



Issue 57 spring 2019

Ahoy There

Hope you all have had a good Easter & Bank Holiday and now looking forward to our annual reunion & 100 years celebrations of the Phot Branch. The RNPA celebrations will take place on the weekend 11th October 2019 in Portsmouth with a formal Dinner & Dance on Saturday 12th October at The Spinnaker Tower Portsmouth and a Run Ashore on the Friday night. Full details will be sent out in the near future we are just sorting the fine details. The RN phot branch is organising a Buffet Dance which I understand is on 21st September but invitations have not yet been sent out.

In this newsletter Submariners celebrate 50 years of the longest operation by armed forces, new RFA launch, HMS Protector on patrol, The Duke of Sussex in his role as Captain General meet the Royal Marines and Things Historical looks at the Navy Photos that served with the RM.

We are looking for someone to take over as Secretary as Jan Larcombe has resigned but will stay as Historian. We would all like to thank Jan for all his hard work over the years it has very much been appreciated, Ray Whitehouse has taken the role as Acting Secretary until one has been appointed.

Hilary & Steve King



"Following the annual Symposium for the serving photographers a dinner commemorating the 100th anniversary of the formation of the branch was held in the WOs and Senior Rates mess HMS Excellent.

RNPA members and other ex RN photos included in the picture are Tony Darbyshire, Andy Baverstock, Louise Baverstock, Paul Parrack, Mike Keeling, Stewart Warren, Danny du Feu, Lesley Wenden, Richard Thompson, Paul McCabe, Jim Gibson, Jan Larcombe"

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GAS ATTACK* at the ROYAL NAVY SCHOOL OF PHOTOGRAPHY

RNAS FORD aka HMS PEREGRINE

Brian Jackson



For members of Number 4 National Service Photography Course at RNAS Ford in the early autumn of 1949, there was a break from the usual class and darkroom activities. The evening prior to the incident I write of, the class was instructed to arrive the following morning with gas masks and in No 1s. Some students had never been issued with masks, while for others, it was to be a difficulty because they hadn't seen their haute couture accessory since the jolly days at His Majesty's establishment, HMS Royal Arthur, which perplexingly for landlubbers such as we, was afloat in the middle of Wiltshire. As an additional frisson to the excitement, we were ordered to practice wearing masks while relaxing at make and mend in our happy, comfy double-bunked vintage wood mess huts with its single coal-burning stove. Since being toggged up at Royal Arthur, I'd lugged my several-times-pre-owned mask on smoky trains, RN buses and trucks as I would a life support pack, along with the mandatory but unwieldy hammock with a mind of its own, large pussers' kit bag and optional swanky ditty bag. For those who cannily or absentmindedly, while on leave for instance, had left their masks at home or perhaps had had them nicked by a fetishist in a pub, or more usefully, had voided the mask per se for use as a handy shoulder bag, problems possibly loomed at demob. Why we had to dress up in our best togs instead of our usual No. 8s. wasn't declared.

On arriving at the school in said finery with shiny boots and after our enervating twice-weekly PT session, in said boots, (an obvious necessity PTI guys be given something to do) a truck arrived with a load of assorted gas masks and gaiters, plus one chief petty officer gunnery instructor and an assistant. Without ceremony or reverence for their antiquity, the regalia was dumped at the school entrance and a curious pile it was to. The gaiters, a handsome mix of black, white and off-white, some somewhat similar to spats yet others of venerable jungle khaki went nicely along with gas masks from different eras. It was soon discovered most of the gaiters seemed to be for the left leg.

GAS ATTACK Cont:

'Get 'em on. This ain't playtime Shuftil'

Shouts the GI in a fatherly tone intended to be humorous, but because of volume, fails.

'Come on ... quick about it.'

In bored parrot-fashion we were lectured about what was to take place in the school's semi-ground brick air raid shelter.

Excitement faded... the genial GI's first attempt to set the gas bomb' off appeared difficult because what seemed to be a tab simple refused to be ripped. He removed his mask the better to see and tried again. Still nothing. He let go his mask, a much fancier version than any of ours, which dangled comically between his astride legs. The few with clean visors noted the chief's blood pressure was on the up.

Unfortunately ... the 'bomb' began to splutter, a little, but enough to prompt our serious heavy breather GI again don his state-of-the-art mask but in so doing, dropped the increasingly fizzing bomb, which rolled along the mucky floor towards assistant three badge killick GI who with great presence of mind took over and 'Seeking the bubble reputation even in the cannon's mouth'. (Jacques: As you like it) gallantly picked up the sputtering gas bomb and perhaps thinking his quick witted action would encourage the reluctant flare into greater activity, unfathomably, threw it hard at the wall.

Unfortunately ... junior's aim was not Bisley standard, because the enlivened faux gas bomb, finding freedom, performed beautifully and burst into an hypnotic brilliance with pinkish-purplish smoke as it embedded itself on the wood door, our only exit. Talk about, Fred Karno! Could not have presented a better performance. Needless to say we all survived to tell the tale. There being no telly in the mess in those days, we National Service squaddies really appreciated the cock-up cabaret ...

See you then ...

Brian Jackson

*With a nod to Gerard Hoffnung and his famous 'Barrel of Bricks' speech 1951



The Duke of Sussex Valentine's Day visit to the Arctic Circle

The Duke of Sussex spent part of Valentine's Day visiting Naval Service personnel hundreds of miles inside the Arctic Circle.

In his first overseas visit in his role as Captain General of the Royal Marines, His Royal Highness was involved in celebrations marking 50 years of UK helicopter exercises in the extreme cold.

The Commando Helicopter Force (CHF) – the wings of the Royal Marines – and their predecessors have conducted Exercise Clockwork since 1969, ensuring they are equipped to support Royal Marines in temperatures as low as -30°C.

His Royal Highness, wearing Royal Marines uniform for the first time, travelled to Royal Norwegian Air Force Station Bardufoss, in northern Norway, to learn about Clockwork at the Joint Helicopter Command facility and meet Royal Marines and Royal Navy sailors.

"This is the first time His Royal Highness has visited Joint Helicopter Command since becoming Captain General and it is great that he is doing the visit while we're in Norway," said Warrant Officer 1st Class Adrian Shepherd, who has served with CHF for 27 years.

“He was able to get a good look at what we do and how we operate in these harsh conditions. He saw the amount of training that goes into it and why it is so important that we do this exercise every year.

“It is good for the people out here to see their hard work recognised during a significant year for the exercise.”

CHF test their mettle in the Arctic Circle every year and Bardufoss is like a second home to the unit which provides crucial aerial support to Royal Marines.

The Duke gained insight into how working in the extreme weather helps expand their capabilities, as well as viewing CHF’s specialist Commando Merlin and Commando Wildcat helicopters.

He also watched personnel complete outdoor ground training and was shown field tents and a Quincey shelter – a makeshift snow shelter used by elite forces.

Colour Sergeant Gary Bell is an air crewman for the Merlin and the chief air crewman of Clockwork. The 40-year-old has operated in Norway nine times – four times in the iconic and now retired Sea King and five times with the Merlin. He said there have been many changes to Clockwork during his time but the focus has always been the same.

“If you can operate in Norway and in these conditions, you can operate anywhere in the world,” he said.

“Clockwork is about ensuring our people have the skillset they need to support 3 Commando Brigade and defend NATO’s northern flank. This is the harshest and toughest place to look after yourself and operate an aircraft so it really does make you ready for anything.

“During the Duke’s visit we were able to show we have those capabilities and the team were able to speak to him about how we achieve it.”

The Duke of Sussex visits 42 Commando



The Duke of Sussex handed two dozen new Royal Marine Commandos their green berets after they finished a gruelling 30-mile yomp across Dartmoor.

The Captain General Royal Marines called in on 42 Commando at Bickleigh, near Plymouth, then headed out on to the moor where generations of commandos have earned the coveted cap – the reward for 32 weeks of intensive training and dedication.

He met some of the experienced Royal Marines from the Commando Training Centre in Lympstone who’ve put recruits through nearly eight months of demanding instruction.

That training reaches its climax with the final ‘commando test’ on Dartmoor: a 30-mile march which starts at the northern tip of the moor and finishes near Plymouth.

Recruits have eight hours to finish – carrying around 40lbs of equipment.

As they finished the ‘30 miler’ the Duke saluted the successful recruits, then presented them with their coveted green berets, which symbolically marks the completion of their commando training.

Marine Rowan Birch was one of the exhausted recruits to complete the yomp successfully.

“Completing training has not really sunk in yet – it’s all a bit of a blur,” he said.

“You see and hear about Prince Harry going off on trips – and here he is, which is brilliant. I was a bit star-struck.”

Marine James Reynolds, another successful recruit, added: “To have someone as big as Prince Harry here at the end of the 30-miler, it feels special. It’s not everyday you get him handing you your green beret.”



At 42 Commando, the Duke learned about the unit's specialists who provide force protection/board and search teams for ships around the globe, amphibious support and expertise, and – in a new role – a dedicated rescue squad to save downed aircrew from behind enemy lines.

The Duke watched a Joint Personnel Recovery demonstration as Royal Marines leapt off a Merlin helicopter and simulated the rescue of an F-35 Lightning pilot from new carrier HMS Queen Elizabeth. Afterwards, he chatted with some of 42 Commando's personnel about their work.

"It was good to meet Prince Harry – normally you only see people like him on the telly!" said Marine David Meenagh from 42's Mortar Troop.

"He was really laid back and his military experience definitely makes a difference – the first thing he said when he came up to us was: 'Mortars, I like these guys!'"

"Hopefully we'll be seeing a lot more of him in the future."

Major General Charlie Stickland, Commandant General Royal Marines, said today's visit was the latest part of a comprehensive year-long programme to introduce the Duke of Sussex to the unique world of the Corps.

"42 Commando is his latest 'port of call', a chance to learn about this specialist unit – and for the guys to get a 'sense and smell' of their new Captain General, having taken over from his beloved grandfather," he said.

"For the successful recruits, today is the culmination of many months of blood, sweat and tears. To receive their green berets at Bickleigh Vale from their Captain General is incredibly special. Some were speechless, some were smiling, some were incredibly tired."

Since assuming the role of Captain General Royal Marines from his grandfather the Duke of Edinburgh in December 2017, the Duke of Sussex has visited new recruits at Lymington and commandos on exercise inside the Arctic Circle in Norway.



Air Shows on May 15-16 2019
and on 21-22 September 2019

This photo has come to light any ideas who they are - could be Bill Stenning in the red top.



Submariners celebrate 50 years of success of Navy's ultimate



EVENTS across the UK will celebrate the 50 years of dedication of submariners on the longest operation ever carried out by our armed forces.

No mission has been longer – or more important – than the nuclear deterrent patrols performed around the clock by the Royal Navy over the past half century.

Since April 1969 there has always been one submarine from Clyde Naval Base carrying out Operation Relentless.

To mark that commitment – and success – high-profile public events, including services of thanksgiving in London and Edinburgh, a parade through the home of the deterrent force on the Clyde and a new commemorative award for crew are all lined up.

Political, industry and naval leaders are determined 2019 also recognises the expertise, innovation and skill of the thousands of people who have designed, built and supported the deterrence force on more than 350 patrols since the late 1960s.

Today's generation of Trident-missile-carrying submarines are the size of small aircraft carrier and more complex to build than the Space Shuttle.

On patrol, the crew of over 160 are cut off from the rest of the world except for short messages of 120 words which can be sent by families each week that their loved ones are away - with no opportunity for submariners to communicate back.

The first submarine to carry the nuclear deterrent was HMS Resolution which left Clyde on her maiden patrol in June 1968.

Continuous patrols began in April 1969 as the remaining R-boats – Repulse, Renown and Revenge – entered service, each armed with Polaris nuclear missiles.

The four conducted 229 deterrence patrols until they were retired in the 1990s as the much larger V-boats – HMS Vanguard, Victorious, Vigilant and Vengeance – replaced them.

As they approach the end of their lives, work has begun on the third generation of deterrent submarines, the Dreadnought class which will also be equipped with Trident missiles. The new boats will enter service in the early 2030s – taking the continuous at sea deterrence up to its 100



Greenock welcomes Royal Fleet Auxiliary ship to the Fleet



ROYAL Fleet Auxiliary (RFA) ship, RFA Tidesurge, was welcomed into the Fleet on Wednesday, February 20, during her dedication service at Greenock's Ocean Terminal.

The 39,000-tonne fleet replenishment tanker is the latest of four new RFA ships which will be the biggest in service.

Previously, Greenock was the affiliated town of RFA Gold Rover, which provided sterling service in support of the Royal Navy, NATO, and coalition allies for over 40 years. RFA Tidesurge will now take on the honour, continuing its close ties with the area.

Members of the RFA, military personnel, dignitaries, and civil leaders from Greenock gathered at the waterside for the dedication ceremony. Guest of honour at the event was Lady Sponsor, Lady Joanna Woodcock, accompanied by her husband, former Second Sea Lord, Sir Jonathan Woodcock, KCB, OBE. Also attending the event were local Sea Cadets, with their unit changing its name to "TS Tidesurge" to mark the special link between the vessel and town.

"Royal Fleet Auxiliary Tidesurge is the third of our four new fleet replenishment tankers," explained Commodore Duncan Lamb, Head of the RFA Service.

With her flight deck capable of operating Chinook helicopters, double probe Replenishment At Sea rigs, self-defence capability, and versatile fuel cargo system, she represents a crucial element of the Royal Navy Task Group of the future and a key enabler of our Navy's global reach."

RFA Tidesurge is the third of class of the Military Afloat Reach & Sustainability (MARS) Tankers, which includes in-service sister ships RFA Tidespring and Tiderace, and RFA Tideforce which will become operational later this year.

The Tide class tankers are flexible, state-of-the-art, double-hulled vessels which will provide a key future underway replenishment at sea capability and support to the Queen Elizabeth Aircraft Carriers.

Once in service, Tidesurge will also provide fuel and water for Royal Navy warships all around the world. The delivery of these new ships is part of the UK Government's £179Bn plan to provide the Armed Forces with the equipment they need to deliver effective operational support across the globe.

Things Historic

Following the publication of the history book Steve King asked why I had not made a reference to photos working with the Royal Marines. The answer was that I did not know and recent searches at the National Archives did not turn up anything either.

The following is based on information from Steve King, Mike Lay and Rob Harding. If anyone can add to the story please let me know.

In 1966/7 an AFO was published asking for asking for photographers to volunteer to be attached to the Royal Marines. as the practice of using untrained Royal Marines photographers on a part time basis had proved unsatisfactory.

Four Photos volunteered, Steve King, Howard Bolston, Taff James and Chief Geordie Moss. All were advised to get fit as the job meant that they were e required to pass the All Arms course (gaining a Green Beret) before being drafted to the newly created Royal Marine unit billets. Chief Moss found the course to difficult and requested to return to the Navy but the other three passed the course and found themselves attached to Commando Units in Aden and Singapore.

Mike Lay volunteered to replace Geordie Moss and joined Lympstone later in 1967 having got himself fit before undertaking the Commando course. On joining he was told in no uncertain words that, unlike Geordie, people did not request to leave the course but either passed or were thrown off and that dire thing would happen if he did the same.

Mike duly passed the course and was drafted to the 3rd Commando Brigade based at HMS Sembawang in Singapore. As part of the Brigade, whose remit was to cover British interest East of Suez and up to the West coast of the USA, Mike undertook both intelligence and publicity work from Ethiopia to New Zealand.

Initially there was no equipment provided but eventually he managed to equip a section with a collection of Naval and Army stores but had to process "in the field" when deployed to remote locations.

Photographers continued to serve with the Commando units until 2014/5 but as branch numbers were reduced they were withdrawn to form a RM mobile news team based in Stonehouse and the Brigade together with 43 and 45 Commando are looked after by a photographer from FRPU (N) at Faslane.

There are still eight Photographers entitled to wear green berets but completing the All Arms course is no longer a requirement to serve with the Marines but ex marines who have transferred to a blue photographer's uniform are preferred for major operations. Two photos continue to operate at Poole.



Digging around in the IWMs photograph collection I came across half a dozen pictures of WRNS under training at RNAS Donibristle ,HMS Merlin taken on 19th January 1942. The first WRNS course at RNSOP Felpham did not start until 15th May 1942 so this was either a local arrangement or an interim measure until formal training could be started at Felpham.

HMS Protector



Royal Navy survey ship HMS Protector smashed through nearly 300 miles of Antarctic ice to help scientists begin a five-year mission to understand how West Antarctica is contributing to global sea-level rise.

Working together with British Antarctic Survey's vessel RRS Ernest Shackleton, the Plymouth-based ice-strengthened vessel crunched her way to a remote Antarctic ice shelf to support a team of around 100 scientists who seek to understand a glacier the size of Great Britain.

The gigantic Thwaites Glacier is melting – accounting for four per cent of the annual sea level rise every year. Scientists fear the huge mass of ice could eventually collapse, raising the global sea level 80 centimetres – more than two and a half feet – and so are beginning a five-year programme of field activities on the glacier.

With the nearest British and American scientific research stations more than 1,600 kilometres away from the research site, the two ships were called upon to deliver essential heavy stores to the ice edge in preparation for the arrival of the scientists next year.

The two vessels delivered four large tracked vehicles, 14 snow mobiles, numerous sledges, a caboose to act as living quarters, fuel and food to last nearly 5,000 days.

Upon arriving at the Stange Ice Shelf, a team went on to the ice to dig deep holes to secure the ship's berthing lines. The crew of HMS Protector then worked around the clock for 72 hours with their colleagues from the British Antarctic Survey to offload around 300 tonnes of equipment, machinery and supplies as quickly as possible.

BAS Director of Science, Professor David Vaughan, added: "Without the assistance of HMS Protector, we just couldn't have delivered all the necessary cargo to this remote part of West Antarctica in time to begin this vital research programme, which will help us predict future global sea-level rise.

"This partnership with the Royal Navy has been enormously valuable and the kit they have delivered will mean that our joint UK/US science teams can begin their fieldwork on schedule next year."

HMS Protector has been away from its home port since September 2015 and will not return home until May next year. She spends summer in the Southern Hemisphere conducting research on the fringes of the frozen continent and austral winters in milder waters off West and East Africa.

Congratulation to Doug & Maureen Manning on their Diamond wedding Anniversary, we understand Doug is 95 In July and our oldest member of the RNPA.

