

News story: Jetty completion marks major milestone in Carrier works

This is a major milestone in preparations at the naval base where £100m has been invested by the Ministry of Defence (MOD).



USNS Robert E Peary on the Jetty

The jetty, parts of which date back over 90 years, has been refurbished to prepare for the first of the Queen Elizabeth Class aircraft carriers. This is in addition to the dredging of the approach channel, inner harbour area and berth in order to make them deep and wide enough for the new ships, moving three million cubic metres of clay, sand and gravel from an area the size of 200 football pitches.

Bespoke navigational lights, a high-voltage electrical supply and specialist carrier-specific gangways, known as 'brows' are also being provided as part of the huge programme of works. The Defence Infrastructure Organisation (DIO) has worked with VolkerStevin and BAE Systems to deliver the package of infrastructure needed for the carriers.

DIO Project Manager Philip Wise said:

"I am delighted that the works to the jetty are completed. It is a crucial element of the £100m infrastructure package being delivered to support the arrival of the carriers into their homeport of Portsmouth. We are looking

forward to seeing the first of the ships berthing against the new and improved jetty later this year.”

With the core jetty works complete and new specialist equipment delivered, the Naval Base’s preparations for the arrival of the Queen Elizabeth Class (QEC) Carriers are centred on a programme of Familiarisation, Integration and Testing, otherwise known as FIT.

This has been designed by BAE Systems on behalf of the Portsmouth Naval Base Commander and Naval Base staff to prepare equipment, personnel and processes for the arrival of the Queen Elizabeth Class Aircraft Carriers. They provide a valuable means to practice and refine standard operating procedures designed for the QEC and to role-play emergency scenarios.

David Mitchard, Managing Director, BAE Systems Maritime Services said:

“In readiness for the arrival of HMS Queen Elizabeth our team at BAE Systems in Portsmouth has put in place a rigorous testing programme for the new infrastructure at the Naval Base. We have a long expertise in maritime support and servicing and are committed to delivering the most innovative and cost-effective solutions to the Royal Navy for these remarkable ships.”

Today (10th March) saw the start of Phase 3 of the FIT trials, using the visit to the Naval Base of the 40,000 Tonne United States Naval Ship Robert E. Peary for live testing of people, processes and equipment.

Royal Navy Captain Iain Greenlees, the QEC Infrastructure Director said:

“This jetty lies at the very heart of the preparations for the arrival of HMS Queen Elizabeth and the wider development of the Base for this century. It is tangible evidence of how close we are to the dawn of the QEC era and I am proud of the way the Royal Navy, DIO and Volkerstevin have been able to work together on this challenging project to get us ready for today.”

[News story: British military chief welcomes largest number of female Afghan officer graduates](#)

Updated: new pictures

Speaking today at a graduation ceremony for new Afghan officers at the Afghan National Army Officer Academy (ANAOA) in Kabul, Vice Chief of the Defence Staff, General Sir Gordon Messenger welcomed the increasing female participation in the Afghan security forces.

This year's class has the largest number of female graduates to date, with 23 officer cadets graduating today.



Female officer cadets march at the graduation ceremony.

The ceremony took place the day after General Messenger, the MOD's Gender Champion, participated in International Women's Day events in Kabul, including meeting with British Council and Embassy staff who work closely with the Afghan Government and Civil Society to create a better future for women and girls, including increasing awareness of gender issues in Afghanistan's security institutions.



A British officer presents an Afghan cadet with their graduation award.

This work includes supporting efforts to make the Afghan National Defence and Security Forces (ANDSF) a more attractive career choice for women, including improving accommodation arrangements for female ANAOA cadets. Training in the prevention of sexual violence in armed conflict is also provided to cadets as part of the Academy's programme.

Britain is also working to strengthen the role of women in the Afghan security forces through the training of future female leaders at ANAOA. The 23 graduates from the class of 2017 join the 57 female officers who have previously passed the intensive and sought after training. Today's ceremony also saw the Academy's total number of graduates going over 2000.



General Messenger attends the graduation ceremony at ANAOA.

With Afghans in the lead for providing security throughout the country and training their next generation of future leaders, Britain is helping to 'mentor the mentors' at the ANAOA, where over 30 British personnel provide advice and assistance to Afghan trainers.

Vice Chief of the Defence Staff, General Sir Gordon Messenger said:

Today's largest ever female graduate class demonstrates the progress the Afghan security forces are making in allowing women to help defend their country.

Britain's enduring commitment to Afghanistan means we're helping them in this task, as well as offering broader support to Afghanistan's security institutions.

UK assistance at ANAOA is an important part of NATO's non-combat Resolute Support Mission, which trains, advises and assists Afghan security forces, building their capacity to provide security for the country.

Britain recently increased the number of personnel in Afghanistan, with 500 people now providing advice to Afghan instructors, developing the fledgling Afghan Air Force, advising Afghan security institutions and providing security as part of the Kabul Security Force.

As part of the UK's long term commitment to Afghanistan, Britain has pledged

over £200million to support the ANDSF.

As Her Majesty The Queen today [unveiled](#) a Memorial in London recognising the contributions of the UK Armed Forces and all UK citizens who deployed in the Gulf region, Iraq and Afghanistan from 1990-2015, General Messenger on his visit laid a wreath at the Graves of the Fallen in Kabul.



General Messenger lays a wreath at the Graves of the Fallen in Kabul.

[News story: Unknown World War 1 soldiers graves rededicated](#)

A funeral service was held for three unknown soldiers who enlisted into The Lancashire Fusiliers, the New Zealand (NZ) Infantry and of an unknown regiment on Tuesday 7 March 2017 at Perth Cemetery (China Wall) near Ypres, Belgium.

The service, organised by the MOD's Joint Casualty and Compassionate Centre (JCCC), part of Defence Business Services was conducted by Reverend Chris Kellock, Chaplain 1st Battalion The Royal Regiment of Fusiliers.

The service was supported by The Royal Regiment of Fusiliers and by staff from the New Zealand Embassy. In attendance were delegates from both British

and New Zealand Defence, regimental representatives and local dignitaries.

Three sets of remains were discovered near Zonnebeke in December 2012 and accompanying military insignia indicated the casualties were World War 1 soldiers of The Lancashire Fusiliers and NZ Infantry; no identifying insignia accompanied the third soldier. Despite extensive research, the JCCC was unable to identify the casualties and they will be buried as 'Soldiers of the Great War known unto God'.

Beverley Simon, JCCC said:

We owe a huge debt to those who fought in the Great War and we at JCCC take immense pride in ensuring all those who died in the service of their country are laid to rest with the appropriate dignity, ceremony and respect.

Reverend Chris Kellock QCVS RChD, Chaplain 1st Battalion The Royal Regiment of Fusiliers said:

It is always an immense privilege to be involved on such occasions as this. As the current Chaplain to the Royal Regiment of Fusiliers it is an honour to join with other Fusiliers, past and present, alongside our friends from New Zealand to ensure a fitting remembrance to those who paid the ultimate sacrifice.

The memory of these unknown soldiers, in particular the Lancashire Fusilier, is part of our history but more importantly provides the motivation for our young Fusiliers as they follow in the proud traditions of wearing the hackle.

Headstones for the unknown soldiers have been provided by the Commonwealth War Graves Commission (CWGC), who will now care for their final resting place in perpetuity.

[News story: Iraq and Afghanistan Memorial unveiled in London](#)

The new Memorial recognises the contributions of the UK Armed Forces and all UK citizens who deployed in the Gulf region, Iraq and Afghanistan from 1990-2015, and those who supported them back home.

At 1100 am, a Service of Dedication was conducted from a specially constructed Drumhead on Horse Guards Parade with The Queen, Prime Minister

Theresa May and the Defence Secretary, Sir Michael Fallon, in attendance. They were joined by His Royal Highnesses The Duke of Edinburgh, The Duke and Duchess of Cambridge, Prince Henry of Wales and other Members of the Royal Family. Readings were given by Prince Henry and a Ministry of Defence Civil Servant Victoria Whittaker who deployed to Afghanistan in 2014.

Following the Drumhead Service, the Memorial was formally unveiled at a short ceremony in Victoria Embankment Gardens, in front of the Ministry of Defence, where Her Majesty The Queen met a small number of civilian and military guests who contributed to the Iraq and Afghanistan conflicts, and Memorial Trustees. Prior to leaving, Her Majesty was presented with a posy by two-year-old Alfie Lunn whose father Serjeant Mark Lunn, 29, deployed to Iraq in 2007 and was awarded a Military Cross for his actions during a fire-fight in Basra. Alfie's mother, Corporal Michele Lunn, deployed to Afghanistan in 2014/15.

Speaking after the event, Alfie's father Serjeant Mark Lunn said:

I'm incredibly honoured to be here today and especially proud to see our son Alfie present a posy to The Queen. This memorial is a wonderful way to recognise the duty and service of so many military and civilians.



HM The Queen presented with a posy by two-year-old Alfie Lunn. Crown Copyright.

Designed by sculptor Paul Day, the Iraq and Afghanistan Memorial is

positioned nearby monuments to the Second World War and the Korean War.

The new Memorial features two large stones – one representing Iraq and the other Afghanistan – linked by a giant, two-sided bronze tondo depicting the Memorial's theme of "Duty and Service". The Memorial gives equal prominence to military and civilian contributions, including, amongst others, the delivery of healthcare and humanitarian work. It is specifically intended to be inclusive of all those who contributed and therefore bears no names.

Between 1990 and 2015, thousands of British citizens put themselves in harm's way, protected our nation's interests, helped those in danger and worked to improve the lives of those in other countries. 682 Service personnel lost their lives in the three conflicts. Civilians from a vast breadth of organisations worked for more than two decades in areas such as aid distribution, education, healthcare and governance to help the citizens of both Iraq and Afghanistan.

The Queen was joined by over 2,000 people for the event, and guests were representatives of the many groups, military and civilian, including current Service personnel, veterans, Civil Servants and aid workers, whose efforts are marked by the Memorial, and also families of the fallen.

Prime Minister Theresa May said:

The missions in Iraq and Afghanistan called on hundreds of thousands of our military and civilian personnel to put their lives on the line in a heroic effort to help secure greater peace and stability in some of the most hostile environments that we have ever known. Today we honour the extraordinary courage and dedication of every one of those British men and women who stepped forward to answer that call. We pay tribute to those families who spent long periods apart and we stand with the friends and families of all who lost loved ones.

Secretary of State for Defence Sir Michael Fallon said:

It is vital that we recognise our Armed Forces and civilians who contributed, both abroad and at home, to the campaigns in the Gulf, Iraq and Afghanistan. Today's service is an appropriate occasion to honour their immense efforts and sacrifices. We should also reflect on the continued service of the men and women of our Armed Forces deployed around the world today to help make us safer at home.



The Queen, Prime Minister Theresa May and the Defence Secretary, Sir Michael Fallon, were in attendance. Crown copyright.

The idea of creating a national Memorial commemorating the UK's military operations and reconstruction efforts, from the liberation of Kuwait in 1990 through to the end of combat operations in Afghanistan, originated in spring 2014 and was supported by the Government. A board of Trustees, whose Chairman is former Chief of the Defence Staff, Lord Stirrup, ran the project, which has Government backing and financial support from LIBOR funding and Sun readers. The unveiling was organised by the Ministry of Defence, on the Trustees' behalf, in partnership with The Royal British Legion, which hosted a reception after the service.

The combined events that the memorial covers represent the longest post-war continuous overseas deployment of UK forces (excepting garrison duties), and the most intensive extended period of operations undertaken since the Second World War.

[RAF Sportswomen Top of Their Game](#)

RAF SPORTSWOMEN TOP OF THEIR GAMES

Wales-based RAF servicewomen are competing at the top levels in a range of sports, either representing the Service, civilian teams and even their countries.

SAC Sian Williams, 26, serves as a Logistics Mover at MOD St Athan. For the majority of the time, however, she trains and plays for the senior women's Welsh international rugby team and RAF Women's Rugby. She has 25 caps for Wales and is currently training for Women's Rugby World Cup in 2017, a tournament she has fond memories of.



"The highlight of my career so far has definitely been playing against New Zealand in the 2013 World Cup," said Sian. "It was a privilege to represent Wales and play against the best."

SAC Catherine Sharples, 43, is a reservist with Number 614 (County of Glamorgan) Squadron, where she serves as a photographer. She plays for Newport County's women's football team and is a regular goalscorer. She has played football for over twenty years and credits the RAF with helping to keep her fit enough to play alongside colleagues less than half her age. She said:

"One of the reasons I became a reservist is the military's emphasis on fitness. I was already fit when I joined, scoring light blue on the fitness test, but over two years of service now see me regularly achieve dark blue scores, which has only helped my speed and endurance on the pitch."



LAC Olivia Blok, 27, is a civil engineer in civilian life but serves in personnel support in the RAF Reserves. She has been a triathlon and duathlon competitor for the past four years and puts in between 10-15 hours a week training in swimming, cycling and running. She enjoys the emphasis that the RAF puts on fitness and competition and hopes to represent the Service in the near future.



"That's definitely something I'm working towards if the opportunity is there," said Olivia. "I was honoured to represent the United Kingdom in my age group at the European Duathlon Championships in 2014 and it would be great to do so for the RAF or UK again."

Finally, Kate Gale, 24, is a reservist soon to become a regular as she is about to start Initial Officer Training. She plays for Cardiff City women's basketball and after seeing a poster for RAF ladies team, she signed up and

hasn't looked back. In the course of a year, she has made fast friends and has been selected to play for the RAF at the inter-services tournament in May.



“I’ve always taken my fitness and sports seriously as a reservist,” said Kate. “But playing competitive basketball for the RAF has taken my motivation to another level. The training days can be long and intense but are all the more enjoyable for it, and in a funny way will help prepare me for officer training. I’m really looking forward to continuing RAF basketball as a regular.”

Images by SAC Cathy Sharples

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