



National Museum of the Royal Navy ~ Master Narrative



1

NARRATIVE

We will tell this emotionally-coloured and nuanced story, one of triumph and achievement as well as failure and muddle, through four key themes:

People

We tell the story of the Royal Navy's people. We examine the qualities that distinguish people serving at sea: courage, loyalty and sacrifice but also incidents of ignorance, cruelty and cowardice. We trace the changes from the amateur 'soldiers at sea', through the professionalization of officers and then ships' companies, onto the 'citizen sailors' who fought the World Wars and finally to today's small, elite force of men and women. We highlight the change as people are rewarded in war with personal profit and prize money but then dispensed with in peace, to the different kind of recognition given to salaried public servants. Increasingly the people's story becomes one of highly trained specialists, often serving in branches with strong corporate identities: the Royal Marines, the Submarine Service and the

Fleet Air Arm. We will examine these identities and the Royal Navy's unique camaraderie, characterised by simultaneous loyalties to ship, trade, branch, service and comrades.

Power

We tell the story of the Royal Navy's power as a defining influence. We show its impact through operations on Great Britain, Europe and the wider world, and the effect of the informal export of its culture, traditions and infrastructure. We explore how Kings and states used the power of ships, how the development of the Nation and navies are linked and the part played by the Royal Navy in the creation of British national identity. We reflect on the Royal Navy's contribution to wealth and power; as principal engine and client of the Industrial Revolution; as key player in formation of Empire; as the force that controls the sea and allows trade. We show how the Royal Navy's power has increasingly had to be exercised in partnership with allies, multinational organisations like NATO and the United Nations and non-state actors. We discuss how the Navy's status has declined

OURS IS THE EPIC STORY of the Royal Navy, its impact on Britain and the world from its origins in 625AD to the present day.

BRITAIN'S SEA POWER



2

Maintain it with your SAVINGS



3

from a powerful internal force which at times shaped the policies of the state, to an armed force whose resources are determined by government priorities.

Purpose

We tell the story of the Royal Navy's roles in the past, and explain its purpose today. Using examples of what the service did and continues to do, we show how for centuries it was the pre-eminent agent of first the British Crown and then of state policy throughout the world. This purpose has included life-or-death struggles against implacable foes like the defeat of the Spanish Armada, to great set-piece sea battles like Trafalgar, or huge, multi-faceted combined operations like D-Day. Sometimes the Royal Navy was the implacable foe, enforcing state policies like the opium trade or enabling colonial expansion. Beyond these significant events the Royal Navy's purpose has always included peacetime service as well as war fighting. Its success has always been defined as much by the complex logistical operations which keep warships at sea, as by the warships themselves.

Progress

We tell the story of the Royal Navy and innovation. Constant technological developments in ship design, weapons, navigation, infra-structure and communications have been essential in providing a fighting advantage. These accelerate from the 1840s as the Navy changes from a force of wooden sailing vessels to a fleet of steam-powered steel warships that is supported by aircraft and submarines. At times this advantage comes from innovation that transforms the health of ships' companies such as Lind's discovery that lemon juice could combat scurvy.

We tell these stories through the impact that these changes had on naval personnel, and at times on wider civil society. On occasion it is the Royal Navy's people who have driven innovation and at other times the Navy has adopted ideas from external sources.



4

1 Company from the first Royal Marine Commando unit, formed in 1942.

2 Poster advertising 'War Savings' to fund naval expenditure, around 1942.

3 The Royal Navy's first aircraft flight from a stationary ship, 1912.

4 The sailor Jack Tar capturing Napoleon, 1803.



HISTORICAL NARRATIVE

This matrix aims to outline in more detail the historical narrative across different periods that we will bring to life through our museum galleries, collections, historic ships and aircraft, special exhibitions, programmes, publications and partnerships. Key to telling the story are our historic assets – our museum collections, ships, aircraft, buildings and affiliate organisations.

The matrix is designed to be an active tool for internal use – it ‘shows our working’ and helps inform the decisions we need to make to actually tell this story – from collecting strategy, to updates of permanent galleries to more detailed site development plans. The matrix divides our story into seven periods and reflects the weighting which we believe they should receive.

FIGURE 1 Narrative Matrix for the National Museum of the Royal Navy

Period	Title	Characterisation
625-1450	Origins	Soldiers at sea
1450-1660	Towards Maturity	Mariners at war
1660-1815	Empire Building	Volunteers and pressed men
1815-1898	Superpower	Career sailors
1898-1945	World at War	Citizen sailors
1945-1989	Cold War	Professionals
1990 onwards	Changed World	Specialists

Each following section of the matrix sets out the key events/developments which have been identified as a focus within each narrative theme; the sections also map the NMRN’s existing assets to these themes.

625~1450 ORIGINS ~ SOLDIERS AT SEA

People

With no permanent standing navy the numbers employed on naval duties throughout this period fluctuates widely in line with the underlying interests and finances of the incumbent king. At times men are called to serve for a period in the service of their King. Recruiting or commandeering merchant seamen and their ships in times of need provides a skilled body of personnel but this also creates tensions as merchants dislike the necessity of having to make these assets available for the King. The burgeoning size of the navy at the height of the 100 Years war was such that the position of Clerk of the King’s Ships was created to manage the King’s ships.

KEY PERSONALITIES William Soper.

Power

Throughout this period the political landscape constantly evolves as foreign invaders settle and integrate and Britain’s multiple kingdoms continue to seek new alliances and dominance over their neighbours. Whilst there is burgeoning nationalism, Britain is not a united kingdom with rival kingdoms developing their own naval forces. Adoption of the Law of Oleron, by King Richard I in 1190 and the publication of the Black Book of Admiralty in 1336 signify the increasing professionalism of sailors and laws of the sea.

Purpose

The sea brought successive invasions, invited or hostile, to the shores of Britain throughout this period. From the Anglo-Saxons, to the Vikings and Normans, seafaring was an important aspect within each of their cultures for war as well as trade but the establishment naval forces varied according to wishes of the king. Fighting during early Anglo-Saxon period was generally between rival local kingdoms but it is the increasing number of raids by Danish invaders that prompts King Alfred to construct a fleet of large longboats to meet and fight the new wave of invaders before they

land. Over the next few centuries the fortunes of the naval force fluctuate. Notably, under King Canute, the English navy grew into an almost professional force but Edward the Confessor abolished his naval force leaving the country vulnerable to invasion following his death in 1066. During the years of Norman rule there was little interest in maintaining a navy but the need for transportation and trade between Normandy and the south coast of England led to the creation of the Cinque Ports in 1155. In the event of pirate or enemy attack the merchant vessels from these ports could form a naval force. Trading at the ports thrived until 1204 when King John lost Normandy to Phillip II of France. This prompted a renewed interest in the development of an English navy and by 1212 a naval base was established at Portsmouth. Following King John’s death there was a series of battles against the French.

KEY EVENTS Battle of Sandwich (1217), 100 Years War (1337-1453), Battle of Sluys (1340), La Rochelle (1372)

Progress

The design of long and narrow clinker built vessels, such as the burial ship at Sutton Hoo, were slowly refined during this period reaching their zenith with the Viking longboat. Powered by a team of oarsmen, supplemented with a single sail and with a shallow draft, these ships were ideally suited to transporting warriors on raiding parties as they could travel far upriver and be easily beached but they were equally useful as fighting platforms for warriors at sea when the main aim would be to try and board the enemy boat and capture it intact as a prize for future use.

By the 11th century a small fortified platform began to be added at each end providing space for archers. Over time decks began to be added, construction techniques changed from clinker to carvel construction and ships evolved ever larger fore and aft castles. The enormous 1400 ton Grace Dieu, constructed for Henry V in 1418, was unparalleled in size for centuries.

1450~1660 TOWARDS MATURITY ~ MARINERS AT WAR

People

In 1514 Henry VIII’s fleet of 18 ships required around 6400 sailors and soldiers to fully man however, ordinary seamen would be recruited as a ship was commissioned, rather than employed on a continual basis. Many men were drawn from ranks of experienced merchant seamen and fishermen but there are often problems recruiting sufficient skilled men and landsmen were frequently used to make up numbers. To meet the growing demands for personnel impressment first becomes law in 1563. As part of the reforms of the Commonwealth period navy the officer corps were remodelled with a greater emphasis placed on the appointment of experienced mariners to positions of command rather than the former reliance on men drawn from the gentry, regardless of experience.

KEY PERSONALITIES Sir John Hawkins, Sir Francis Drake, Walter Raleigh, Robert Blake, James IV of Scotland.

Power

The creation of a small standing fleet engenders a growing professionalism of naval forces with developments in naval administration and codification of naval strategy and tactics. Ships and weaponry become increasingly specialised to fighting at sea and the navy evolved from a force largely operating in coastal waters to an ocean capable fleet which is increasingly supporting global expansion and exploration. Private enterprise plays a vital role in this with the issue of letters of marque to privateers whose work directly supports the state.

Purpose

Emerging from the internal turmoil of the Wars of the Roses, the Tudor monarchs began to recognise the growing importance of naval power as England countered threats from France and Scotland, whose fleet expanded under James IV (1473-1513) and included Great Michael, the largest ship in Europe. Henry VIII built up a standing fleet known as the Navy Royal and established the Council of the Marine, a forerunner of the Navy Board. To support increasingly colonial aspirations Elizabeth I enlisted the assistance of



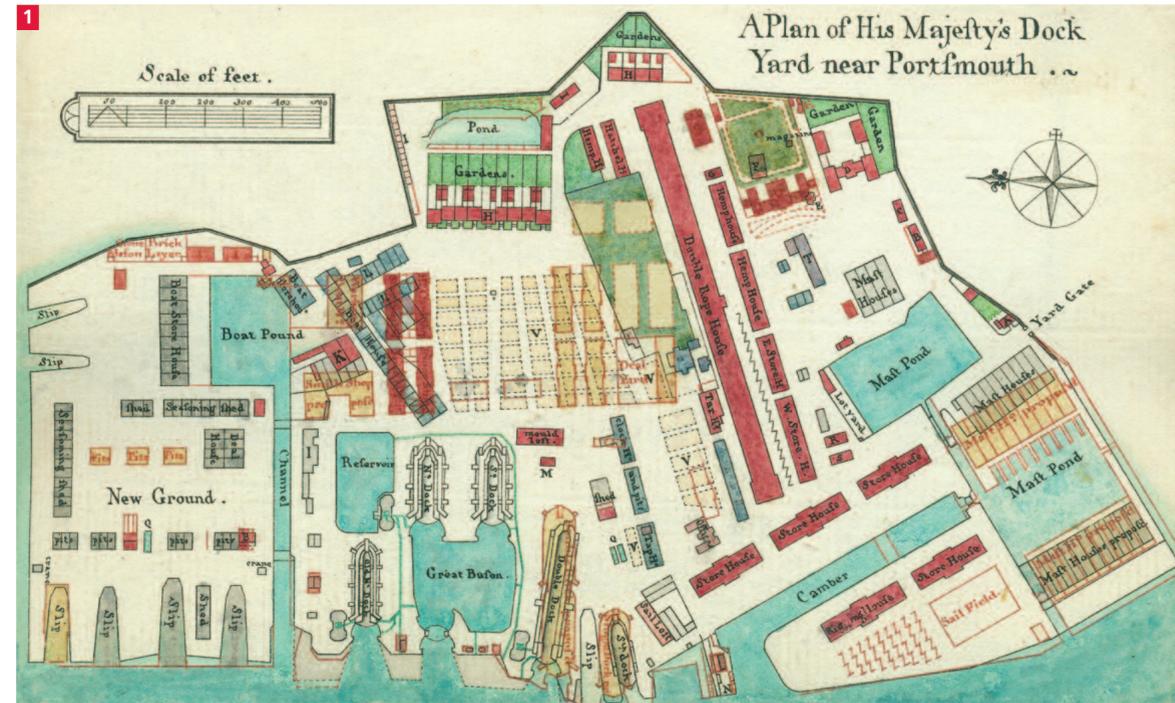
privateers. It was a time of exploration but also the start of the transatlantic slave trade. However, Elizabeth's support for the privateers and their attacks on Spanish interests ultimately led to the Armada against England. In response Elizabeth sent the entire 'Navy of England' to meet them, leading to the battles of the Isle of Wight and the important victory at the Battle of Gravelines.

The Navy shrank under early Stuart Kings but this changed with the English Civil War (1640-42) during which the Navy Royal sided with Parliament against Charles I. Renamed the British Navy during the Commonwealth period it rapidly expanded. Formed into three squadrons, each controlled by an Admiral, Vice-Admiral and Rear Admiral this newly-organised force proved successful during the first Anglo-Dutch War, begun in 1652. General-at-Sea Robert Blake led his fleets to victory in the Battles of Kentish Knock and Gabbard and published a set of naval tactics for fighting at sea. By the time the monarchy regained control in 1660 the British Navy was a permanent professional fleet renamed the Royal Navy with the coronation of Charles II.

KEY EVENTS Battle of the Solent (sinking of Mary Rose) 1545, Battle of the Armada 1588, Battle of Isle of Wight, Battle of Gravelines, Dutch Wars 1652, Santa Cruz 1657.

Progress

Henry VII invested in the infrastructure needed to support naval operations, ordering the building of Europe's first dry dock at Portsmouth in 1495. Throughout this period ships develop into floating gun platforms as the use of guns became more widespread. Bronze guns were replaced by cast iron guns, mostly manufactured in the Weald of Kent. Decks were strengthened to incorporate guns mounted in bow, stern and broadside pointing out of specially cut gun-ports. Ships developed a lower profile which was faster and more manoeuvrable than those with high forecastle and aftercastles. Trinity House was established in 1514.



1660~1815 EMPIRE BUILDING ~ VOLUNTEERS AND PRESSED MEN

People

During the period the Navy slowly evolved into a more meritocratic organisation, with professional competence becoming valued at least as highly as social standing. This allowed individuals of relatively humble birth, like Cook and Bligh, to thrive. The Royal Marines were formed in 1664 as the Duke of York and Albany's Maritime Regiment of Foot. Recruitment to the lower deck was still largely through impressment, with half of the Navy's 120,000 men at the time of Trafalgar being pressed.

Conditions for ordinary sailors were still harsh, with flogging commonplace and living conditions sometimes dependent on the whims of individual commanding officers. The RN was a

wholly male profession and the service was the largest maritime force in the world during this period.

KEY PERSONALITIES Pepys, James Duke of York, Cook, Anson, St Vincent, Howe, Rodney, Nelson, Collingwood, Popham/Murray, Harrison, Dalrymple.

Power

During this period the Royal Navy established itself as the key element of British international power, the nation's spearpoint. Britain's rise as a global Imperial power of unmatched economic strength was both a cause and a consequence of her naval strength: colonies were acquired largely through naval action, but then required naval power to hold, develop and exploit them. As a consequence, the Royal Navy started to become embedded in the national psyche, as illustrated by popular mythology of 'Jack Tar' and



the hero worship of admirals (notably Nelson). Perhaps the best example of this popularising of the service was 'Hearts of Oak', written by the dramatist David Garrick in the 'year of victories', 1759. The Royal Navy's growing importance to the nation also enhanced its internal political power, allowing the service to influence key events, notably the Restoration and Glorious Revolution. By the end of the period Great Britain was at the cusp of becoming the world's only superpower, thanks to its mastery of the most powerful trading empire the world had ever seen. This was only possibly thanks to her unparalleled naval strength.

Purpose

Under the restored monarchy the Royal Navy flourished as Britain became a dominant naval power. Charles II adopted the Commonwealth reforms and appointed his brother James, Duke of York, as Lord High Admiral. Following his

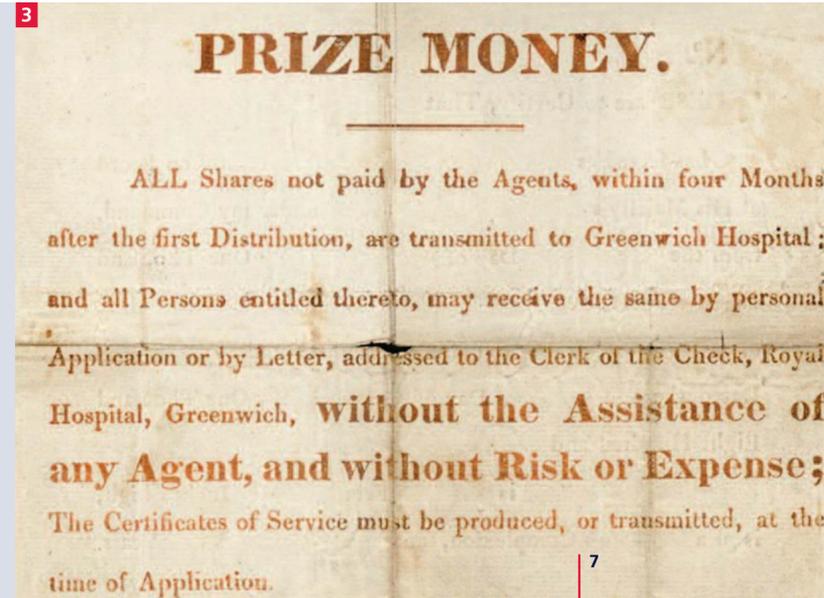
appointment to the Navy Board in 1660, Samuel Pepys' reforms, including the Naval Discipline Act 1661, laid the foundations for a professional service. In 1664 the Duke of York and Albany's Maritime Regiment of Foot was formed, becoming the Royal Marines in 1755. Following less successful campaigns against the Dutch, the Royal Navy again demonstrated its political power by playing a key role in the Glorious Revolution, refusing to declare for James II. The first half of the 18th century, when the Act of Union (1707) joined the Royal Navy with the Royal Scottish Navy, saw war with Spain and then the Seven Years War with France over control of North America. In 1775, the RN entered a period of almost unbroken war, first against the American colonies, and then with France, in between tackling piracy and protecting British trade. Although unable to prevent American independence, a string of victories against France and Spain left the Royal Navy virtually unchallenged by 1815. The Navy was at the forefront of exploration and after 1807 led efforts to suppress the Slave Trade. The Admiralty's Hydrographic Department was established in 1795 and the first Admiralty chart issued by Alexander Dalrymple in 1801. This was also a period of naval rebellion with mutinies at Spithead and the Nore in 1797, although these were protests over pay and conditions rather than revolutionary. It was also a time of great innovation (see below).

- 1** Plan of Portsmouth Royal Dockyard showing the extent of the yard and planned extensions, around 1786.
- 2** Silver cup presented to Physician John Drysdale for treating yellow fever in the West Indies, 1782.
- 3** Ticket issued to Able Seaman Robert Fell allowing him to reclaim prize money, 1804.

KEY EVENTS Restoration, Medway Raid, Glorious Revolution, Beachy Head, Barfleure, The Chesapeake, Cape St Vincent, Glorious First of June, Battle of the Nile, Trafalgar, Abolition of Slave Trade, Anson's Circumnavigation (1740-43) and Cook's voyages (1768-1780), Nore and Spithead Mutinies.

Progress

This was a period of great innovation. The 74-gun ship of the line, a French design, was improved by the British and became the standard Royal Navy battleship. Copper sheathing was introduced to protect ships' hulls, effectively increasing the size of the fleet since coppered ships sailed faster and required less dry docking. The invention of the carronade by the Carron Cannon Company in 1778, increased firepower, as did flintlock firing systems (1782) and shrapnel shells (1784). The introduction of semaphore by Sir Home Popham and Rev. Lord George Murray and John Harrison's chronometer improved navigation and communications and in 1795, following research by James Lind and trials by James Cook, the compulsory issue of lemon juice to sailors on board ships prevented scurvy. The Admiralty's Hydrographic Department was established in 1795 and the first Admiralty chart issued by Alexander Dalrymple in 1801.





1815 ~ 1898 SUPERPOWER ~ CAREER SAILORS

People

The period saw great changes to the way sailors were recruited and how they were treated once they had joined up. The press gang was abolished in 1814, and recruitment became wholly voluntary. Over time, standard uniforms were introduced and provided by the service (1857), ranks and rates were standardised and proper career progression began to be introduced. Flogging was abolished, and in 1859 a Royal Commission recommended wholesale changes to training, payment, food and serving conditions. By the end of the period, the service can finally be said to have been professionalised, with the Navy becoming a proper career for both officers and ratings rather than a temporary expedient whose manpower could be dramatically expanded in wartime and equally drastically cast aside in peacetime. The Royal Marines, expanded into Light Infantry and Artillery, played prominent roles in many of Britain's colonial wars.

KEY PERSONALITIES Cochrane, Fisher, Beresford, Tryon, Markham, Franklin, Colomb, Corbett.

Power

Avoiding commitments on the European continent, Britain used seapower to accrue wealth through its expanding Empire, enforcing the neutrality of the seas through the so-called Pax Britannica to make it easier for Britain to trade and shape the political map of the world. It was not always a force for good, as evidenced by the Opium Wars with China in the 1840s and 50s. Britain deployed the Royal Navy to support independence for Greece, Italy and new nations in South America, and even enforcing the US Monroe Doctrine, keeping other European powers out of the western hemisphere. Britain used the Navy to try to control the breakup of the Ottoman Empire, protecting the latter from Russian exploitation but encouraging smaller nations to break away.

At home, the reforms to the Navy's administration meant that it no longer enjoyed the direct political power of the past, but its importance to British wealth and prosperity meant the service enjoyed unparalleled popular support and influence, which was reflected in popular culture, as evidenced by the extraordinary popularity of the comic opera HMS Pinafore (1878).

Purpose

With the defeat of Napoleonic France in 1815, Europe remained relatively peaceful until the First World War. Britain increased the size of its Empire and became the dominant world power. During this period, the Royal Navy was the largest maritime force in the world backed by a vast ship building programme. From 1889, the RN sought to ensure its battleship numbers were never less than the combined strength of the next two largest navies.

Administrative changes included merging the Admiralty and the Navy Board in 1832 and other reforms included improved conditions for enlisted men such as the abolition of flogging in 1879. Later, structural changes made by First Sea Lord Fisher ensured funds and manpower were available for new ships. RN sea power, including the Royal Marines, enabled it to impose Pax Britannica on vital maritime trade routes and Britain established a dominant position in world trade, deploying the Royal Navy to shape a world which lent itself to British interests. The abolition of the slave trade in Britain in 1807 meant the RN was the main enforcer of this legislation and also actively involved in anti-piracy, helping not only Britain but other nations. Exploration continued,

notably in the Arctic. By the end of the century warships had changed from wooden sailing line-of-battle ships and frigates armed with cannon, to steam-powered steel battleships and cruisers armed with guns firing high explosive and mounted in revolving turrets.

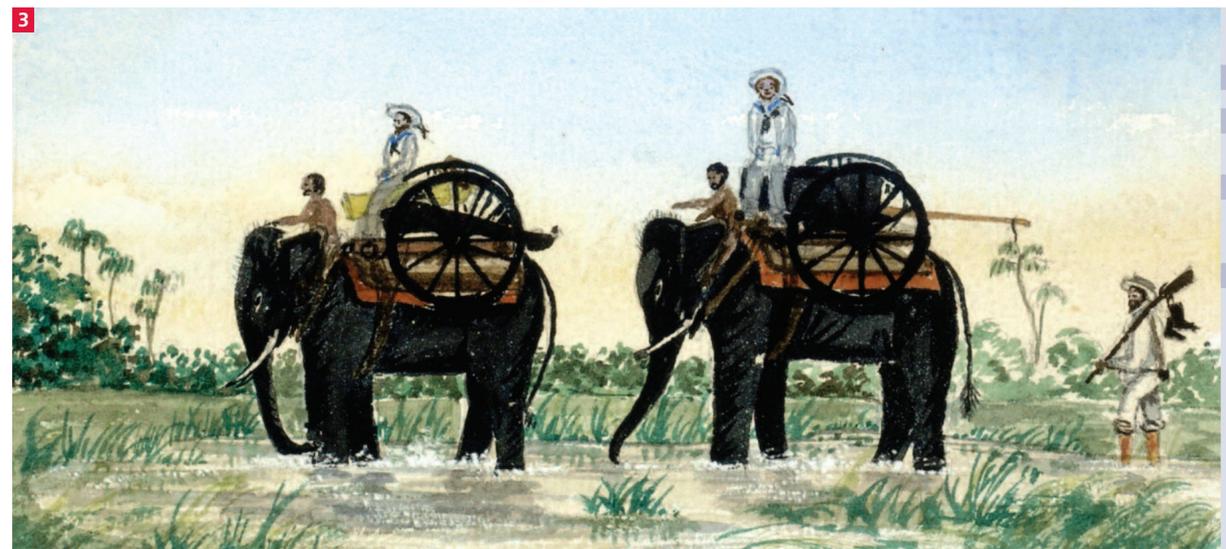
The RN embraced new technology and stayed ahead in the arms race, although much of this new technology remained untested in action as the service did not fight any major wars at sea during the period. By the end of the period, Germany was building a navy that might challenge the RN's long-held supremacy.

KEY EVENTS Bombardment of Algiers, Navarino, Bombardment of Acre, launch of HMS Warrior and HMS Royal Sovereign, Opium Wars, Crimean and Boer Wars, Franklin expedition, the Camperdown/Victoria collision, Fashoda Crisis, Bombardment of Alexandria.

Progress

The Royal Navy both benefitted from and inspired Britain's Industrial Revolution. Britain had unparalleled wealth and shipbuilding resources, allowing the Navy to remain far

ahead of its nearest rivals both in terms of quantity and quality. Amongst the many milestones of this period were: the gradual move to steam power; the introduction of guns firing high-explosive shells in the 1840s; the first ironclad warship, HMS Warrior, in 1860; introduction of rotating barbets and turrets in the 1860s; the invention of the torpedo in 1866 and its use in torpedo boats, the first of which, HMS Lightning, was built in 1877, and the adoption of breech loading artillery in the 1880s. The move to steam power led to the establishment of a network of bases around the world, where warships could take on coal and make repairs. Medical care continued to improve, and Arctic exploration led to the development of canning techniques, first introduced in the Napoleonic Wars, to preserve food.



- 1 The ship's company of HMS Wasp, around 1865.
- 2 Burning the barracoons on the Gallinas River, watercolour by an officer of HMS Penelope, 1845.
- 3 Elephants carrying howitzers during rainy season in the Indian Mutiny, watercolour by Lieutenant Henry Grant of HMS Pearl.
- 4 HMS Warrior, the Royal Navy's first iron-hulled warship, launched in 1860.



1898~1945 WORLD AT WAR ~ CITIZEN SAILORS

People

Between 1914 and 1918, RN personnel numbers nearly doubled to around 450,000. By 1930 numbers had dropped to around 97,999 but rose massively again during the Second World War (around 850,000). This period saw the beginning of the technology race and the RN began recruiting personnel with specific, transferable skill sets (e.g. RNAS recruited engineers/automobile workers). Training reforms (e.g. gunnery methods) were introduced as the RN sought to create a force best suited to the demands placed on it. The WRNS was established in 1917, disbanded at the end of the First World War and then reformed in 1938/39. Adverse economic conditions in the 1920s led to pay cuts and pay rates were only restored in 1934 following a mutiny in 1931.

KEY PERSONALITIES Churchill; Fisher; Jellicoe; Beatty; Cunningham; Samson; Longmore; Naismith; VCs.

Power

The First World War began badly for the RN. The failure to produce another 'Trafalgar' led to a loss of public confidence which was only partially restored by the successful naval blockade of Germany and the defeat of the U-boat campaign in the Atlantic. Between the wars, the Washington Treaty led to the scrapping of many capital ships greatly reducing the RN's ability to police the Empire. In the 1930s, the RN exercised gunboat diplomacy and carried out evacuations of British citizens from areas of conflict (Manchurian Crisis 1931-33; Abyssinia 1935).

This period saw the beginning of the end of Empire. Participation in two World Wars stimulated a desire to break away from the British Empire and develop as independent nation states. Countries such as Australia and Canada (1911) and New Zealand (1941) developed their own navies and India pressed for independence and partition which finally took place in 1947.

Purpose

The end of the 19th century saw a rapid change in naval technology. From steamships to ironclads, from submarines



to the mighty Dreadnought, the RN embraced new technologies and stayed ahead in an arms race with Germany. As the period unfolded, debates arose over the RN's role as its dominance declined. Fisher's reforms (1904-09) massively increased RN spending and introduced new ships to the fleet; Churchill emphasised the importance of modernisation and enthusiastically supported the introduction of aircraft in a combat role and thus the development of the RNAS. RN deployment changed in the run up to the First World War and by 1914 most RN ships were stationed in home waters. The First World War brought new threats and ways of counteracting them. The RNAS took on the threat of the Zeppelin, Room 40 provided cryptanalysis and the RN introduced the convoy system, achieving success in the first Battle of the Atlantic. This denied victory to Germany's U-boat campaign and helped Britain avoid defeat in the war. As the war ended the WRNS was formed and then disbanded and the RNAS and the RFC were merged to form the RAF. The era of the big battleship ended and the age of the aircraft carrier began, but the Washington Treaty (1922) greatly reduced RN power. The RMA and RMLI amalgamated (1923) and the Submarine Service was scaled back. Only as the Second World War loomed did Britain rebuild its fleet, embracing new technologies. Control of

naval air power returned to the Admiralty (1937 – Inskip) and submarines capable of long range operations were designed as US/Japanese tensions increased. In the Second World War, the RN defeated the U-boat threat, maintaining vital supplies. It played key roles in numerous operations including Dunkirk and the D-Day landings; some argue that because the Navy denied the enemy access to the Channel and Home Waters it played a key role in winning the Battle of Britain. FAA operations reflected the growing importance of carrier air power and, at Taranto, the first all-aircraft naval attack was launched. RN submarines played key roles in the Mediterranean and North African campaigns and took part in clandestine operations. RM operations included Burma and the D-Day landings and RM pilots commanded FAA squadrons supporting the British Pacific Fleet.

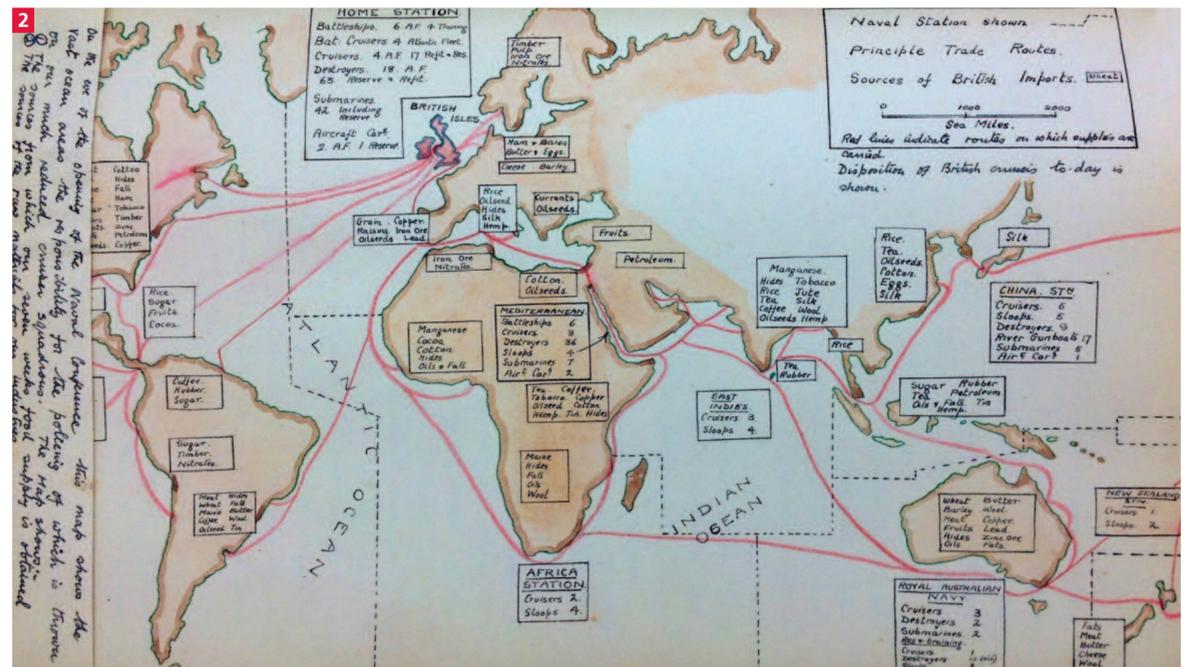
KEY EVENTS The First World War naval blockade of Germany; Gallipoli; Battle of Jutland; Battle of the Atlantic 1 (First World War); Zeebrugge; Norway and Dunkirk evacuations; Battle of Britain 1940; Battle of the Atlantic 2 (the Second World War); HMS Hood and the Bismarck; Taranto; Channel Dash; Operations Pedestal (relief of Malta); D Day; BPF; Palembang; Invergordon Mutiny 1931.

Progress

The first half of the 20th century saw major changes for the RN. Battleships gave way to aircraft carriers and submarines. Coal was replaced by fuel oil and airships and fragile early aircraft evolved into jet aircraft. Aircraft progressed from spotting and reconnaissance roles to attacking targets on the ground, at sea and under the sea and the concept of strategic bombing was developed.

In 1944, the Fleet Air Arm took delivery of its first helicopter, the Sikorsky Hoverfly. Over time, aircraft carriers were developed to make the operating of aircraft at sea more effective and efficient. The RN played a key role in the development of the tank, a progression from the use of armoured cars pioneered by the RNAS. New types of military hardware required new weaponry to counteract them. Armour piercing shells, torpedoes and armoured flight decks were all developed during this time as were radar, sonar and radio technology.

- 1** The Grand Fleet at sea at the Battle of Jutland, 1916.
- 2** Map showing the stations of the Royal Navy in relation to world trade routes, 1931.
- 3** The upper deck of HMS Vindictive showing ramps fitted for the raid on Zeebrugge, 1918.
- 4** The escort carrier HMS Nairana pitching in heavy seas, 1945.





1945~1989 COLD WAR ~ PROFESSIONALS

People

At the end of the Second World War, the RN consisted of some 800,000 men and 74,000 WRNS. By the end of the 1980s, numbers fell to under 65,000. Economic pressures required continuing contraction of RN personnel but with technological advances creating an increasing requirement for specialists, recruitment campaigns focused on the training opportunities offered; the RN was creating a smaller, all-professional force.

Better levels of pay were introduced and with the introduction of new ships, living conditions and food quality improved although the daily rum ration ceased in 1970. A small WRNS service was retained post-the Second World War in administrative and support roles based at shore stations in the UK and overseas. Embedded journalists and 'fly on the wall' television brought the experiences of serving personnel into civilian homes.

KEY PERSONALITIES Captain Eric 'Winkle' Brown; Political figures; Admiral Sir Henry Leach; Major-General Sir John Jeremy Moore; Admiral Sir John Forster 'Sandy' Woodward; Admiral Sir John Fieldhouse.

Power

As the RN grappled with post-war contraction, it also struggled to gain public understanding of its role in the face of Russian power and the nuclear threat. The Korean War was the first major conflict of the Cold War and the first real test of the United Nations. RN ships and FAA aircraft joined American and Commonwealth forces in the UN led campaign. Britain's post-war standing and prestige was badly damaged by the Suez crisis, when Britain's withdrawal under US pressure demonstrated how the balance of world power had shifted. Helicopters became increasingly important, first in the Malayan Emergency (1953) and then the Borneo Confrontation (1963-66), where Commando 'jungle' squadrons unequivocally demonstrated the versatility of naval helicopters in the inhospitable and humid conditions of the Indonesian jungle. In 1953, Dragonfly helicopters of 705 Sqn carried out the first helicopter search and rescue mission.

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Closer to home, the RN established the Northern Ireland Squadron which was deployed during The Troubles (1969-1998) to prevent paramilitary organisations moving illegal arms by sea and to support anti-terrorist operations in the province. In 1972, carrier diplomacy saw RN Buccaneers from HMS Ark Royal overflying British Honduras (now Belize) in a show of strength to counter invasion threats from neighbouring Guatemala. During the Iran-Iraq war in the early 1980s, the RN's Armilla patrol protected British flagged and friendly tankers in the Persian Gulf. The Falklands Conflict (1982) demonstrated the Navy's ability to act swiftly and effectively, and ruthlessly if necessary, when HMS Conqueror became the first nuclear-powered submarine to sink a surface ship. Humanitarian operations in this period included the evacuation of civilians from Aden and assisting the population of Montserrat following the volcanic eruption.



Purpose

Old allies became enemies, the British Empire came to an end and the US Navy took over the mantle of the dominant naval power. Post-war austerity left the RN facing the conundrum of how to reduce its fleet and still meet its world-wide commitments whilst from 1949 NATO requirements stretched capacity even further. RN forces were in action off Korea, Malaysia, Indonesia and Suez where the RMs made the first operational helicopter assault in an amphibious attack.

Anti-terrorist operations in the late 1950s (Cyprus) and NATO peace-keeping tours in the final years of the Cold War started a commitment that continues to the present day. During this period, spending reviews and funding cuts made updating the fleet harder as the RN sought to maintain expeditionary capability. The FAA had to fight hard to retain its fixed-wing strength, plans to replace the carrier fleet were shelved and a smaller type of carrier operating helicopters and vertical take-off Sea Harriers was developed.

The 1982 Falklands Conflict highlighted serious weaknesses in RN provision and earned it a temporary reprieve from cutbacks. New ships, including HMS Ocean, were built to sustain capability levels. The submarine force was reduced but in 1960 took delivery of its first nuclear submarine followed by the Resolution class submarine armed with Polaris missiles. The RN became the guardian of the UK's nuclear deterrent and anti-submarine operations became a key function.

KEY EVENTS Korea; Malaysia; Indonesia; Suez; Falklands; Cod Wars; Northern Ireland Squadron; First jet deck landing; First surface ship sunk by nuclear submarine

Progress

Gas turbines replaced furnace fuel oil and radio communication was enhanced by the ability to use satellites. Satellite-based navigation systems (e.g. GPS) allowed for unprecedented navigational accuracy. Nuclear submarines capable of spending months under the sea carried a new generation of missiles (e.g. Polaris) and the threat that submarines represented led to the development of advanced anti-submarine warfare technology. The RN modernised its air power and aircraft carriers, developing angled decks and



1 The last issue of rum as part of the ration, 1970.

2 HMS Dreadnought, the Royal Navy's first nuclear submarine, at sea.

3 RFA Tidepool refuelling HMS Hermes during the Falklands Conflict, 1982.

4 HMS Coventry hit by three Argentine bombs whilst defending the Task Force, 1982.

team catapults, jet fighters and VSTOL aircraft. Strike aircraft capable of delivering nuclear weapons came into service as did missiles with, for example, air-to-air, sea-to-air and anti-ship capability.

Multi-purpose helicopters capable of airborne transit and deployment of ground forces, anti-submarine warfare and airborne early warning operations quickly became a key component of the RN's resources. RN ships continued the role of collecting hydrographic and oceanographic data for planning and operational purposes as well as for navigational charts.





1989 ~ PRESENT CHANGED WORLD ~ SPECIALISTS

People

By the mid-1990s RN strength stood at about 60,000; by 2015 this had reduced to around 30,000. As technological developments continue, the RN seeks personnel to fill the specialisms integral to a high tech service. Attitudes to gender and sexual orientation issues have embraced modernity and, as a result, women's roles in the RN have changed too. In the Gulf War of 1990, HMS Brilliant's crew included the first women to serve on an operational warship. In 1993, the WRNS was integrated fully into the RN and women were able to serve on RN ships at sea as well as shore-based, at all ranks, rates and in all roles.

Officer recruitment is firmly based on merit rather than background. Medical care in theatre and the after care of wounded or disabled personnel has improved greatly, encouraged and supported by greater social awareness and higher public expectation of their post-conflict treatment. In a digital age, personnel are also able to capture their experiences and upload them to a world-wide audience via the internet.



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Power

With tough economic constraints in place the RN has to justify funding in the face of a public perception that most conflicts are land based, even though, unseen, the RN frequently plays a key role, supplying at times more than 50% of the forces deployed to Afghanistan. Nevertheless, the 1998 Strategic Defence Review authorised two, state-of-the-art aircraft carriers with the expectation of the first entering service in 2012.

With continuing unrest in many areas around the world, the RN is still able to demonstrate the effectiveness of naval power to help stabilise a situation or reinforce an international initiative. Thus the RN helped enforce a UN arms embargo as the Balkans situation deteriorated, carrier diplomacy was used to try and coerce the Iraq government into implementing UN resolutions and Royal Marines were

deployed to protect Kurds under threat from Saddam Hussein's regime. Trident submarines are on permanent patrol and RN ships also provide humanitarian assistance following natural disasters or crises brought about by conflict. Closer to home, the RN has provided SAR around Britain's coast for over 60 years, a tradition that ends in 2015. The world political situation continues to be complex and uncertain with the rise of China, the resurgence of Russia and the threat of a nuclear capability emerging in volatile regions. All of which means that demands on the RN are likely to increase over time.

Examples of where the Navy has been deployed include: Tsunami (2004); Lebanon evacuation (2006); Haiti (2010), evacuation of British and other citizens, Libya (2011); Philippines (2013); Med migrants (2015).

Purpose

The fall of the Berlin Wall and the ending of the Cold War did not bring the anticipated peace dividends. Numerous conflicts have arisen, influenced by globalism, geopolitics and terrorism. The RN surface fleet continued to decline in size and a smaller RN had to become high tech and specialised yet still versatile and flexible. The 1998 Defence Review recommended building new aircraft carriers and design work on two Queen Elizabeth class carriers began. State-of-the-art, they are the largest, most powerful surface warships ever built for the RN and will be used by all branches of the armed forces. HMS Queen Elizabeth should have operational military capability in 2020 and the F35s embarked will see fixed-wing aircraft return to the FAA. The RN has been involved in numerous conflicts around the world including Bosnia and Afghanistan usually working as part of a multinational contingent. Helicopters provide air support; Wildcats for strike capability and a world-leading fleet of multi-task Merlin helicopters. Uncertainties continue. Issues such as the Trident successor programme have political and social implications and naval operational requirements do not always take precedence. The post-Cold War era has seen an increase in RN anti-piracy, anti-terrorist anti-drug smuggling and humanitarian operations. Often working

collaboratively with other nations, RN ships patrol the Indian Ocean to prevent piracy, deliver life-saving supplies to stricken areas, intercept drug runners, rescue asylum seekers sinking in the Mediterranean and they evacuate British citizens from crises spots. The RN's role has changed to it embrace multinational operations and humanitarian imperatives.

KEY EVENTS Bosnia; Kosovo; Afghanistan; Gulf War 1990/91; Sierra Leone; Iraq War 2003.

Progress

With its reduced size and inherent financial pressures, the RN has to continue to keep incorporating the latest technological advances into its arsenal. Two state-of-the-art carriers will come into service from around 2020 and when the F35 Lightning Joint Strike Fighter is embarked, it will see the return of fixed wing aircraft to the RN for the first time since 2010. Cockpit technology includes technical data, speech recognition and electro-optical sensors to warn of external threats. The Wildcat provides strike capability and the multi-mission Merlin helicopters can operate from a wide range of RN ships including the new carriers and the Scaneagle unmanned 'eye in the sky' drone provides reconnaissance



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and surveillance data, day or night. The nuclear-powered, Astute class submarines are the largest, most powerful and most advanced the RN has ever operated. QE class carriers; F35; Merlin helicopters; Type 45; Wildcat; Drones; security – hacking, keeping one step ahead of the terrorist'.



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- 1 The first women to serve at sea in the Royal Navy, HMS Brilliant, 1990.
- 2 The last full embarkation of 801 naval air squadron on board HMS Illustrious, 2005.
- 3 K Company 42 Commando RM in Afghanistan.
- 4 Cut-away of the Type 45 destroyer.