



CNOA

Chatham Naval Officers' Association



The CNOA Newsletter for July 2020

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Lawrence Churcher © Crown Copyright MoD Navy 2020

DUNKIRK COMMEMORATED BY ROYAL NAVY VETERAN 80 YEARS ON

On 26 May the Royal Navy commemorated the 80th anniversary of the start of Operation Dynamo, the evacuation of over 338,000 troops from Dunkirk during WWII. The occasion was marked by a wreath-laying ceremony in Portsmouth.

The wreath was laid by veteran Lawrence Churcher (99) at the foot of those plaques that bear the names of men who never returned from Dunkirk and for whom there is no known grave.

Mr Churcher served throughout WWII including Dunkirk where, miraculously, he met his brothers on the beaches during Operation Dynamo.

Chairman's Flag Hoist:



Dear Fellow members,

I hope you and your families are well during the continued lockdown. If you need any support please contact one of the Committee and we will do our best to help.

Sadly, I recently learnt of the death of Vice Admiral John Coward DSO. Born in Kent, he sadly died on 30th May 2020 aged 82. Many of use will remember him as the Captain of HMS Brilliant during the Falklands. Following his distinguished naval career, in retirement he became Lieutenant Governor of Guernsey.

Covid-19 continues to affect the maritime sector and Weymouth is testament to that, with 9 cruise ships anchored in the bay, including Queen Mary 2 (see article on p14). These have become a local tourist attraction, with the ships now having a 50m exclusion zone around them as sightseeing paddleboarders present a risk.

HMS Medway continues her state of readiness in the Caribbean with Merlin Mk4 landing on the flight deck for the first time in preparation for the hurricane season. Her sister ship, HMS Tamar has recently been commissioned.

I am sure some have only just finished reading last month's large newsletter; thank you to those that contributed, we hope to provide entertainment for those in lockdown and isolated. I loved Roy's sketches, our own Giles!

Your committee continues to meet monthly via the internet and we are working on several items in readiness for our return as well as checking on fellow members. At home I am near competition of my account in uniform and I can finally source glass to continue my repairs on the historic lamps so can get back to work. Before and after images on the right.

Yours Aye,

Jon

Jon Vanns
Lt Cdr (SCC) RNR
CNOA Chairman



2020 Future Speakers & Events: Subject to revision

10 July: Peter Goodwin – Nelson’s Arctic Voyage – **Postponed**

14 August: CNOA is on leave

11 September: Guy Bartlett – Stealth Aircraft, State of Art War Machines

9 October: Vanessa Nicholls – Dementia Friends

23 October: Trafalgar Night Dinner, Officers’ Mess, Brompton

13 November: Derek Goodwin – Reflections of Marine Engineering Sales

11 December: Cdre Bryant – President’s Address

16 January 2021: New Year’s Luncheon, Bearsted Golf Club

Additional events will be included as details become available.

As always, we are most grateful to those who send items for this Newsletter. **All such contributions by the 5th of each month please.** Please email contact@cnoa.org.uk with articles, news items and photographs.

Derek Ireland (Hon. Secretary) and *Suzanne Wood* (Newsletter Editor)

Could other CNOA members also provide short presentations based on their own service-related experiences for the CNOA meetings? **Yes, of course they could!** Please let Jon Vanns know or email contact@cnoa.org.uk

Royal Marines storm tanker in return to regular duties From MOD Navy

Royal Marines stormed a tanker off Plymouth as they sharpened their board and search skills – crucial in the wars against drug-running, piracy and terrorism.



RFA Tideforce being boarded by a Royal Marine from Juliet Company 42 Commando © Crown Copyright MoD Navy 2020

Marines from 42 Commando and 47 Commando (Raiding Group) headed into Plymouth Sound to practise maritime interdiction operations – the art of intercepting, boarding and securing vessels suspected of involvement in criminal activities.

Waiting to be boarded: 39,000-tonne naval tanker RFA Tideforce, normally used to keep HMS Queen Elizabeth and her carrier task group topped up with fuel. Climbing up the imposing side of Tideforce was a return to more regular duties for both Royal Marines units as the nation begins to emerge from the restrictions imposed by the Covid-19 pandemic.

Teams from 42 Commando, based at Bickleigh just outside Plymouth, helped to run mobile test centres for the virus to assist key workers across the south west, including sites in Torbay and Salisbury. Stood down from those duties, the marines can focus on their usual mission, especially as both 42 Commando and 47 Commando are constantly held in a state of very high readiness to deploy on operations across the globe.



A Royal Marine from Juliet Company 42 Commando boards RFA Tideforce © Crown Copyright MoD Navy 2020

Small teams from 42 Commando's Juliet Company – the Corps' dedicated maritime interdiction operators – secure a suspect vessel. The ranks of Juliet Company are well practised in Close Quarter Battle – crucial in the confines of a boat or ship – as well as mechanical / explosive access and vessel embarkation, using either a sea boat such as the Royal Navy's Pacific 24 or rapid roping on to a deck from a Merlin or Wildcat helicopter.

Once the commandos have secured the suspect vessel, a Royal Navy boarding party of trained sailors comes aboard to conduct the search for anything untoward. They've recently been given enhanced search kits as smugglers use increasingly devious methods to hide their illegal cargos.

The combined efforts of the Royal Marines and Royal Navy boarding teams have seized or destroyed more than £150m worth of illegal narcotics since the beginning of 2019 in a dozen major busts, with the Indian Ocean accounting for all but two of the successes. All the drugs would have funded illicit activities had they reached the streets; in the Middle East, the illegal trade in narcotics is known to fund terrorism.

“Maintaining this level of readiness for boarding operations demands that the unique techniques and procedures needed for success must be regularly exercised in the most arduous conditions,” explained Captain Jack Denniss RM, Operations Officer of 539 Raiding Squadron, 47 Commando’s front-line unit. “Failure to do so could mean that crucial skillsets degrade, and the capability can quickly become compromised.”

Capt Denniss continued: “539 Raiding Squadron provides the sea boat coxswains, responsible for getting troops to a target vessel, day or night, and in a position from which they can launch their assault. Although these ranks belong to different units, regular integration and rigorous training allows them to seamlessly operate with one another.”

Teams from Juliet Company are currently deployed in the Middle East with frigates HMS Montrose and HMS Argyll on maritime security operations.

Crossing the Bar

Dear CNOA member,

It is with great sadness that I have to inform you that Lt Cdr Eric Golding RN ‘Crossed the Bar’ on 15th April.

Eric hadn’t been a member of CNOA very long but his wife told me that: “Eric was a keen member of the association as with all things naval.”

I have passed on to his wife Barbara our sincere condolences.

Regards

Lt Cdr Derek Ireland MBE MRIN JP

Hon Sec

US Navy accepts delivery of USS Zumwalt By The Maritime Executive

The US Navy recently accepted delivery of USS Zumwalt (DDG 1000), the world's most expensive destroyer and the lead ship of the USN's next generation of multi-mission surface combatants.

The ship will now transition from Combat Systems Activation to the next phase of developmental and integrated at-sea testing. The vessel was subject to a dual delivery approach: shipbuilder General Dynamics' Bath Iron Works (BIW) commissioned the vessel in 2016; Raytheon Integrated Defense Systems was the prime contractor for the Zumwalt Combat System and has lead activation and integration for Zumwalt class ships both in Bath, Maine and San Diego, California. USS Zumwalt joins the US Pacific Fleet battle force and remains assigned to Surface Development Squadron One. The ship will be crewed by 147 officers and enlisted personnel and a 28-person aviation detachment.

The 610-foot, wave-piercing tumblehome ship design provides a wide array of advancements, according to the US Navy. Additionally, the shape of the superstructure and the arrangement of its antennas significantly reduce radar cross section, making the ship less visible to enemy radars.



USS Zumwalt. Credit: The Maritime Executive

Employing an innovative and highly survivable Integrated Power System (IPS), DDG 1000 has the capacity to distribute 1,000 volts of direct current across the ship's entirety, allowing for enhanced power capability for various operational requirements. At its core are four turbine generators powering induction motors – comparable to a diesel-electric power plant, but with much more installed capacity than any other destroyer. The extra peak power is intended to feed advanced energy weapons like the US Navy's prototype railgun.

The USS Zumwalt suffered several propulsion casualties during trials at sea but Commanding Officer Capt Andrew Carlson was positive about the future, saying: "After sailing over 9,000 miles and 100 days at sea in 2019, we are absolutely looking forward to more aggressive at-sea testing and validation of the combat systems leading to achievement of initial operational capability."

USS Zumwalt embodies the legacy of warfighting excellence and innovation of Admiral Elmo R Zumwalt Jr, a veteran of World War II and the conflicts in Korea and Vietnam. He exemplified honour, courage and commitment during 32 years of dedicated naval service. Believing it was his job to "modernize and humanize" the Navy, Zumwalt chose to embrace change and to lead it from within.

As the 19th Chief of Naval Operations, Zumwalt's embrace of innovation resulted in a number of successful new programs, including the Oliver Hazard Perry-class frigate, the Ohio-class ballistic missile submarine and the F-14 Tomcat, all of which had lasting impacts on the warfighting readiness of the US Navy.

The USS Zumwalt is the first ship of the Zumwalt-class destroyers. The USS Michael Monsoor (DDG 1001) is homeported in San Diego and is undergoing combat systems activation. The third and final ship of the class, the future USS Lyndon B. Johnson (DDG 1002), is under construction at BIW's shipyard in Bath, Maine.

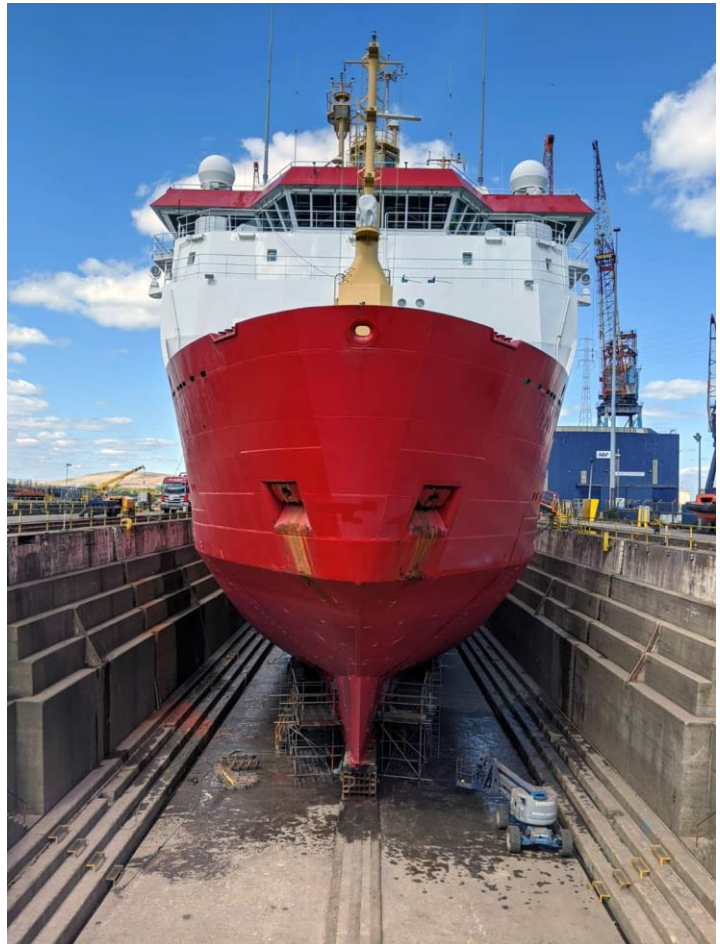
HMS Protector begins major revamp From MOD Navy

The Navy's only icebreaker, HMS Protector is undergoing a major overhaul on Teesside, including preparing the ship to carry unmanned survey devices.

The distinctive Plymouth-based scientific vessel spends the austral summer – winter back in the UK – charting the waters around the frozen continent and working side-by-side with the British Antarctic Survey to gather information on the Southern Ocean, ice and sea levels and the region's unique wildlife.

Given the unforgiving nature of the Antarctic environment, HMS Protector undergoes maintenance every time she returns from the Southern Ocean, and every five years she is subjected to 'deep maintenance' – a particularly thorough revamp which will prepare the vessel for the long term, in this case until the middle of the decade.

So, over the summer, shipwrights and engineers at UK docks are working above and below the waterline, overhauling Protector from bow to stern, topmast to keel. Her 60-tonne crane – which has repeatedly proven its worth in loading/offloading supplies and equipment in remote locations with no port facilities – and flight deck have already been removed for major servicing and, with the dry dock emptied, extensive work is taking place on the hull; moving at four knots, the 5,000-tonne vessel can cut through ice half a metre thick.



HMS Protector in dry Dock © Crown Copyright MoD Navy 2020

Beyond what might be regarded as routine maintenance, the ship is being substantially upgraded to embrace latest operational scientific/survey techniques, including increasing use of autonomous survey methods.

"Protector is a unique ship facing a unique set of challenges," said Captain Michael Wood, the ship's Commanding Officer.

"This refit marks the start of our long journey back to Antarctica. It will take real determination, and teamwork, to get there. However, I am certain we can make it happen."

He leads one of the most eclectic teams on any Royal Navy vessel: a specialist crew of hydrographers, meteorologists, engineers, logisticians, and warfare personnel, plus Royal Marines (specialists on survival in cold environments), divers, scientists, a Royal Navy photographer and, occasionally, an artist in residence – up to 100 personnel in all, living and working in some of the most austere and challenging conditions on the planet.

Once work on Teesside is complete, HMS Protector's ship's company will undergo operational sea training before the ship deploys in the autumn in time for the height of summer in the Southern Hemisphere.

Dear Lt Commander Sprowles

Thank you for your kind and generous donation of £400.00 in response to our recent Seafarers UK COVID-19 Emergency Appeal. Please pass on our thanks to all the members of the Chatham Naval Officers Association.

As the world fights against the Coronavirus pandemic your contribution is needed more than ever. Your donation will help us continue to fund a vital network of assistance for seafarers during this difficult period.

Due to restrictions imposed by Covid-19 on the way our charity operates, it is currently taking around 3-4 weeks for us to process donations so our sincere apologies that you may have had to wait longer than usual for this response.

We are incredibly grateful for your donation and for the continued support that you and your members have shown Seafarers UK. We would like to take this opportunity to thank you again on behalf of seafarers who will have the assistance they need in times like this, thanks to your kindness.

Yours sincerely,

Carole Hunt

Fundraising Administration Officer



HMS Tamar raises her flag on her own river From MOD Navy

The Royal Navy's newest vessel, HMS Tamar has raised the White Ensign from her deck for the first time and takes her place as a Fleet warship.

Uniquely conducting the ceremony on her namesake, the River Tamar, the very distinctive Batch 2 River-Class Offshore Patrol Vessel (OPV) bears a rampant red lion on either side of her superstructure, representing her close affiliations with both Devon and Cornwall.



HMS Tamar raises her flag on her namesake river and shares sunset with dolphins © Crown Copyright MoD Navy 2020

Over the past few weeks, the ship has been operating around Plymouth Sound and the south west sea training areas, carrying out her acceptance trials and a series of firsts for the ship and her crew. These include the first helicopter landing in the form of a Wildcat from Royal Naval Air Station Yeovilton, her first gunnery exercises, as well as boat drills and emergency exercises, that have put the crew through their paces.

HMS Tamar also has the distinction of being the 'Greenest Ship in the Royal Navy' – fitted with 'catalytic converters' that reduce nitrogen-based emissions from her engine exhausts by up to 95 per cent. She weighs in at 2,000 tonnes, has a 6,000-mile range and a flight deck capable of carrying a Merlin helicopter. She also has accommodation for up to 50 Royal Marines Commandos and is considered by her crew as the 'Swiss Army Knife' of Royal Navy vessels.

Lieutenant Commander Michael Hutchinson, Commanding Officer of HMS Tamar, said: "It's an incredibly proud moment for the ship. We've generated really quickly, we've done all our training and now we are at the point where we can join the Fleet and start to get ready for our first deployment later this year."

As the ship is affiliated to the Cornish City of Truro, the Mayor of Truro, Councillor Bert Biscoe has sent his best wishes to the ship.

"On behalf of the community of Truro, the elected members and establishment of Truro City Council, and all those for whom Truro is home and a workplace, may I convey the good wishes and congratulations to the Captain of HMS Tamar on the auspicious occasion of its commissioning into the Fleet.

"The River Tamar is the oldest cultural boundary in Europe, and it is fitting that the vessel carries the name of the River which bonds, as a son to his mother, the Duchy of Cornwall to the Crown.

"Long may she patrol and protect us one and all – Tamar bys Vykken!"

Lady Brigitte Peach, the Lady Sponsor of HMS Tamar, also sent a goodwill message on the raising of the White Ensign for the first time.

We loaded up with a lot of mail, crates of car parts, spirits and several cars. The mail was stored in the upper tween of Number four (hatch) and Number three. Number three's load was shifted ashore at Curacao (ooh my aching back) and, during the first week or two in the Pacific, the mail in Number 4 caused some trouble. The Carpenter (Stan the Man) was busy down there trying to unblock the scuppers which had, unfortunately, flooded some mail. The bags were taken on deck to be dried in the sun and should be okay. One car, namely the Captain's, was placed in Number five trunked hatch. Its petrol tank was empty and it was lashed down with rope to a rectangular frame of wood dunnage.

By the time of sailing we cadets had been divided into watches and settled into the cadetship routine. This consisted of turning to at 0630 and either cleaning the accommodation or deck until 0745, before changing from working gear to full uniform for breakfast in the cadet mess at 0800. (The picture shows my best cap). The cleaning of the accommodation was straightforward when in port, as the deck was covered in heavy duty sisal or craft paper, with showers and heads being attacked with lots of elbow grease applying large helpings of bleach, Brasso and Vim. Once at sea, however, it was on hands and knees to scrub every inch of alleyway and cabin deck with a bucket of soogie, heavily laced with Teepol, ready for daily inspection after breakfast.



The PTI, Sid, oversaw cadet accommodation and he was also the Petty Officer who was our first line of discipline, something for which his service in the Royal Navy made him particularly suitable. Sid introduced us to a whole new vocabulary which he claimed was strictly nautical, but which appeared to consist mainly of terms describing human reproduction and the general disappointments and failures of the young generation. Sid delighted in shouting instructions and providing visual demonstrations of methods of cleaning right up the bend, and never failed to lament that our standards of polishing were not as high as those pertaining in the 'real' navy. He blamed our fathers, mothers, long-haired teachers and the Beatles for our degenerate laziness and cunning naivety (this was not the actual phrase he used). For some of the lads, Sid's appraisal and motivational language were a rather brutal introduction to life after school, but we all grew to understand that, although he gave us a hard time, he nurtured pride in ourselves and our ship, and he defended us to the hilt against any officer interfering in his domain. Today, when I talk or write about the backbone of any service, it is senior NCOs like Sid that come to mind, using their experience and hard-edged human understanding to embed teamwork and get the job done. More of Sid later.

Orders for the first day at sea were posted in the mess at breakfast, and I read that I would be on the 4-8 watch for the next week, commencing 0400 on the morning of Sunday 31 October. This meant that I had no duties after the morning's cleaning, and I spent most of the day on the upper deck looking at the coastline and the heavy ship's traffic that centred on the Thames estuary. I recall that it was a fresh, cloudy and windy day and, as the Otaio entered the channel, the wind was blowing from the south west at about force 4. The sea was slight, with the occasional pitch and roll, and I thought it was wonderful. As this was a time before the traffic separation scheme in the channel, I was aware that the wheelhouse was a busy place and guessed this was why my company was not required until we were well down channel. I should add here that it was also the case that, unless on watch, as bridge lookout or farmer, first trip cadets were not allowed in the wheelhouse and, regardless of weather, were not allowed to enter the Bridge from the inside, having to climb the external ladders from the upper deck.

As it happened, I need not have concerned myself about this, because when reporting to the bridge at 0350 the following morning, the mate, Ted, informed me that my first 2 hours on watch were to be standing as foc'sle head lookout, and I was to use the phone rather than the bell to alert him of any lights or objects that I spotted. Not knowing my points from my elbow, I decided that so many degrees to port or starboard would do. Naturally, in my naivety, I failed to realise that, giving the height advantage of standing in the wheelhouse or on the bridge wings, the mate and the bridge lookout would see lights well before they came into my view. I should add that radar was rarely used, apart from approaching or departing harbour and in circumstances of poor visibility. Its quality and reliability were always in doubt, and we were vigorously taught that it was an aid to navigation only. We were also told tales of how many radar-assisted collisions there had been since merchant vessels were compelled to purchase and use radar under the 1958 Act.

I can remember, as if it were this morning, climbing down the bridge ladders and making my way for'ard alongside 3,2 and 1 hatch, before climbing up to the fo'c'sle and relieving the cadet on look out. The handover took a couple of minutes whilst I waited for my eyes to adjust to the darkness, and I was astonished to see the lights of about a dozen ships close by, some inbound and some outbound, as we passed along the Cornish coast. I was daunted and excited at the same time and drew some confidence in being able to read the pattern of red, green and white lights that stood out in the pitch black, and began to make my reports to the bridge. Towards the end of my 2-hour stint the gloom of the night began to clear, and Otaio settled into a gentle pitching motion, that revealed, off and on, the silhouettes of the ships around us.

Approaching the Atlantic, our companions began to draw away on their different courses, bound for Biscay, the Mediterranean, Africa or, like us, on a course to the western hemisphere. After being relieved I reported back to the Mate in the wheelhouse to take up farmer duties as standby watchkeeper, which is a longwinded way of saying taking responsibility for bacon sandwiches, tea and cocoa. Ted, the Mate was a large, heavily bearded man, who reminded all of us of Captain Haddock (pictured) in the Tintin series that had recently been shown on television. He was a genuine larger than life character who organised the ship's entertainments and possessed a very good baritone voice. This became most apparent as the final two hours of my watch, in the wheelhouse or on the bridge wing, consisted of having to listen to endless renditions of 'I am the Very Model of a Modern Major General', 'Go Away Madam', 'I have a Song to Sing' and 'A Wandering Minstrel I'. To this day I cannot abide Gilbert and Sullivan.



Captain Haddock © Casterman

The routine for cadets at sea kept us, as it was purposely designed to do, very busy in those days before employment laws were introduced limiting hours for under 18s. Weeks were rotated between morning deckwork with seamanship instruction and afternoon schoolwork for one watch, and the reverse for the other. In addition, parts of watches were given deck watchkeeping duties, and we could also volunteer to understudy the bosun, carpenter or lamptrimmer. If on daywork, in the deck and school routine, Saturday and Sunday afternoons were for make and mend, which usually involved laying around on deck recovering from the injuries sustained during compulsory sports on weekday evenings. This cunning plan made sure that we were fully occupied and that our youthful energy was completely drained, with compulsory and competitive deck football and deck hockey played under cargo lights on the wood covered flush decks of Nos. 4 and 5 hatches. At weekends, during daytime, deck cricket was also organised and sporting rivalries began to emerge between watches, officers and crew. Sid, the PTI, was of course in charge of all sport and his word as referee, umpire, mickey-taker, cynic and world's leading smoking athlete was final. Sid also possessed the bandiest legs known to man and, whilst this gave him unrivalled stability in a gale, he always looked as if he had lost his horse.

More on school, seamanship, sport and first steps ashore in the next instalment...

HMS Kent arrives in Gothenburg

On Saturday 6 June 2020, HMS Kent arrived in the historical city of Gothenburg, Sweden.

The 24-hour period alongside came prior to the ship commencing BALTOPS 20, a three weeks long NATO-led exercise.

During the stop, the ship received essential stores needed for the exercise along with fuel before she sailed on the Sunday afternoon to begin BALTOPS 20.



HMS Kent arrives into the historical city of Gothenburg, Sweden before commencing BALTOPS 20. © Crown Copyright MoD Navy 2020

Editor: More from BALTOPS next month.

Ports helping cruise ships find safe berths

By The Maritime Executive

Ports around the world are facing a unique challenge: where to put all the cruise ships that have suspended operations due to the global pandemic. With over 280 cruise ships idled worldwide, the lines are searching for dock space to accommodate their ships.

Several ports stepped forward to work with the cruise lines when they cancelled cruises. PortMiami, for example, waived all lay berth fees for home-ported vessels that requested to berth alongside. This waiver was extended for an additional 30 days through to 12 May 2020, subject to availability. Some of the cruise lines used PortMiami as a staging port to load



provisions and for transferring crew to repatriation flights home. Currently Norwegian Cruise Line Holdings' ships the *Norwegian Escape*, *Marina* and *Sirena* are all staying on the dock while other ships come and go in PortMiami.

Cruise ships idled in Miami, April 2020 Credit PortMiami

Jaxport in Jacksonville, Florida also accommodated cruise ships at the beginning of the suspension. Four vessels, *Carnival Ecstasy*, *Norwegian Pearl*, *Norwegian Sky*, and *Norwegian Sun*, were in the port and, as Norwegian moved to put its ships in cold layup, two of its vessels – the *Norwegian Gem* and *Norwegian Sky* – were docked in Jacksonville. Additionally, three of Norwegian's cruise ships recently arrived at The Port of Virginia's Portsmouth Marine Terminal where they are expected to remain with skeleton crews until the end of June 2020.

Complicating efforts to lay up the cruise ships were the requirements from the US Coast Guard and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). According to The Port of Virginia, Norwegian Cruise Line had to submit crew manifests and a plan of operation during their stay at port for review and approval by the CDC, the Coast Guard and the Virginia Department of Health.

Similar scenes are playing out at other ports around the globe. For example, eight cruise ships from companies including AIDA Cruises and MSC Cruises have been tied up at Port Rashid in Dubai, United Arab Emirates since the beginning of the cruise suspension. In the Firth of Forth, Fred. Olsen Cruise Lines' *Balmoral*, *Boudicca*, *Braemar*, and *Black Watch* are all now anchored and were recently joined by two P&O Ferries vessels that normally operate in the English Channel.

Some situations, however, have proven more difficult for the ports and shipping companies. Norwegian Cruise Lines Holdings had agreed to dock two vessels at The Port of Astoria, Oregon in an arrangement similar to its agreement with Virginia. However, local authorities later declined the docking.

Similarly, according to the Scottish newspaper Greenock Telegraph, local authorities objected to a plan to dock up to a dozen cruise ships in Greenock. Australia also ordered all of the international cruise ships to leave its ports, with many of the ships sailing to The Philippines.

As the suspension has stretched on, cruise ships are continuing to arrive in locations that normally do not see vessels of this class. The residents of Weymouth were surprised to see P&O Cruises' vessels *Arcadia*, *Aurora*, and *Ventura* all riding anchor in their bay. Recently, Cunard Line's *Queen Mary 2* also moved from her berth in Southampton to the Weymouth anchorage.



Fred. Olsen cruise ships in the Firth of Forth. Credit: Fred. Olsen Cruise Lines

The challenge will continue to be finding berth space able to accommodate more of the cruise ships as the lines seek to move their vessels into cold layup to reduce crewing and operating costs.

Helicopter unleashes new missile to protect carriers From MOD Navy

Royal Navy helicopter crews have proven their ability to protect the UK's aircraft carriers with a new missile system.

As sailors and marines support the current national fight against Covid-19, the Yeovilton-based Wildcat Maritime Force, which includes 815 Naval Air Squadron, is focused on ensuring the UK is prepared for future global threats.

Blasting from a Wildcat helicopter, the new Martlet missile was tested in May on a range off the coast of Wales. In 0.3 seconds, the missile detached from the Wildcat HMA Mk2 helicopter, accelerating to one and a half times the speed of sound.

The trials mark an important milestone in the testing of the new system which will arm the Wildcat helicopters that deploy as part of HMS Queen Elizabeth's maiden operational deployment next year.

Commander Matt Boulind, the Wildcat Maritime Force Commander, said: “This test firing shows the Wildcat helicopter will be ready to help defend our Queen Elizabeth-class carriers and their strike groups for years to come.

“The Royal Navy and Army introduced Wildcat helicopters into service five years ago and the firing of the Martlet this week is a very significant milestone and represents a huge success for the joint industry and MOD team. This firing underpins future Royal Navy offensive capability and the defence of the surface fleet.”



A Wildcat helicopter fires the Martlet missiles during the trials © Crown Copyright MoD Navy 2020

Managed by the Lightweight and Medium Attack Systems and Wildcat delivery teams at DE&S, and manufactured by Thales, the laser-sensor missile can be used against stationary and moving targets.

Captain Mark Langrill, DE&S Wildcat Delivery Team Leader, said it was important these trials went ahead. “These firings mark a vital step forward in the integration of the uniquely flexible Martlet missile into what is already an outstanding helicopter to provide the Royal Navy with a world-class capability.” He added: “I am grateful to all those, across industry and the Ministry of Defence, who have worked so hard to achieve this milestone.”

The preparation for the firing was conducted in line with current government social distancing rules due to the coronavirus, adding an unexpected hurdle for the teams to overcome.

Martlet, also known as the Lightweight Multirole Missile, has already been successfully launched off frigate HMS Sutherland so the latest firing was to test it in its primary role. The firing was captured with high resolution cameras so the teams from both Thales and the Wildcat lead Leonardo Helicopters can analyse the system in minute detail.

Philip McBride, General Manager of Integrated Airspace-Protection Systems at Thales UK, said: “Martlet will ensure the Wildcat has the best-in-class offensive capability to protect the Carrier Strike Group. With each helicopter capable of carrying up to 20 missiles, the Wildcats deployed will be a significant deterrent to anyone wishing to interfere with UK interests.”



A Wildcat helicopter loaded with the Martlet missiles during the trials © Crown Copyright MoD Navy 2020

Nick Whitney, Managing Director of Leonardo Helicopters, added: “This major milestone demonstrates that the combination of the AW159 Wildcat and the Martlet missile will be a flexible and effective tool for the Royal Navy. Next year the Wildcat fleet will embark on Carrier Strike Group missions with HMS Queen Elizabeth on its maiden operational deployment. As the only British company to design and manufacture helicopters on-shore, we’re extremely proud to be equipping the UK armed forces with world-beating sovereign capabilities.”

The Royal Navy is transforming into a force centred around Carrier Strike – supporting the ships as they conduct carrier strike missions, enforce no-fly zones, deploy Royal Marine Commandos, deliver humanitarian assistance and build international partnerships with our allies.

Editor’s note: for those of you reading this on a computer, there is a short video (7 seconds) at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wj2TdWxHV24>. We can add it to the list of items to share when we are all back together again.

Operation Cycle From Lt Cdr Derek Ireland

After Dunkirk, some 100,000 British and Commonwealth military personnel still remained in France. These numbers were boosted by a further 60,000 upon the arrival of the British 52nd Lowland Division (7-12th June) and the 1st Canadian Division (12-13th June), the so-called 'Second BEF'.



The driver of a Bren gun carrier of 51st Highland Division, June 1940.

The Franco-British position, already precarious, was made untenable when their attacks on the German bridgeheads around the River Somme failed and the Germans launched their second major offensive of the Blitzkrieg campaign, 'Fall Rot' (Operation Red), on the 5th June, 1940. The Allied



defenders were too thinly spread and after initial tough Allied resistance, built around defensive strong points, the inevitable German breakthrough came. The response of the Allied Commander-in-Chief, General Weygand, to the crisis was to issue increasingly hysterical and impractical orders which imperilled his forces and the remaining British units in particular.

Men of the 7th Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders, 51st Highland Division, holding a position in the River Bresle area, 6 – 8th June 1940.

By this stage, the British commanders on the ground had lost all confidence in the ability of the French High Command to stem the German advance and were reporting these thoughts back to the War Cabinet in London.

The German breakthrough had isolated a large number of British troops, including the 51st Highland Division under Major-General Fortune, in a rapidly shrinking triangular pocket between Dieppe and Le Havre in the north and Rouen in the south. With 5th and 7th Panzer Divisions moving rapidly northwards from Rouen, an improvised evacuation of the British troops needed to be undertaken.



Men of the 7th Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders, 51st Highland Division, Millbosche, 7th June 1940.

Operation Cycle was intended to evacuate these troops from the port of Le Havre and was under the command of Admiral James, C-in-C of Portsmouth. He had rapidly assembled an evacuation fleet of 67 merchant ships and 140 smaller vessels (mostly fishing boats from the Sussex coast) for this purpose. Following a personal visit to Le Havre to assess the military situation, he correctly anticipated that the bulk of the 51st Division would be cut off from Le Havre by 7th Panzer Division and would need to be evacuated from the small port of St Valery-en-Caux.

On the night of the 11th June, the first wave of ships arrived off St Valery. However, valuable time had been lost in the first place by French prevarication in granting permission for the Division to retreat. Furthermore, the retreat to St Valery was slowed by the decision, for the sake of Allied

solidarity, to retreat in concert with the French 9th Corps under General Ihler, which had inadequate transport at their disposal. While the combined Allied force did manage to get to St Valery slightly ahead of the Germans, the Panzer troops were successful in occupying the heights to the west of the port with artillery and heavy machine guns, effectively blocking the approaches to the port.

As a consequence, the focus of the evacuation switched eastwards to the small seaside village of Veules-les-Roses. The geography between St Valery and Veules was challenging to say the least for those troops who made the journey. The rocky shoreline was covered by German guns and, if making their way along the cliff top, the soldiers faced a descent down the sheer 300ft high cliffs on improvised ropes in the dark. Out at sea, the situation was little better. Heavy fog and the absence



British and French troops taken prisoner at St Valery on 12th June 1940.

of radio communication meant that it was nearly impossible to re-direct the bulk of the rescue fleet. Whilst some ships did manage to land beach parties and embark troops, by 0930 on 12th June German gunfire from east and west brought the evacuation to a premature close from Veules. French forces in St Valery surrendered at 0800 with the British surrendering shortly afterwards. Only 2,137 British and 1,184 French troops had been evacuated, with the remaining force of around 40,000, including 8,000 British, being captured.

The evacuation from Le Havre, Operation Ariel, undertaken in the period 10-13th June, was altogether more successful, with 11,059 men being evacuated. The last ship left port as the Germans approached the town.

Note:

HMS Wellington, now HQS Wellington the Headquarters Ship of the Honourable Company of Master Mariners, was one of the RN ships sent to St Valery-en-Caux to evacuate the 51st Highland Division, on 11th June 1940. Sadly, the port at St Valery dried out for half the day, and the harbour was surrounded by steep cliffs, allowing the German army to fire out to sea. Whilst laying off the port of St Valery using her boats to ferry men to the ship, HMS Wellington received a 76mm round from a Panzer III tank, hitting just below the bridge. This was the only damage HMS Wellington received from enemy fire during her service throughout the Second World War.



HMS Wellington during the War years

Base selected for world's largest offshore wind farm By The Maritime Executive

Equinor and SSE Renewables have announced plans to build a new operations and maintenance (O&M) base for the world's biggest offshore wind farm, Dogger Bank, at the Port of Tyne.

Dogger Bank Wind Farm is a 50:50 joint venture between the two companies. It will be able to generate around five percent of the UK's electricity needs, enough for over 4.5 million homes.



Port Tyne

Construction of the wind farm, led by SSE Renewables, began in January 2020 and as operator for the operations phase, Equinor will construct three new O&M base and operate the wind farm for its expected life of more than 25 years. The project has three 1.2GW phases, with each phase located more than 130 km from the North East coast of England. First power generation is planned for 2023.

The UK government has legislated to cut carbon emissions to net zero by 2050.

Matt Beeton, Chief Executive Officer of the Port of Tyne said: "The Port recently launched its 'Tyne 2050' plan with a vision to become one of the most environmentally sustainable ports in the UK by 2030. Offshore wind is a key component of that strategy and this announcement is a huge step towards developing a cleaner future for the Port, the region and for industry in the North East."

Life in the Merchant Navy 60 years on – then and now By Brian Bissell

May 1960, having left HMS Conway in Anglesey as a Midshipman RNR after a two-year course, I joined the Merchant Navy as a Cadet/Navigating Apprentice having signed a three-year Indentures with Royal Mail Lines. I joined my first ship, RMS Picardy, in Middlesbrough and yes, for the first and only time, I arrived at the ship in uniform. The ship was awaiting departure for a voyage to the West Indies.

Once shown my cabin I unpacked and went straight to the saloon where I sat at a very fine table and was given a menu by the steward. I saw Eggs Florentine, which I was served, a dish I had never had before. Turned out to be poached eggs and spinach – delicious!



This is to certify that

Mr. J.B. BISSELL

has served as JUNIOR 3RD OFFICER

in ss. "CARMANIA"

under my command from 13TH NOVEMBER, 1964

to 7TH FEBRUARY, 1965

during which period he has conducted himself *

to my entire satisfaction

He is at all times sober

and attentive to his

duties.

[Signature] Master.

ss. "CARMANIA"

Date 7TH February 1965

* Here the Master is to insert in his own handwriting his remarks on the conduct, ability and sobriety of the officer.

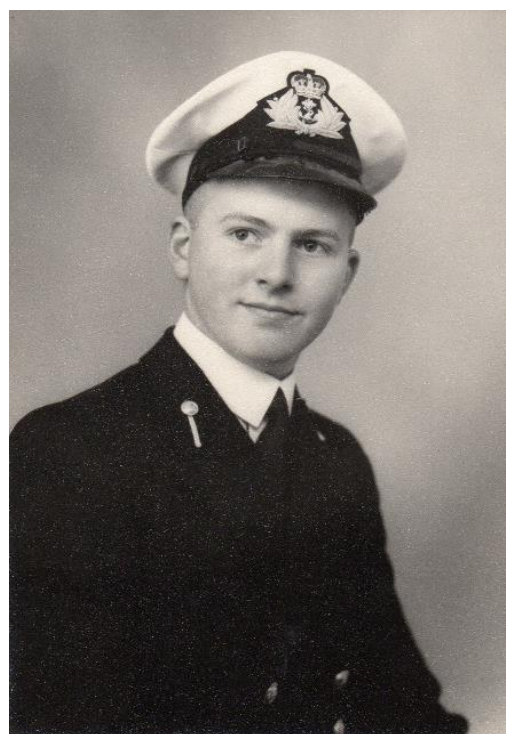
It wasn't long before we headed to the port of London and having loaded cargo, departed down the Thames into the English Channel and set course across the Atlantic to our first port of call San Juan Puerto Rico in the West Indies – my life in the Merchant Navy had finally begun and what a memorable first voyage it turned out to be. A story to be regaled at a later date maybe with possibly many others! After voyages to the West Coast of the USA and Canada, Mexico, Texas and South America, plus numerous other voyages to the ports of the West Indies, I left Royal Mail Lines, took my Second Mate's Certificate of Competency foreign-going and subsequently joined Cunard Line as a 3rd Officer.

My first ship, RMS Andania, took me to the East Coast of the USA for two voyages, after which I was appointed to RMS Carmania as Junior 3rd Officer for one voyage to Quebec and Montreal. Following a brief period of shore leave I was

re-appointed to RMS Carmania for nine West Indies cruises out of Port Everglades, Fort Lauderdale, Florida, via Bermuda and Nassau, and was away from the UK for over three months. All the other officers, plus captain and staff captain, completed just four of the cruises and flew back to the UK whereas I remained for all of them, serving alongside new officers and captains.

Incidentally, two of the senior 1st officers on Carmania subsequently captained the QE2 to the Falklands. Following my Carmania experience I returned to the cargo ships as 3rd Officer for the remaining period of my time with Cunard.

Life in the Merchant Navy back then, upwards of 60 years ago, was very different to what it is right now for merchant seafarers in the wake of the current coronavirus pandemic. With more than 80% of global trade by volume transported by sea, the world's more than 2 million merchant seafarers continue to play a vital role.



For nearly four months a Russian oil tanker crew haven't set foot on dry land. With global travel at a virtual standstill due to the coronavirus pandemic, they still don't know when they'll be going home. "In some ways, they've been the forgotten army of people," said Guy Platten, Secretary of the International Chamber of Shipping (ICS). "They are out of sight, out of mind, and yet they're absolutely essential for moving the fuel, the food, the medical supplies and all the other vital goods to feed world trade." About 150,000 seafarers are stranded at sea in need of crew changes, according to the ICS and another 150,000 are stuck ashore, waiting to get back to work.



"It's not a tenable position to keep on indefinitely. You can't just keep extending people," said Platten. Anchored ships were seen miles from the port of Piraeus, near Athens, Greece, on 26 May 2020. International shipping organisations, trade unions and shipping companies are urging countries to recognise merchant crews as essential workers and allow them to travel and carry out crew changes.

"Our challenge now is to get a very strong message to governments. You can't expect people to move PPE (Personal Protection Equipment), drugs and all the issues that we need to respond to COVID, and keep cities and countries that are in lockdown fed, if you don't move cargo on ships, said Steve Cotton, General Secretary of the International Transport Federation (ITF). "They've got to recognise the sacrifices seafarers are making for our global society."

David Hammond, founder of the Human Rights at Sea organisation, said: "Many seafarers have been really at the end of their tether, due to contract extensions. The reality is that until there is a global co-operation among states and shipping entities... then crew change is going to be very problematic".

These are indeed challenging times and these recent press releases, no doubt a few of many, bring to mind the serious situation faced by merchant seafarers and put into perspective how fortunate we are who enjoy the freedoms available to us ashore. I hope you are all keeping well and staying safe.

I find it difficult to believe that sixty years have passed since my first voyage at sea and that right now, sixty years ago; I was either still in the West Indies or on my way back to the UK aboard RMS Picardy and a month into my Merchant Navy career. My membership of the CNOA, now over ten years, which I very much appreciate, enables me to relive some of my memories from my cadet school and Merchant Navy experience as well, as share in the memories of my fellow members.

Of the photos attached, the one of last November's Remembrance Sunday parade in Tunbridge Wells included our new fellow CNOA member Lt Derek Goodwin along with myself as we marched representing the Merchant Navy.



Team Resolute

By Cdr Colin Tozer

Well, how depressing would this be if it comes to pass and Spain has a hand, no matter how small, in building future Supply Vessels for the RFA. Spain is no friend of the UK, except when it comes to attracting our free-spending holidaymakers who boost their ailing economy. They routinely send a warship in to Gibraltar's territorial waters to try to assert their own sovereignty over 'The Rock'. (But have no fear, our mighty Archer Class Gibraltar Patrol Boat Squadron regularly sees them off with a flourish, according to sections of the press anyway!) Over the past few years, Spain has also interfered in the Brexit negotiations, threatening to veto any deal unless Gib is handed back to them. Not to mention the border shenanigans that they have used over many years to disrupt the lives of the Gibraltarians.

NO, NO, NO! This would be a shameful decision if it came to pass, even had we been remaining within the EU. All national assets and strategic infrastructure should be UK sourced, or if that is impossible, then at least purchased from a friend and ally.

Article below courtesy of www.savetheroyalnavy.org
Images courtesy of Team Resolute

British-Spanish team bid to build the Fleet Solid Support ship

From Save The Royal Navy

This week [article dated 29 May] 'Team Resolute' went public. This is a new partnership between Spanish shipbuilder Navantia, Belfast shipyard Harland & Wolff and naval architects BMT to bid for the Fleet Solid Support (FSS) ship contract. Here we consider this partnership and summarise the story of FSS so far.

Team Resolute

The naval architecture pedigree of BMT combined with Navantia's recent track record of building naval stores ships was already the basis for a very credible bid for FSS.



Unfortunately, their plan to construct the ships entirely in Spain always looked politically unworkable. The inclusion of Harland and Wolff is a way to surmount this obstacle, although this raises many other questions. H&W have not constructed a naval vessel since RFA Fort Victoria 30 years ago and currently have a workforce numbering just 130 people.

Despite their illustrious shipbuilding heritage, H&W narrowly escaped oblivion last year. In June the owners, Dolphin Drilling, filed for bankruptcy and put the yard up for sale. The saviour was energy firm InfraStrata Plc which bought the yard in September, apparently planning to use the site to construct elements of their Islandmagee underground gas storage plant off the coast of County Antrim. Subsequent to the buy-out, a new management team with substantial UK and international shipyard experience has been assembled in Belfast.

InfraStrata confirmed to us that their plan would see modules for the lead vessel built in both Belfast and Spain with more modules of the 2nd (and possibly 3rd) being built in Belfast. A large contingent of UK workers would be brought over and trained by Navantia. The plan will enable concurrent fabrication of the ships at both H&W and Navantia's Puerto Real shipyards. New jobs will be created; a local skills base does still exist as around 1,200 workers were laid off prior to the InfraStrata acquisition.

Team Resolute say their bid would "re-establish a skills base for UK shipbuilding in Northern Ireland, The transfer of Navantia's cutting edge knowledge to Harland & Wolff will support the modernisation and availability of this UK sovereign asset for FSS and beyond."

Navantia have developed a digital shipyard concept named 'Shipyard 4.0', which they promise to share with all UK partners across the supply chain. This system includes digital connectivity, cybersecurity, robotics and logistics, ensuring consistency in the production process and improving connectivity between people, products and machines.

Navantia has delivered 40 ships on time to customers worldwide over the last 5 years and recently built vessels for the Australian, Norwegian and Turkish navies.



The BMT design is based on an existing mature design and aims to maximise the commonality of equipment and components with the Tide Class RFAs. This will facilitate reduced training overheads, smart documentation and intelligent spares holdings across the fleet. Integrated Logistic Support (ILS) has been fully considered to minimise through-life costs and maximise time at sea. Navantia have expertise in using predictive maintenance using artificial intelligence with data analysis, virtual reality simulators to reduce support costs. H&W are also hopeful of winning the MoD's 'Future In-Service Support' (FISS) contract to maintain the ships in service.

InfraStrata have big ambitions for H&W and say that securing the FSS work would enable them to "disrupt the UK defence shipbuilding duopoly that currently exists" They also argue it could strengthen their position to tender for contracts in the oil & gas, cruise & ferry, commercial and renewable sectors and are in discussions with Navantia about further teaming agreements in relation to offshore wind farms.

Beyond FSS, there are not many other large UK naval projects on the horizon and H&W is unlikely to re-establish itself as a major player in naval construction. Although Team Resolute say they have identified other opportunities in the international naval market, it is hard to envisage Navantia passing naval contracts to the UK instead of building in Spain. The two large dry docks possessed by H&W are, however, potential sites for undertaking major refits of the QEC aircraft carriers in future.

There is a certain irony that Britain, once the shipbuilding powerhouse of the world, could be reliant on a technology transfer from abroad to build ships for its navy. Should Team Resolute win the bid, it would certainly be good for Northern Ireland and there is an appeal in seeing naval vessels being built by this iconic shipyard once again. Breathing new life into the Belfast yard would also be in line with the government's prosperity agenda and efforts to 'level up' the economies of the provinces. FSS could provide a pathway to opportunities beyond naval construction for H&W but in there is already over-capacity in UK shipbuilding and moves further away from the idea of concentration of expertise at one or two efficient 'super yards'.

The 3 existing Fort-class vessels are ageing fast and the need for replacements to re-supply the carrier strike group remains.

The FSS story so far...

FSS was originally part of the ambitious MARS (Military Afloat Reach Sustainability) project that the MoD embarked on in the early 2000s to replace the majority of RFA vessels. MARS suffered death by a thousand cuts, eventually only delivering the 4 Tide-class tankers. Some early concepts for FSS developed by the NDP (Naval Design Partnership) included a very large ship with 'steel beach' and vehicle deck. Later concepts are closer to the more conventional US Navy (T-AKE-1) stores ship design.

November 2015

The defence review (SDSR) confirms the intention to build three new solid stores support ships.

September 2017

The National Shipbuilding Strategy (NSbS) is published and sets off a two-year controversy by stating the FSS contract would be open to international bidders to "test UK yards against foreign competition". This policy is justified by labelling them "non warships".

6 May 2018

For the first time, the number of ships is in doubt. The MoD issues a Contract Notice asking for potential bidders to build two ships, with an option for a third.

30 November 2018

It is announced that five bidders had been accepted for the FSS competition. The British consortium, 'Team UK' is made up by Babcock, BAE Systems, Cammell Laird and Rolls-Royce. Fincantieri, Navantia, Japan Marine United Corporation, and DSME of South Korea are invited to submit a tender for the competition.

25 Feb 2019

Rear Admiral Paul Marshall appointed by the navy as the Senior Responsible Officer (SRO) Fleet Solid Support Programme (FSSP).

March 2019

The controversy over building the vessels overseas rumbles on. The House of Commons Defence Committee is not impressed with the possibility the ships could be built overseas and writes to the Defence Secretary demanding clarification as to why FSS are being classified as "non-combatants". Brexit-related political instability induces a rapid turnover of Defence Secretaries and Junior Ministers which ultimately results in growing support within government for buying British.

May 2019

The Financial Times reports that JMUC, DSME and Fincantieri have withdrawn from the competition, leaving Navantia head-to-head with 'Team UK'.

Sept 2019

Spanish shipbuilder Navantia and UK naval engineering specialists, BMT announce they have formed a partnership for the bid. Their outline design is revealed at DSEI.

4th November 2019

Two years after it was first published, Sir John Parker is asked to review the implementation of the National Shipbuilding Strategy. When the review is published it is clear he has changed his tune and now says "I recommend that UK-only competition should be considered for future defence-funded vessels".

6th November 2019

The Defence Secretary announces the FSS competition has been suspended. The accompanying MoD statement is strange, saying the bids were "not compliant with commercial terms and not delivering on value for money expectations."

March 2020

It is revealed that the RN could be planning to dispense with the Fleet Solid Support ship (FSS) and Littoral Strike Ship (LSS) concepts and standardise on a single hull known as the Multi-Role Support Ship (MRSS). The FSS has many unique and demanding requirements and the common hull concept is proved to be just a rumour. MRSS is possibly the solution to the LPD and LSS replacement but FSS is still alive.

7 May 2020

The Defence Secretary, Ben Wallace says FSS competition will "probably be restarted in September 2020".

26 May 2020

Navantia and BMT announce Harland & Wolff will join their 'Team Resolute' partnership, bidding on the basis of skills transfer Belfast.

The future

The Pandemic leaves public finances in a parlous state. When the dust settles and a Comprehensive Spending Round and Defence Review finally get going, FSS is a project that looks vulnerable to the savings axe. The industrial and economic benefits are likely to carry greater political weight than the needs of the navy when fighting to keep the project alive.

Note from the Editor:

Thanks to Colin for his rousing introduction to this article.

Some of you may be unfamiliar with Navantia but it was a name I heard regularly during my visit with HMS Sutherland to Australia in 2018. At that time, there were three companies bidding to design Australia's new Future Frigate: BAE Systems (UK-based), Fincantieri (Italian) and Navantia (Spanish).

We visited the cities of Perth, Adelaide (naval shipbuilding capital of Australia), Melbourne and Sydney to demonstrate British shipping design, including meeting both Australian Defence Ministers (Christopher Pyne MP, whose constituency is in Adelaide, and Marise Payne MP). The winning design was intended to be built by the host nation so it was a design contest rather than one of construction capability.

The Italian bid was always considered an 'also-ran' and the choice between the two leaders was close. In the end, the Royal Australian Navy decided to take our Type 26 design, as did Canada, and to build it with their own modifications and systems.

So Navantia is not a completely unknown competitor in the Royal Navy's world. We will watch the outcome with interest.

After the Pandemic By Cdr Colin Tozer

"We're going to go through a very dangerous period post-COVID-19. The world order was not in good nick before this, countries are following their own rules and the US disengaged from the international table. I'm afraid we see many of the ingredients seen in the build-up to the Second World War. International organisations unable to wield authority, the UN, WTO and WHO aren't functioning as they should, countries are siloed... a very dangerous set of parameters which could easily lead to greater conflict."
(Tobias Ellwood, MP, Defence Select Committee Chairman, BFBS Sitrep, 14 May 2020)

It's enough to make your eyes water. I thank my lucky stars that I am not in the MOD trying to resolve these funding issues. Of course, if unemployment rises, perhaps we will be able to man our ships again (is everyone aware that we have a couple of our most modern ships tied up alongside in their base ports as 'Training Ships' simply because we cannot man them?). Every cloud has a silver lining and all that.

Ever wondered how the S&S Department used to preserve its manpower in our surface ships? Despite annual calls to "Do away with the Stewards" they never lost their billets at sea. Well, the FOSF sea manpower committee was chaired by a Cdr (S). When FOSF was directed by Fleet to cut X% of our sea billets, we were called to attend a meeting and offer up our 'compulsory' losses. So as the Warfare Branch stooge, I would lay my 10 billets on the table, SMEO would lay down his 6, WEO would offer his 5 and so on. The Cdr (S) would be totting up how many he had. Then suddenly announce that 'that was it, meeting over'. Hey! we would all exclaim, what about your Department. "Oh, it's alright," he proclaimed, "I've got plenty from your people to meet the overall reductions required". That, my friends, is management, if not leadership. We were never caught out again, but... By the way, I actually approve of the officers having professional stewards in the wardroom. On the subject of the S&S Branch (now named some logistical alphabet soup), do you know that the highest academic new entry score required to become a (non-Technician apprentice) rating was to be a Cook? Yup above all others. (And yet they all still fail their basic cooking courses! Boom Boom).

Anyway, read on dear reader. See you in the bar... one day, perhaps!

Article below courtesy of www.savetheroyalnavy.org
Images © Crown Copyright 2020

After the pandemic. Turbulent times for UK defence and security? From Save The Royal Navy

In this speculative piece, we look at how the effects of the global pandemic may impact UK defence decision-making.

Skint

Besides the appalling human suffering, stress and dislocation, the pandemic is causing a financial earthquake across the globe. As the British state has intervened on a giant scale to help its citizens, the public finances and the economy of the UK are being changed in a way that was unimaginable just a couple of months ago. The Coronavirus jobs bailout scheme alone will cost the Treasury about £10Bn every month and the government has promised to back more than £300bn of loans to businesses. At the same time, tax receipts will fall dramatically as the UK enters what will be the deepest recession in 300 years. The Office for Budget Responsibility (OBR) has forecast that the deficit will rocket to £273bn, the largest since the Second World War if lockdown lasts for three months and the Bank of England predicts GDP will decline by 14% in 2020.

The extreme measures to protect individuals and business may be fully justified but even if COVID-19 is controlled quickly, the financial and psychological legacy will be felt for a long time. To return the public finances to an even keel the Chancellor will eventually have to make more dramatic policy decisions. While not attempting to endorse or analyse complex economic theories, there are probably three main options; (1) Cuts and austerity, (2) Debt-supported spending intended to grow the economy, (3) Experimentation with radical new economic models such as Modern Monetary Theory (essentially printing more money) or a 'Green New Deal' that abandons the norms of capitalism.

Boris Johnson was known to be unhappy with the conventional Tory policy of austerity pursued in the wake of the 2008 financial crash (which included the disastrous 2010 defence review). Severe public spending cuts in most departments are unlikely to be politically tolerable and borrowing to stimulate growth is a more likely path. However, some departments, such as the MoD, that are seen as being of less immediate political consequence could still be hard hit. The proud boast that we spend the NATO recommended minimum of 2% of GDP on defence was not really questioned when the assumption is that the economy would always be growing. If this commitment was maintained rigidly now, then a 14% reduction would amount to a brutal 'haircut' of at least £5.5Bn annually to a defence budget that was already inadequate. Drastic cuts, exceeding the severity of 2010, maybe avoided but cannot be discounted if the economy does not bounce back quickly or if a very serious financial crisis develops.



Victims of the 2010 defence review: HMS Ark Royal and the Harrier, Four Type 22 frigates, RFA Fort George and Largs Bay. By far the worst decision was to make 5,000 sailors redundant, creating a personnel issue the RN has yet to fully recover from. Many of the cuts at that time were made against the promise of new equipment for "Future Force 2020". Just as this vision is on the cusp of realisation and vital in a world that is now far more uncertain, a new round of cuts could be looming.

Health security v national defence

Even before the pandemic, the election promises of the government were ambitious and involved greater public spending aiming to 'level up' the more deprived parts of the UK with the affluent South East. Now the Treasury will have to bear the cost of a new public health infrastructure to deal with the current virus and ensure against future pandemics. Addressing biosecurity will be expensive and bound to inhibit commercial, social and military activity to some extent. Although Europeans are only dimly aware, COVID-19 is actually the third coronavirus outbreak of the 21st Century (following SARS and MERS) and it would be negligent not to be fully prepared for more.

Demands to plough an even greater share of public money into the NHS at the cost of almost everything else are likely to gain yet more political momentum. Keeping people healthy is obviously an important priority and the work and bravery of health workers has been outstanding. But public admiration and appreciation is in danger of becoming a mawkish deification of the NHS that threatens to make a balanced assessment of both our health and security needs impossible.

Dangerous parameters

"We're going to go through a very dangerous period post-COVID-19. The world order was not in good nick before this, countries are following their own rules and the US disengaged from the international table. I'm afraid we see many of the ingredients seen in the build-up to the Second World War. International organisations unable to wield authority, the UN, WTO and WHO aren't functioning as they should, countries are siloed... a very dangerous set of parameters which could easily lead to greater conflict." (Tobias Ellwood, MP, Defence Select Committee Chairman, BFBS Sitrep, 14 May 2020.)

Until the pandemic, there was a tendency in Europe to turn a blind eye to China flouting international law, human rights abuses and intellectual property theft, essentially tolerating this behaviour in return for Chinese inward investment, cheap consumer goods and a quiet life. When the Chinese government initially covered up the COVID-19 outbreak, imprisoned the first doctor to warn of the threat in Wuhan and delayed informing the rest of the world, the tide of public opinion may have turned.

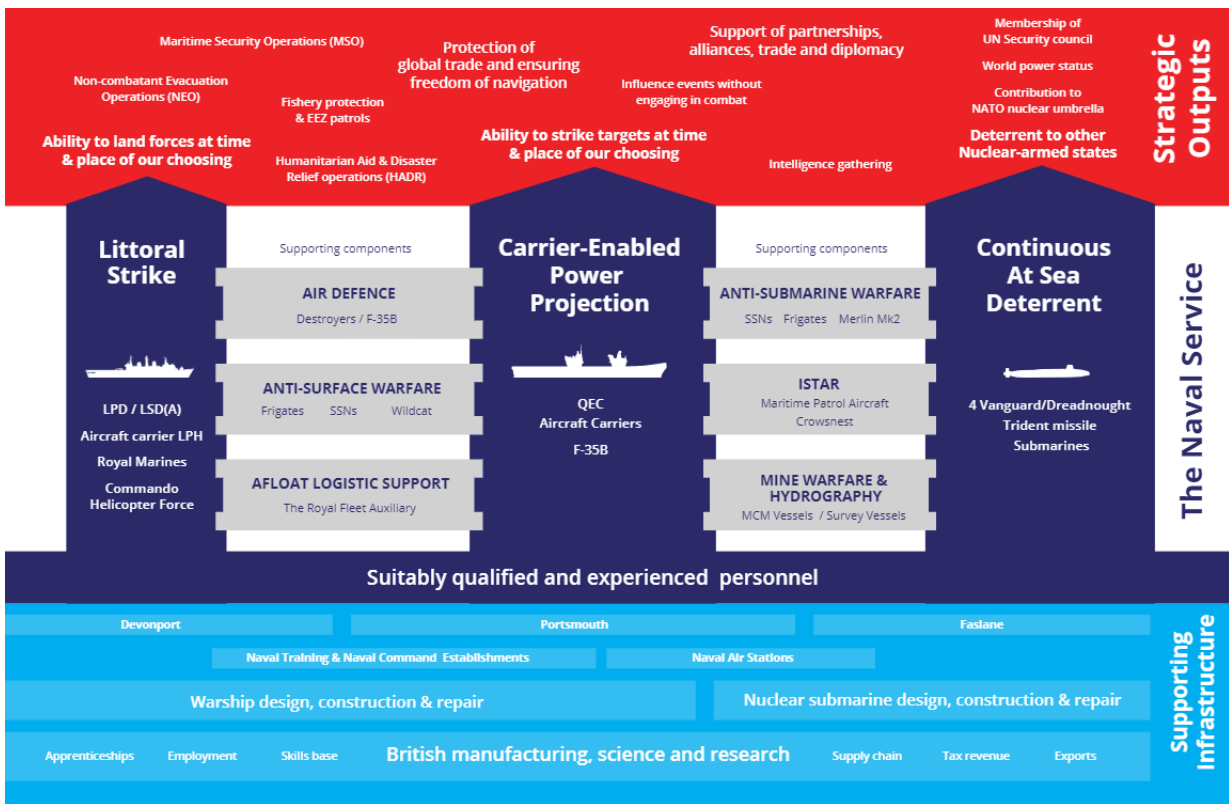
The absurd Chinese '9 Dash Line' territorial claim over most of the South China sea, and threats to invade Taiwan has put it on a collision course with the US and many Asian nations and conflict looks ever more likely. Although it could seem far away and someone else's dispute, what happens in Asia has big implications for UK interests. There is likely to be more support for a tougher line on China and the planned FONOP by HMS Queen Elizabeth in the South China Sea in 2021. A robust, co-ordinated and measured international response would make it much harder for China to pick off nations one by one or risk being drawn into a war and is the best hope for long term peace and stability.

Russia's oil-dependent economy is in floundering and Putin's approval ratings have plummeted. Authoritarian regimes that are in trouble are often tempted to distract from problems at home with foreign adventurism. While the Russian people struggle in the pandemic, Putin seems more concerned by superpower pretensions, heavy investment in the military and, in particular, a new generation of nuclear weapon systems which far exceed purely defensive needs.

Swinging the axe?

This infographic [on the next page] lays out the three core pillars of Naval Service capability and its supporting elements. This was roughly how the RN successfully presented its case to government in the run-up to the 2015 defence review. Today the core functions and outputs remain essentially unchanged and are just as relevant. It is clear that the interlocking and mutually supporting elements of a balanced fleet are still needed and there is little left that can be cut without impacting credibility.

Each of the three pillars has an army of critics and naysayers, especially the expensive nuclear deterrent. As the defence spending has fallen since CASD began in the late 1960s, the deterrent has inevitably assumed a bigger and bigger proportion of the budget. Further cuts to conventional capabilities could not only weaken the protection the deterrent submarines require but would begin to undermine the purpose of Trident if the UK has little left but its nuclear shield. There are many that believe we should abandon Trident and strengthen our conventional forces. Not only would be a colossal strategic blunder, but it is unlikely the MoD would be allowed to keep hold of the savings that would eventually be realised after the heavy costs of decommissioning, especially in the current climate.



There are very few options left for 'salami slicing' the RN, ie. multiple small cuts in the hope of maintaining core capabilities and avoiding uncomfortable headlines. To save the £billions the Treasury might demand from defence, in the case of all three services, it would mean removing core capabilities. Extreme measures such as dispensing with the LPDs, mothballing or selling one or both of the aircraft carriers and cancelling the Type 31 frigates would be the result. Instead, a government that actually believed defence of the realm is its first priority, should be looking at the global situation and strengthening the armed forces.

Adapt and overcome

Despite the difficult situation, there are some reasons for optimism. Although not the circumstances of choice, the economic downturn is also likely to help resolve the forces manpower shortages. With fewer attractive opportunities available in the civilian world, expensively trained and experienced personnel are less likely to leave and recruitment is also likely to surge. Having spent so much to furlough and support employees during lockdown, the UK should be in a good position to quickly restart much of its economy. The defence sector has continued to work as far as possible and maintain progress on strategically important projects.

If a policy of public expenditure for growth is adopted, it may also be considerably easier to make the case for defence spending, at least on predominantly UK-manufactured equipment. The time has surely come for the MoD to adopt a mandatory assessment of the local economic benefits, money returned to Treasury and long-term gains when deciding where to award contracts. Much of the defence manufacturing base in the UK is in Scotland, the North or South West of the UK and stimulating the regional economies with new orders would also be in line with the government's 'levelling up' agenda. Prioritising UK manufacturers may come with difficult choices. For example, purchasing more F-35s (predominately US-made) beyond the 48 already ordered could be curtailed along with other off-the-shelf purchases of tried and trusted foreign weapon systems.

The value of having a domestic supply chain, greater resilience and stockpiling has been highlighted by the pandemic and this has always been especially relevant for defence which is supposed to be ready for sudden crises. The West is chronically dependent on China for goods and materials of strategic importance and there is likely to be a move to find more reliable suppliers. Huawei may be the tip of the iceberg and allowing Chinese ownership and involvement in any business of strategic importance must now be subject to heavy scrutiny.

2020 has been tough and not remotely like what anyone expected. It is easy to say with hindsight what could have been done better but there is an opportunity to learn lessons and be better prepared for the unexpected in future. Adversity has mostly brought the best out of the British people – adapt and overcome.

VE Day Commemoration Mess Dinner and Dance - UPDATE

From Lt Cdr Derek Ireland

Place: Salomons Estate, Broomhill Road, Southborough, Kent TN3 0TG Tel: 01892 515152

Dress: Service Personnel Rig 2B with miniature medals or 1B, Civilians Dinner suit, or dark lounge suite with black bow tie. Ladies - Evening Dress

A **Formal** Naval mess dinner. Hotel rooms can be booked directly with the venue at a cost of £105 for a double including breakfast. Rooms will be released into the open market on 1st March 2020. Quote Mess Dinner when booking.

- Pre-Dinner Drinks **18.30**
- Dinner Call **18.50**
- The loyal toast to conform with the nation's timing at **19.00**

Starters

A – Sweet potato soup, crispy leeks, garlic croutons

B – Hot smoked salmon, beetroot puree, horseradish, sippet

Mains

C – Free range chicken breast, fondant potato, baby carrots, leeks, red wine jus

D – Orzotto Verde with smoked tomatoes and parmesan crisp (V)

Desserts

E – Warm chocolate brownie with salted caramel ice cream

F – Salomons Estate Eton mess

Passing of the port and toasts, followed by tea and coffee in the conservatory. Then dance the evening away to 'Swing the Bluz'. Carriages at 23.30

Cost is £39 per head, (a pre-dinner drink and glass of port included) wine not included and can be pre-ordered or purchased on the night. The event can only host approximately 80 people, so attendance is on a first come first served basis. Please return slip with printed name, choice of food by indicating the letter of menu choice. Contact me if you have a dietary request.

Closing Date for applications is 1 August 2020 unless places have been filled prior to that date.

Payment by cheque or BACS – BACS mark with surname and number of guests to:
Sort code 11-11-08 account 00510406. Cheques payable to *Mr J Vanns*. Payment with menu choice please. (No payment, no place.)

If you'd like email confirmation of receipt of menu choices and payment, please enclose an email address.

Reply to *Lieutenant Commander (SCC) J Vanns MCGI FinstLM. Royal Naval Reserve*
No. 8 Fairfield Ave, Tunbridge Wells, Kent, TN2 3SD or Jonvanns@aol.com

Name	Postnominals	Starter	Main course	Dessert



**CHATHAM NAVAL OFFICERS' ASSOCIATION
STANDING ORDER FORM
FOR ANNUAL SUBSCRIPTIONS**

I wish to make my annual subscription payments by standing order to the Chatham Naval Officers' Association.

Please complete this form and return it to the Hon Treasurer:

Sub Lieutenant Jan Dean RNR, 79A Cherry Avenue, Swanley, Kent, BR8 7OU.

Do NOT send this form to the bank.

Your Name: _____

Your Address: _____

Post Code: _____

Name of your Bank : _____

Address of your Bank: _____

Your Bank Sort Code: ____/____/____

Your Account Number: _____

To my bank: I request you to pay Barclays Bank, 24 Lowfield Street, Dartford, DA1 1HD, Sort Code 20.25.42, for the credit of The Chatham Naval Officers Association, Account Number 93932702, the regular sum of:

£_____ Annually

Amount in words: _____

Starting on: _____/_____/_____

And continuing until* _____/_____/_____

Or until I give notice in writing*

Signature: _____

Date: _____

A note from the CNOA Hon. Secretary

If you enjoy the CNOA activities, why not extend an invitation to a like-minded serving or retired officer? or ask them to look at cnoa.org.uk



CHATHAM NAVAL OFFICERS' ASSOCIATION

President: Commodore Barry Bryant CVO

Chairman: Lt Cdr Jon Vanns (SCC) RNR

APPLICATION FOR MEMBERSHIP

SURNAME		FORENAMES	DATE
HOME ADDRESS Tel. No: E Mail Address:		BUSINESS ADDRESS Tel. No: E Mail Address:	
RANK	TYPE OF COMMISSION	SPECIALISATION / AWARDS & QUALIFICATIONS	
BRIEF CAREER DETAILS			
<p>General Data Protection Regulation: I agree that all the above details may be maintained and kept by the CNOA and RSME for the purposes of membership records and security. I agree / do not agree (delete as applicable) to my details being published in a membership booklet.</p> <p>SIGNED.....</p>			
PRESENT OCCUPATION			
PROPOSER'S NAME	PROPOSER'S SIGNATURE	HOW LONG KNOWN	
SECONDER'S NAME	SECONDER'S SIGNATURE	HOW LONG KNOWN	