact Lt Cdr Jack Longstaff (jack.longstaff104@mod.gov.uk) for details

WOMEN'S GOLF

The 2025 Inter-Service Golf Championships took place from September 9-11 at Saunton Golf Club, where players faced some of the most extreme weather conditions in recent memory.

square, setting up a tense afternoon. With most singles matches going down to the final holes, the RN edged out the Army 5.5-4.5, securing the championship title. This marked the second RN men's title in three years, and notably, the first time in 23 years the RN had beaten both the RAF and Army in the same IS competition.

The Women's match was equally dramatic. Holding a narrow 2.5-1.5 lead after the foursomes, the RN faced a fierce comeback from the Army, who won the first four singles matches.

With the title on the line, the RN needed 3.5 points from the final four matches to retain the championship on countback. Rising to the challenge, the RN Women won all four remaining matches, sealing a 6.5-5.5 victory and

completing the double win for the second time in three years.

The 2025 season was a test of resilience for the RN Women's Golf team, with operational demands and career courses limiting player availability. Despite these challenges, the team continued to grow and develop, thanks to the leadership

of CPO Deb Faben, who played a key role in recruiting new talent and organising development days.

Among the rising stars was CPO Sarah Feltham, who earned her Navy Golf Colours after competing at the 2025 Interservice Championships. With a reduced fixture list, the team completed three matches. Their opening match against Wiltshire County saw new pairings trialled in the foursomes format, but despite close singles matches, Wiltshire secured a 7½-1½ win. The team then regrouped for the Royal Navy Championships at Saunton GC, where players faced tough coastal conditions. The event featured one of the largest women's fields to date, with several players also representing their regions. SET Olivia Trehwela retained her title as RN Champion, while Lt Cdr Lauren Hulston won the Nett Competition. A mid-season training camp included a two-day fixture against the British Police, followed by a match and training session at West Lancashire Golf Club. Though the RN team faced strong opposition, the experience proved invaluable in preparing for the season's climax.

Beyond team fixtures, many players competed in regional and club championships, with several placing in the top five or winning their events. The season, though shortened, showcased the women's team commitment to excellence, development, and competitive success, laying a strong foundation for 2026 and beyond. Contact CPO Laura Raynes (laura.raynes581@mod.gov.uk) if you're interested in



Championships, highlighting the depth of talent within the squad.

A busy spring followed, with three fixtures in quick succession. The team competed in the Brent Knoll Bowl at Burnham & Berrow Golf Club, narrowly missing out on match wins but securing second place in the consolation Stableford competition.

The RN also made a welcome return to the High Post Invitational in Wiltshire, a rare strokeplay event where the team placed 10th out of 18—finishing ahead of both the Army (12th) and RAF (15th).

The final fixture in a four-week run took the team to Yorkshire for their annual match against the Leeds & District Golfing Union (LDU). Known for its warm hospitality and competitive spirit, the fixture saw three RN players make their debut. Despite a spirited performance, the RN fell short against a more experienced Leeds side.

As the season progressed, the focus shifted to IS preparation. A strong win against the Civil Service at Lambourne Golf Club (9-6) gave the team a confidence boost. This was followed by a coaching session at Farnham Golf Club with Luke Bone, a highly-experienced coach with LPGA credentials. Luke worked closely with the team on matchplay strategy and closing out tight contests—key skills for the high-pressure IS environment.

With the interservice squad finalised, the RN returned

to Hampshire for a fixture against Hayling Golf Club's 'A' Team. Known for fielding several scratch players, Hayling posed a stern test. The RN trailed 3-1 after the morning foursomes but rallied in the afternoon singles to secure a narrow 6.5-5.5 victory - a timely morale boost ahead of the Interservice Championship. Contact Lt Cdr Jack Longstaff (jack.longstaff104@mod.gov.uk) for details

Despite the adversity, both the Royal Navy Men's and Women's Teams emerged victorious, claiming their respective championship titles in a remarkable display of determination and teamwork.

The opening day saw the RAF take on the Army in both the men's and women's competitions. In the men's match, the Army led 3.5-1.5 after the morning foursomes and maintained their momentum in the singles to secure a 10-5 win. The women's match followed a similar pattern: the RAF led 3-1 after the foursomes, but the Army surged back in the singles, winning six of eight matches to take the match 7-5.

The second day featured the Royal Navy versus the RAF, and both RN teams delivered commanding performances.

- The RN Men dominated the morning foursomes 4-1, and despite dropping the first two singles matches, they won the next eight to seal a 12-3 victory.

- The RN Women were equally impressive, leading 3.5-0.5 at lunch and winning six of the afternoon singles to finish 9.5-2.5.

With both RN teams in top form and the Army fresh off strong wins, the final day promised high drama—and it delivered.

In the Men's match, the morning foursomes ended all

WALES DOMINATES IN WALES

WEIGHTLIFTER Lt James Wales delivered a commanding performance at the 2025 Welsh Senior Weightlifting Championships, securing the highest total of the entire day and winning both the Men's 110kg category and the prestigious Best Male Lifter award.

Competing in Bangor, Wales posted a powerful 136kg snatch and 184kg clean and jerk, showcasing exceptional strength and composure on the platform. His total not only led his category but outperformed all male competitors across the championship.

Earlier in the day, fellow Royal Navy lifter Able Seaman

Ed Gibson produced a strong performance of his own, earning second place in the Men's 88kg category and contributing to an excellent overall showing for Navy Weightlifting.

Speaking after the event, Lt Wales said he was now focused on the year ahead, where he will represent Wales at the 2026 European Championships in Georgia – the final event he must complete to qualify for the Commonwealth Games.

Wales's and Gibson's success highlights the calibre of athletes within Royal Navy sport and marks a major step toward international ambitions.



DASHING FROM THE UK ON EPIC MALTA VOYAGE

TEN sailors from the Royal Naval Sailing Association (RNSA) and one from the RAF left the rather damp shores of the UK for Malta to take part in Leg 1 of Exercise Malta Crossing.

This was a two-week exercise focused on being the first UK military crew to take part in the legendary Rolex Middle Sea Race. This iconic race is one of the 'big four' offshore sailing races alongside the Sydney Hobart, the Fastnet (a regular event for the RN Offshore team), and the Caribbean 600 (see May 2023 edition of Navy News for a report).

With funding secured from the RNSA, the RN Sports Lottery, and HMS Temeraire (via the AT Fund), and with the Joint Services Adventurous Sail Training Centre generously agreeing to loan us HMSTC Dasher (the last remaining Nicholson 55 in the MOD fleet), the adventure was planned over a two-week period: one week to prepare the boat and train as a crew, and then the race itself. The crew consisted of ten members of the Royal Navy (from AB to Lt Cdr) and one member of the RAF.

Arriving in Malta to glorious sunshine, the crew went straight to the iconic Grand Harbour to meet the boat and get settled into what would be home for the next two weeks.

During the training week, some surprisingly wet weather tested the watertight integrity of both the Offshore Sailing Team and JSASTC foul weather gear (both failed epically). Man overboard exercises under sail for the skipper and mate to blow off some cobwebs were undertaken, alongside tacks, gybes, sail changes, and spinnaker work. A night at anchor in a stunning location (the site of the late Azure Window) ticked a couple of boxes too.

After a final period alongside to fix some minor defects that had developed and to victual the yacht (and buy all the re-waterproofing spray on the island), there was the all-important crew party. The presence of a UK Armed Forces team was remarked upon with delight by organisers and competitors alike, with people genuinely happy to meet a team of Royal Navy sailors. The crew heard stories of professional racers who started their careers racing MOD boats across the Pacific a lifetime ago, met people from Australia to the USA and everywhere in between, and were treated to the best of Maltese hospitality.

Race day soon arrived for Dasher and the crew. An early start to do the final offload of personal gear and prep the boat. Seasickness tablets were taken by those who knew they would need them. The Rolex Middle Sea Race is renowned for its tactical complexity and breathtaking course around Sicily, including passages past Stromboli, the Aeolian Islands, and the Strait of Messina.

With its unique mix of coastal and offshore conditions – and the potential for both calms and storm-force Mistral winds – the race demands preparation, adaptability, and seamanship at the highest level.

Over 100 boats took to the start line in the iconic Grand Harbour, representing 31 countries.

Competitors ranged from the behemoth 100ft Black Jack to the relative minnows of several J99s, with everything in between. With shifty winds that went from 20+ kts to 3 kts in the course of a watch, a long and hard race followed.

Reefs, sail changes, and manoeuvres were incredibly frequent, with every watch bringing something new to challenge the team. As Kyle O'Regan (mate and navigator) commented, "This race was unlike anything I've experienced. The sheer number of micro weather systems encountered, few of which were accurately forecast, was incredible. For a scratch crew in a boat optimised for long-distance sail training cruising (rather than racing), just getting around the course is an achievement." In the end, HMSTC Dasher sailed 747 nautical miles in 6 days, 2 hours, and 35 minutes. Finishing 19th of 21 boats in IRC 5 and 86th of 100 boats in IRC Overall.

The driving force behind this (and the previous headline event of the Caribbean 600), Watch Leader Laura Blagden, said: "This event really showed how AT and Offshore Racing can go hand in hand. The grit and determination that the crew had to find to get around this course in this boat was unlike a normal AT expedition. It combined the incredible scenery of Malta with some really interesting sailing and was a great adventure."

Taking part in the Rolex Middle Sea Race showed once again the great opportunities that the RN offers for both experienced and novice sailors. The Joint Services Adventurous Sail Training Centre offers a number of Offshore Sailing courses, from Competent Crew through to Yachtmaster, and also advertises any expeditions or opportunities across the three Services (check the AATG site via Defence Gateway).

The Royal Naval Sailing Association also offers incredible sailing opportunities for RN personnel and their families. Check out www.rnsa.org.uk.



SUBSCRIBE to NAVY NEWS

OFFICIAL NEWSPAPER OF THE ROYAL NAVY

1 year: £38.00 UK

1 year: £46.00 Overseas

**12 copies
for the price of 10** (UK Only)

**Subscribe online
or Tel: 07773 155321**

**Don't miss out...
Get Navy News
delivered to
your door –
and save money**



Subscribe online at royalnavy.mod.uk/navynews

Veteran retires after 50 years with Fleet Air Arm

ONE of the Navy's last 'Cold War warriors' has retired after a remarkable career spanning 50 years with the Fleet Air Arm.

Steve Murray served for 35 years in the Royal Navy full-time, another seven with the Reserves and eight more years as a contractor, passing his vast experience in submarine hunting to a new generation of aviators.

He has flown 35 types of aircraft, operated from at least eight aircraft carriers, seen active service in the Gulf, and commanded a helicopter flight, two squadrons and Merlin Helicopter Force.

And though today's aircraft, equipment and systems used in the fight against 'the enemy below' have changed dramatically over his five-decade career, the basics of the hunt: determination, dedication, painstaking thoroughness have not.

Retiring from Royal Naval Air Station Culdrose, the 68-year-old former commander said: "I am one of the last Cold War anti-submarine warriors and I've really enjoyed the tactical challenge and the opportunity to pass on my knowledge to the next generation. The old principles are still valid and effective today."

He was joined by friends and family at a farewell event at the air station's Merlin Training Facility, where he was presented with a cake and gifts including a wall clock mounted inside a helicopter tail rotor drive shaft bracket, while the head of the Fleet Air Arm Rear Admiral Anthony Rimington wrote a valedictory letter thanking the aviator for his outstanding service.

From Manchester, Steve joined the Royal Navy aged 18 in 1975. He was selected for observer training at 750 NAS at RNAS Culdrose in 1976. He then learnt to



operate Wessex helicopters before converting to Sea King and was appointed to 814 NAS the following year.

Steve said those early years instilled in him an ethos which he carried throughout his career – earning him a fearsome reputation for demanding the highest standards.

"I've always said you should be the best version of yourself that you can possibly be," he said. "That means never being found wanting professionally. Be proud and do the spadework. 'Just enough' is not good enough."

His time with the Fleet Air Arm covers pretty much every anti-submarine helicopter squadron, time on Search and Rescue with 771 NAS, a three-year exchange with the US Navy, and work as a trials officer for Sea King and Merlin helicopters at Boscombe Down, notably for the first Gulf War enhancements.

He helped introduce the first-generation Merlin into service as senior observer of 700M Squadron in 1998, then commanded 814 NAS operating those same new helicopters aboard HMS Ark Royal.

He was still in command of the Flying Tigers in the spring of 2003 when the squadron embarked on RFA Fort Victoria for the second Gulf War.

Steve went on to become the fifth 'Commander M', commanding the maritime Merlin Helicopter Force before retiring from the full-time RN in 2010.

He remained at Culdrose as an instructor in the Merlin Training Facility, first for the Royal Naval Reserves and then under contract with Babcock and later Serco.

NOTICEBOARD



NAVY NEWS

Navy Command, Leach Building, HMS Excellent, Portsmouth PO2 8BY

JAN 2026 No. 858: Founded 1954

Editor: Lorraine Proudlock
Email: news@royalnavymail.mod.uk

Editorial

Richard.Hargreaves@royalnavymail.mod.uk
Peter.Howard@royalnavymail.mod.uk
Elisha.Quade@royalnavymail.mod.uk
Jessica.Daniels1@csmail.mod.uk

Business

Business manager: Lisa Taw
bm@royalnavymail.mod.uk
subs@royalnavymail.mod.uk
www.royalnavy.mod.uk/navynews
Telephone: 07773 155321

Reprographics

NavyDNS-Commsgraphicsmailbox@mod.gov.uk

The views expressed in this paper do not necessarily reflect the views of the MOD

NOTICEBOARD ENTRIES

■ Notices for this page should be brief, clearly written or typed and addressed to – The Editor, Navy News, Navy Command, Leach Building, HMS Excellent, Portsmouth PO2 8BY, or email: news@royalnavymail.mod.uk or editor@royalnavymail.mod.uk

■ If you are sending your notice via email, please include your full address and telephone number.

■ Reunions appear in date order, and requests to place an entry in a particular edition cannot be guaranteed.

■ Please send in reunions at least two months (preferably three) before the month of the event. There may be a delay before items appear, due to the volume of requests.

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

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

Talking Navy News

Navy News is available free of charge as a digital file on memory stick or email from Portsmouth Area Talking News for those with difficulty reading normal type. Contact 07770 088388 and leave a message, or email patnstudio@gmail.com A speaker that will take a USB plug is required but this can be obtained from the Talking News, or the file can be played back through a computer.

Submissions for the Deaths, Reunions and Ask Jack columns in next month's Noticeboard must be received by January 12 2026

© Crown copyright
This publication is licensed under the terms of the Open Government Licence v3.0 except where otherwise stated.
To view this licence, visit nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/version/3
Or write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU,
Or email: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk
Where we have identified any third party copyright information you will need to obtain permission from the copyright holders concerned.
Published by Navy News, Navy Command HQ, Portsmouth and printed by Walstead UK.

Deaths

Graham Meredith, POMEM. Joined 1966 left 1990. Served in HMS Dido, Lynx, Triumph, Tiger, Bulwark, Kent, Alfriston, Ariande, and Jupiter and numerous small inshore craft Archer etc. Awarded Good conduct and long service medals. Member of Shrewsbury RNA since 1991 and chairman of the Shrewsbury branch for five

years. Died October 22.

Dr Rev Charles Stewart. Served from 1975 to 2000 in HMS Intrepid, Hermes, Invincible, Culdrose, Faslane (twice), Drake, Raleigh, Dartmouth, Nelson. Awarded Falklands and Bosnia medals. Died November 8, aged 79.

Petty Officer Derek Perrin. Joined the RN

in January 1946 as a Radio Operator, leaving in May 1960 having served in HMS Ulster, London (including Yangtze incident in 1949), Boxer, Illustrious, Gravelines, St Kitts, Torquay and Grenville and Shore Establishments: Ganges, Harrier, Dryad, Osprey and Victory. Died November 24, aged 95.

Ask Jack



HMS Collingwood: I recently found this old photograph in an elderly uncle's house after he died at the age of 96 earlier this year. My uncle was in the Army but his surname was Hunt and I was hoping someone could tell me more about the image.

Sue Forknall
forknall2@virginmedia.com

HMS Frobisher: I have found a brass plaque bearing the name of Danny Hinde. My father-in-law Albert Paxton was a stoker on the ship. I would like to unite the plaque with Mr Hinde's family.



Mike Ranson
MikeRanson@btinternet.com
01622 812356

Nicholas Hugh Mason: I am inquiring about the life of Mr Mason, born in 1955 and served in the Royal Navy. He died in 2012. He attended Dean Close School between 1968 and 1974 and we were both in the same class and members of the Combined Cadet Force, RAF Division. It was a shock to discover he had died at the early age of 56 and I am interested in his RN career.

John Williamson
j.williamson108@btinternet.com

HMS Picotee: I have been trying to locate a crew photo of Picotee. I organised the first memorial

service for the ship in 1994 and many more since. I have gathered loads of info about her and some of the crew who were lost with my granddad. I am trying to write a book but would love a crew photo.

Debbie Laws
Debbielaws2002@yahoo.co.uk

HMS Harvester: I am trying to contact any living relatives of crew members from HMS Harvester. My grandfather was a stoker on the ship and died when the ship was torpedoed on 11 March 1943.

Steven Oldridge
Oldridgesteven@gmail.com or phone 07821 788144

Sailmakers: I was rated as a Sailmaker's Mate (Leading Hand) in 1961 and was the youngest member of the last class to undergo training. I was wondering if any of my former branch members are still with us.

Alastair Duncan
Alastairduncan215@gmail.com

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

RS(SM) George Carnegie.
07442 174176 or carnegieen@talktalk.net

Reunions

The Penelope Association: The 39th annual reunion takes place at the Best Western Carlton Hotel, 282 North Promenade, Blackpool, Lancashire FY1 2EZ from February 13-15 2026. It is open to all who served in the cruiser 1938-44 or frigate 1963-92 (or are relatives of those who did so). For details of membership and the reunion, contact Secretary@hms-penelope.com

HMS Bulwark, Albion & Centaur Association: 2026 Reunion/AGM at the Roker Hotel Sunderland SR6 9ND on May 8-10 2026. Most rooms are booked but contact secretary Denis Askham askhamd3@gmail.com or call 07773651213.

BRNC Milestone Reunion January 1976 entry:

Join your classmates on January 10-11 2026. The Britannia Association is facilitating this reunion, allowing you to come along and reconnect. Meet and greet and tour of the College on Saturday afternoon, followed by drinks reception, training update and alumni dinner in the evening. Chapel and refreshments on the Quarterdeck on Sunday. See <https://britanniaassociation.org.uk/> for further details, or call 01803 677 565.

HMS Lincoln 1968/69 Commission: We have had a reunion for the last 20 years, much enjoyed by

all, however like many reunions, time is now telling on those who can attend, and has sadly thinned out many who now cannot. Is there another small ships team also with the same issues who would consider joining us for 2026 get together. no date yet fixed. Yorky Sutcliff 01282616855 or mikesutcliff1958@outlook.com

HMS Troubridge Final Commission Association 1966-69. Our reunion takes place at the Euston Hotel, Fleetwood, September 28-October 2, 2026. Contact Bryan Pace at Romft1@gmail.com



ADVERTISE IN NAVY NEWS

National and International circulation Navy News, the newspaper of the Royal Navy since 1954, has a monthly readership of up to **30,000**. Month by month it features RN operations, developments in ships and naval aviation, organisational changes, charitable works, sports, historical features.

To advertise in Navy News contact Lisa Taw on 07773 155321, or email – lisa.taw503@mod.gov.uk

There are certain advertisements we CANNOT accept. For example: Tobacco, Alcohol, Gambling, Adult services, e-cigarettes, Dietary supplements, Online dating services.

READY FOR CIVVY STREET?

**You've grafted.
You've pushed yourself.
You've got the job done.**

**But stepping
into civvy life?
Not everyone's
got a plan for it.**

**HLP for
HEROES**

**Help for Heroes is here for
anyone who's worn the uniform**
and your family, whatever challenges you might face.

helpforheroes.org.uk/get-help

