

# NRCEE NEWSROUND 2020



Naval Regional Command Eastern England (Edition 1, January - May)



## NRCEE FOREWORD

Without wishing to state the obvious, we certainly live in strange times! As many of you will be aware, the primary role of the four Naval Regional Commanders (NRCs) is to do what they can to ensure that the Royal Navy as a whole, is understood, respected and valued by the

society that it serves. We refer to this work as 'engagement' and we normally seek to exploit opportunities to put our Service 'in the public eye' in ceremonial and civic events as well as through warship visits to non-Naval ports and other visits by our people to employers, communities and other organisations across our respective regions.

Covid-19 has certainly put paid to almost all of that! However, what you may not know is that a key 'secondary role' of the NRCs is in the planning for and co-ordination of, the Royal Navy's contribution to what is known as 'Military Aid to the Civil Authorities' and so, understandably, in the last 2 months or so our focus has shifted from engagement to resilience operations.

In order to maintain the highly-valued links we have with our network in my region, we have produced this short newsletter explaining what we have been up to immediately prior to, and during, 'the lock-down'.

I sincerely hope you are all keeping safe and well and that you will enjoy this alternative approach to 'engagement'. Do get in touch if you would like to.

**Commodore David Elford OBE ADC Royal Navy  
Naval Regional Commander eastern England**



HMS PUNCHER & GUESTS

## P2000s VISIT LONDON

In January and February 20, HMS Ranger and HMS Puncher, (Archer Class P2000 inshore patrol vessels) visited 'the smoke'. The ships were undertaking University Royal Naval Unit training whilst supporting NRCEE's civic and employer engagement.



## HMS RANGER & CIVILIAN / MILITARY GUESTS



The presence of the P2000s also placed the Royal Navy 'in the public eye' in London as they hosted a cross-section of military and civilian guests onboard for a 'Thames Experience'.

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## HMS KENT VISITS DOVER



The last NRCEE event before lockdown was supporting HMS KENT's visit into Dover 20-23 March. Unfortunately the weather was mainly wet and cold. However, this did not deter the Kentish people; even on the eve of the pandemic over 2500 visited the ship. The Ship hosted the visitors on the tour and Team NRCEE



checked tickets and ensured all visitors sanitised their hands properly before stepping onboard! The ship also hosted a number of their affiliates who enjoyed the experience onboard. HMS KENT stated on Twitter *'It is was good to be back at our affiliated @PortofDover. We're very proud to bear the name of such a historic county and we hope that the people of Kent are equally proud to have the best frigate in the Royal Navy representing them around the world'*

## HMS KENT SOTV - SURVEY MONKEY FEEDBACK

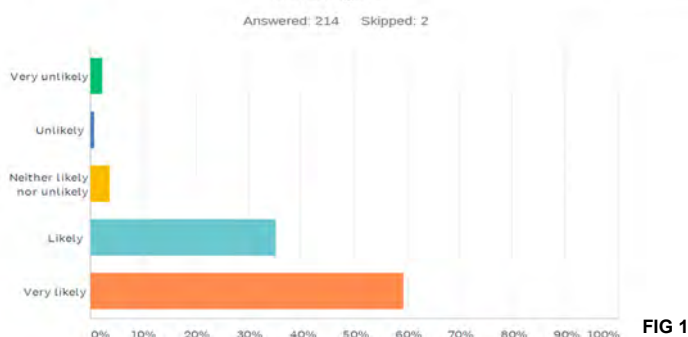
Survey was sent to email addresses used to book the tickets to attend:

- ♦ 721 survey invites sent; 426 survey invites opened.
- ♦ 235 clicked survey; 215 completed (29.81%).

### ANALYSIS

- ♦ The average score for the visit was 4.6/5.
- ♦ There was an increase in knowledge about the RN from the attendees as a result of the visit.
- ♦ 57% of visitors would recommend a career in the RN to a friend or relative.

How likely are you to recommend a tour to a relative / friend / colleague



- ♦ 50% found out about the visit from Facebook and 30% from a friend / colleague / relative.
- ♦ 94% would recommended a ship's tour to others (Fig1).

The most requested option was to look inside the ship too; specifically cabins / mess decks, the operations room and the Bridge.



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## COS' REFLECTIONS

### 'Who Would Have Thought It?'

By Cdr Glynn Johns NRCEE Chief of Staff (COS)



At the start year, the office was full of excitement and enthusiasm with the prospect of delivering a packed, interesting and varied engagement programme for the 2020 season that covered the depth and breadth of our region (from just

south of the Humber to just east of Birmingham and all the way to the south coast including Greater London), that can be a challenge with a small core team of only 11, with 2 running the administration from our HQ in London, HMS PRESIDENT. By late March, it was apparent that Covid-19 would have dramatic impact personally as well as on our engagement programme. Rapidly, the planned ship visits, attendance at county shows, maritime festivals and the national VE75 events in London were cancelled. However, out of the ashes grew the NRCEE contribution to the Covid-19 national emergency, and you will hear accounts of individuals' own experiences in this newsletter; in my case I became the Military Liaison Officer (MLO) for Lincolnshire. It's hard to comprehend that I'm on week 9 of my (temporary) role MLO as part of their Covid-19 emergency response team, the Local Resilience Forum (LRF). In short, Defence has a defined role in supporting national resilience (pandemics, floods, fires and famine etc).

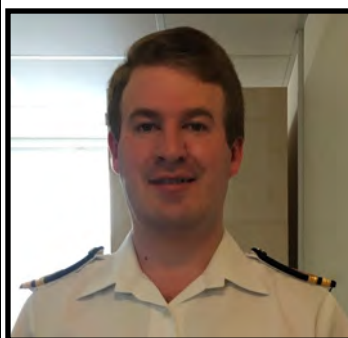
As the MLO, I have been acting as the liaison between the LRF and the regional Joint Military Commander (JMC). Each JMC supports several counties. In 'JMC East', we support 11 counties that make up the East Midlands and Eastern England. The County LRF is normally set up because of a county or regional emergency which, in Lincolnshire, is normally a flood! The LRF's response to Covid-19 has been no different in that all the agencies have come together to work out a coordinated response, including County and District Councils, the local Critical Care Group (CCG-NHS reps), Defence, Police, Fire, Ambulance Service, Environmental Agency, Public Health England and other Government departments. That said, floods last for a few days; the Covid-19 response has lasted for weeks and is likely to last for months, if not years. Normally, a response would see all members gather in one building; with social distancing enforced, business had to be conducted virtually and this worked very well. There are 7 other uniformed personnel assisting the Lincolnshire LRF deliver a robust response, who are embedded in planning cells, dealing with the vulnerable to PPE logistics or working alongside the CCG.

As MLO, I link into the Strategic Coordination Group where I calculate military support requirements and offer another brain, all from the confines of my kitchen using a laptop and mobile. Keeping one eye on engagement, I'm still hopeful that we can recover some events at the end of 2020; only if it's safe to do so.

Like everyone else, I'm surprised by the events that have unfolded and it certainly was not how I imagined spending my last year in the RN after 34 years. That said, the 2021 programme is now being developed and hopefully it will be bigger and better!

## NAVAL LIAISON OFFICER TO ROYAL NAVAL RESERVE (RNR) OFFICER - CALLED TO ACTION

By Lt Charles Perrett RNR / NLO



As I write this, I should have been halfway across the channel with: Prince Michael of Kent; 76 of the original Dunkirk 'Little Ships'; 8 support vessels; 4 RN warships; and 130 modern spectator yachts as part of the #Dunkirk80 return. Instead, I have been mobilised in my RNR

role as part of the Covid-19 'Op RESCRIPT'. At the start of April, I donned my uniform and headed down to HMS EXCELLENT where I had been appointed to act as one of 3 Fleet Adjudication Officers (AOs) working for Navy Legal to support the planned mobilisation of up to one thousand Maritime Reserves (MR). As an AO, I was empowered directly to adjudicate over objections to mobilisation from a Reservist or their Employer. I also decided if their entitlement to a Reservist Award (top up between military and civilian income), allowable expenses such child care, and the employer award. The workload in April was high as we processed the first 100 Reservists (RNR/RMR) mobilised, after the initial rush this dropped dramatically as the MR realised that fewer would have to mobilise due to the amazing response from volunteers in the charity sector and former NHS staff.

By the end of April, I was 'stood-down' from HMS EXCELLENT and I am currently working from home in London at 'immediate readiness to support' whilst coordinating online training for 20 RNR senior rates, warrant officers and officers. Whilst mobilised, it was agreed that, should capacity allow, I would cover the very much reduced workload of my NRCEE day job as Naval Liaison Officer; this included working with the Queen's Harbour Master Portsmouth in allowing a German ship to anchor in the Solent after she had failed to safely take on fuel in France and supporting RN media to produce a feature on Dunkirk Veterans for #Dunkirk80.

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## RESILIENCE IN NRCEE AND OP RESCRIPT By Mark Van Den Bergh - RNRLO

In the NRCEE HQ, I am the Royal Navy Regional Liaison Officer (RNRLLO) and take the lead for resilience (liaison with the civil authorities – police/blue lights, local authorities and other government departments), UK operations and maritime security in our region. Eastern England (EE) encompasses 3 Army Regional Brigades (Regional Points of Contact (RPOC)) with: London District within the M25; 11 Infantry Brigade to the south covering Aldershot to Kent down to the Isle of Wight; and 7 Infantry Brigade based in Cottesmore, with a region that spans from Lincolnshire to Essex and Hertfordshire. RPOCs each have one Joint Regional Liaison Officer (JRLO) and, for the three in the EE each RPOC has 2 JRLOs; so, I cover the whole of EE in comparison to the Army that have 6 JRLOs, each with a Deputy.

Once Covid-19 was declared a pandemic, the military response became known as 'Operation Rescript' with the Standing Joint Command UK (SJC(UK)) designated as the Joint Military Commander (JMC), each of the 3 RPOC Commanders were designated as JMC for their regions: JMC-London; JMC-SE; and JMC-E. Up to 20,000 personnel from the UK Armed Forces were activated in the fight against the virus and the normal slow drumbeat of meetings became the Royal Marines Corps of Drums on speed! I could only attend one meeting at the same time and we now had 3 JMCs that each needed my attention as 'their' RNRLO. This would obviously not work and something would break (me) if nothing was done! Therefore, the NRCEE, Commodore David Elford, directed that I would focus on supporting JMC-SE (which includes Portsmouth, home to a third of the Navy) leaving JMC-London and JMC-E with no direct RN liaison. HQ NRCEE was now only supporting Op Rescript as all other tasks had been put on hold and so the Chief of Staff, Commander Glynn Johns - now working from home in Lincolnshire - would cover JMC-E as Deputy RNRLO. This left London; a quick telephone call and the CO of RMR London, Lt Col Jason Durup RM, had agreed to help and another by NRCEE to the Commander of the Maritime Reserves secured agreement that he could help us out. We now had a plan that would allow us to support all 3 JMCs in our region and I could provide deeper knowledge as required.

I have been very busy supporting JMC-SE, which has 26 RN/RM personnel in the HQ in a range staff roles supporting the operation; some have been working directly in the HQ with many more working with the five LRFs providing critically-needed staff support, especially in areas where existing plans for a 'flu pandemic needed urgent updating to take into account the nuances of Covid-19, mainly in areas such as: mortu-

The Army had Operational lead as JMC; the Navy had the Naval Base, NCHQ and HMS EXCELLENT in Portsmouth and SULTAN and COLLINGWOOD on the Fareham/ Gosport side, all established to react to Covid-19 tasking and I needed to ensure that each of the bases had the



right information from Hampshire's response to the crisis along with JMC-SE updates.

Finally – Military Aid to Civil Authorities (MACA) - should any Navy Establishment be approached to support the MACA, it must be stressed that I am the RN liaison for this ensuring that the required paperwork is completed via the JMC into SJC(UK), to be agreed or rejected. As an example, during Op Rescript, there was one request for the Naval Base to provide portable freezer/chiller facilities to Portsmouth City Council to enable it to freeze freshly-prepared meals prior to them being distributed to the vulnerable who were unable to shop.



Normally, plenty of such facilities are available commercially (one of the criteria for MACA), but they were being snapped up to provide additional mortuary capacity across the country, hence the urgent need. Also the Royal Navy was keen to support the community in which we live and work. This request was supported by SJC(UK) and a 'chilled container' was moved from the Naval Base to Portsmouth Football Club's grounds, to provide a secure area; it is still there, providing this service until the end of June, when it will be collected and returned.

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## CRITICAL SUPPORT TO OPERATION RESCRIPT

At the very outset of Operation RESCRIPT, NRCEE allocated his own Engagement Team (comprising one Lieutenant and 3 ratings) to the operation and, on Friday 20<sup>th</sup> March, the team was tasked by Standing Joint Command, at short notice, to collect specialist laboratory equipment from Dundee University for delivery to the first of the 'Lighthouse Laboratory' being established in Milton Keynes. Employing their planning skills normally used for moving their public engagement display equip-



ment as well as the vehicles owned by the team, they quickly set off from RAF Wittering near Peterborough for a 14-hour round trip. En route to Dundee, the team was directed to collect additional equipment from a company in Perth; this was the first of many trips over 8 weeks.

The team said *'It has been great to be able to use the world class training we've received to contribute to the Covid-19 effort in support of the NHS in this way. The lockdown certainly led to much quieter roads which made the long trips easier to complete.'*

They travelled far and wide across north and east of England clocking over 5400 miles and delivering 68 items of critical equipment to three Lighthouse Laboratories based in Milton Keynes, Macclesfield and Glasgow.



## DUNKIRK COMMEMORATED BY ROYAL NAVY VETERAN 80 YEARS ON

On Tuesday 26<sup>th</sup> May 2020, the Royal Navy remembered 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), assisted his friend Lieutenant Calvin Shenton at the foot of those plaques which bear the names of men who never returned from Dunkirk, and for whom there is no known grave. Lawrence Churcher served throughout WWII including Dunkirk, where by miracle he met his brothers on the beaches during Operation Dynamo



Naval Regional Commander for the East of England, Commodore David Elford, said: *"On behalf of the Royal Navy, it is my privilege to convey our sincere thanks and admiration to Mr Churcher as well as to all the veterans of Dunkirk. It is also appropriate to acknowledge all those who continue to care for the remaining 'little ships' which made that dangerous and historic voyage 80 years ago."*

A Royal Navy frigate and several patrol boats were due to have sailed as escort for flotilla of those surviving boats, thought now to be fewer than 100, which made the perilous crossings in late May and early June 1940. However, those plans were cancelled due to COVID-19.

**Look out for #Dunkirk81, May 2021**

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For VE Day 75 on 8th May 2020, it was 75 years since the guns fell silent at the end of the war in Europe. Years of carnage and destruction had come to an end and millions of people took to the streets and pubs to celebrate peace, mourn their loved ones and to hope for the future, but not forgetting those still in conflict until 15th August when it was announced that Japan had surrendered unconditionally to the Allies, effectively ending World War II.

To mark the occasion the Royal Navy invited maritime partners, service and civilian alongside the general



HMS Queen Elizabeth 2020

## CHARNDON VILLAGE CELEBRATES

A personal perspective from a resident and member of the NRCEE team - Charndon Village in Buckinghamshire had planned a large VE 75 celebration including the unveiling of a new War Memorial. Frustrated but not deterred by the ban on public gatherings, the village decided to use the Royal British Legion's 'Stay at Home' street party. Nearly every house was decked out with red, white and blue bunting as well as plenty of flags and balloons. Sitting on a variety of furniture (everything from bean bags and cushions to sofas and dining room chairs), the village took to their front gardens or drives for BBQs, tea parties and buffets.



IWM

public to #ShineALight. To mark the 75 years commemorative celebration those that took part were asked to share their pictures and videos on social media. Shine A Light was an audio and visual activity that marked the main historic events of VE Day in 1945:

- ◆ At 11 am, there was a 2 minutes' silence to remember the sacrifices made between 1939 and 1945.
- ◆ At 3 pm - Churchill's speech, the Royal Navy warships and support vessels of the Royal Fleet Auxiliary at home and deployed around the world blasted their horns for a minute to celebrate victory.
- ◆ At 9.30 pm - The King's speech, naval ships redirected their searchlights skywards for five minutes and supporters shone their phone, torch etc in to the night sky to 'shine their light!'

The 75th anniversary provided our nation, and our friends around the world, an opportunity to reflect on the enormous sacrifice, courage, and determination of people from all walks of life who saw us through this dark, terrifying period.



The day started with the two minutes silence being heralded over loud speakers by the Last Post, so that the whole village could hear. The day continued with Churchill's VE Day radio address being played on a number of speakers throughout the village to recreate the effect of 75 years ago. The day concluded with the Queen's address to the nation being played on the loud speakers and dancing in the quiet roads to a variety of 1940's hits including a rousing rendition of Vera Lynn's We'll Meet Again. It was thanks to the loan of equipment by the Regional Engagement Team that the loud speakers were able to be used.

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