

News story: Defence Medical Services (Whittington) Field Gun Crew battles it out at HMS Collingwood

The crew of 18 highly disciplined, motivated, and physically fit field gunners, battled it out against teams from across the UK and as far afield as Gibraltar, Cyprus and Naples for the coveted Brickwoods Trophy.

The competition is fast and furious and requires 18 man crews to run, dismantle, carry, reassemble and fire the gun in the shortest possible time. Strength, stamina and team work are essential. Sustained by a dedicated support team, time keepers, track judges and managers, the crew comprised of both permanent staff and trainees, and attracted much praise from more experienced crews.



The Defence Medical Services Field Gun Crew battles it out at HMS Collingwood. Photo: Crown copyright.

The DMS (Whittington) Field Gun Crew competed in the Plate 1 final with an impressive time of 1:24:09 and a 3 second penalty and were ultimately positioned 10th out of 23 crews. The converted Brickwoods Trophy was eventually won by HMS Heron from Yeovilton who were ultimately crowned the winners.

Major Richard Yardley, the Field Gun Officer told us,

it has been an absolute honour to work with such a dedicated and talented crew. I have observed teamwork, discipline and courageous acts throughout this season and along with the No1 Trainer Lt Hallam and the Skipper SSgt Gregory, we are immensely proud of the achievement.



The 18 man team finished 10th out of 23 crews. Photo: Crown copyright.

The origins of the Royal Navy Field Gun competition grew out of an event in 1899, when British troops were besieged by Boer fighters in the garrison town of Ladysmith in modern-day South Africa. The Brickwoods Trophy was the idea of Sir John Brickenwood, Chairman of the Brickwood Brewery.

[Press release: Veterans to retain military ID, allowing easier access to](#)

services

The move will allow veterans to maintain their emotional connection with the armed forces, allowing them to keep the card they have carried on them throughout their career. Retaining their ID card, known as the MOD Form 90, will also allow service leavers to be identified as veterans quickly and easily, aiding their transition into civilian life.

Charities, Veterans UK, which manages armed forces pensions and compensation payments, local authorities and GPs will all benefit from the change, as they will not have to conduct time-consuming checks to identify individual veterans.

The Prime Minister last year also announced plans to provide the 2.5 million former armed forces personnel cards which identify them as veterans, in recognition of their service to the nation.

Minister for Defence People and Veterans Tobias Ellwood said:

Our armed forces give their all to keep this country safe and leaving the military can be an emotional time.

That's why I'm delighted that people leaving the armed forces will be able to retain that emotional connection with their service by keeping their ID card. Retaining their ID card will also make it easier for veterans to access the many public services which prioritise veterans under the Armed Forces Covenant.

So this is a small change that I know will make a big difference.

Handing back the Service ID card has regularly been identified as something that members of the armed forces would like to change.

Instead of handing back their card to be destroyed on the day of discharge, the corners will now be cut off to show the card is no longer valid. This will ensure that security is maintained at bases and other sensitive sites.

Chief of Defence People Lieutenant General Richard Nugee said:

Time and time again, I have heard from service leavers that handing back their ID card is one of the hardest things to do as they leave the forces.

Leaving the military is an emotionally charged moment and I hope that this change will ease some of those feelings by reinforcing the message to our veterans that they remain a valued member of the armed forces community.

The MOD is conducting a major cross-government review of veterans policy and provision, which will inform a new veterans strategy and will be released in the autumn.

Part of this involves ensuring greater recognition of veterans so they can efficiently access government and third sector support and allowing retention of the MOD Form 90 ID is the beginning of this. The Ministry of Defence is reviewing a range of other identification options and will make a further announcement later this year.

Service leaver Col David Madden said:

My ID card is more than just a piece of plastic with my photo on, it signifies my service and marks my time in the Armed Forces. Whilst it might seem like something small, keeping my card will make a practical difference by allowing me to verify my service to my GP surgery and local authority.

News story: Britain's most advanced jets touch down on home soil

The first four of Britain's new cutting-edge aircraft arrived into RAF Marham their new home in Norfolk. They touched down at 20.15 after a trans-Atlantic flight from the United States, where Britain has more of the jets and 150 personnel in training.

The F-35s took off from Marine Corps Air Station Beaufort earlier today and were flown by British pilots of the newly-reformed 617 Squadron, which was immortalised by the famous Dambusters' raid of World War II.



Welcoming the news, Defence Secretary Gavin Williamson said:

These formidable fighters are a national statement of our intent to protect ourselves and our allies from intensifying threats across the world. With a game-changing ability to collect crucial intelligence, fight wars and tackle terrorism, these are the most advanced jets in British history. The work that's gone into their early arrival shows they have the people to match. Our defence industry and military have always been at the very forefront of technology, and today's momentous arrival of these incredible jets shows we are upholding our proud tradition of innovation while keeping Britain safe from the gravest of dangers.

Defence Minister Guto Bebb said:

The F-35 will form the backbone of our air power for decades to come, and its arrival in the UK during the 100th anniversary of the RAF marks a truly historic moment.

In the face of growing threats, these fighter jets demonstrate our commitment to provide our Armed Forces with the cutting-edge technology they need to keep our people safe at home and abroad.

The F-35s' arrival in the UK two months ahead of schedule provides an

opportunity for support staff to get a head-start in getting the aircraft ready for operational service at the end of this year.

Around £550m has been invested in RAF Marham as part of a major change programme to get the base ready to house the new jets. The base has seen an upgrade in facilities, resurfaced runways and the addition of new landing pads to accommodate the jet's ability to land vertically.



Chief of the Air Staff Air Chief Marshal Sir Stephen Hillier said:

In the RAF's centenary year, it's great to see the most advanced and dynamic fighter jet in our history arrive today at RAF Marham – and with the modern Dambusters in the cockpit, this homecoming truly feels like an historic moment in British airpower. If you can't see us coming, you won't be able to stop us, so with its stealth and other world-beating technologies the F35 Lightning takes the Royal Air Force and Royal Navy to a whole a new level of capability.

This autumn, the first landing of the F-35 will take place on HMS Queen Elizabeth in the next phase of trials. Having both ship and aircraft operating together for the first time will be another significant moment for the Armed Forces.

The First Sea Lord, Admiral Sir Philip Jones said:

Ever since aircraft first operated to and from ships, the Royal Navy has been at the forefront of maritime aviation and the arrival of our first F35Bs in the UK today, flown by both RAF and Fleet Air Arm pilots, is another important milestone on the way to restoring our place as leaders in the field of aircraft carrier operations. Once combined with our new aircraft carriers, HMS Queen Elizabeth and her sister ship HMS Prince of Wales, these extraordinary jets will sit at the heart of our country's globally deployable expeditionary forces and provide the potent conventional deterrent we need to ensure our national security.



The Lightning, as the aircraft will be known in the UK, is the first to combine radar-evading stealth technology with supersonic speeds and the ability to conduct short take-offs and vertical landings. It will be jointly operated by the Royal Air Force and the Royal Navy and can operate from land and sea, forming a vital part of 'carrier strike', the use of the aircraft from Britain's new Queen Elizabeth Class aircraft carriers.

This is the first tranche of F-35s to arrive, with RAF Voyager aircraft providing air-to-air refuels on their trans-Atlantic journey. More jets are due in Britain later this year, and there is an overall plan to procure 138.

The F-35 is the world's largest defence programme at over \$1.3 trillion, and UK industry is providing 15% of every one of over 3,000 jets set for the global order book. That makes the economic impact greater than if we were building 100% of all 138 aircraft which we intend to buy.

The programme has already generated \$12.9Bn worth of orders and at peak production will support thousands of British manufacturing and engineering jobs. Just last week, the F-35 programme awarded a contract worth over \$2bn for aircraft propulsion systems, which will have significant benefits for Rolls-Royce and their supply chain.

[Press release: Tech giant Microsoft signs Armed Forces Covenant](#)

Minister for the Armed Forces Mark Lancaster visited Microsoft's UK Headquarters in Reading for the signing, where he met with staff currently serving in the reserves.

The Armed Forces Covenant is a promise from the nation that those who serve or have served, and their families, are treated fairly.

Minister for the Armed Forces Mark Lancaster said:

The fact that such a leading multinational company has signed up to the Armed Forces Covenant demonstrates the support businesses have for our military personnel.

We are continuously building on our cyber capabilities to ensure we are countering ever intensifying threats. And it is companies like Microsoft that we look to support and develop our Reservists to ensure we remain at the cutting edge.

At today's signing, Microsoft made a number of pledges, including:

- A commitment to develop the digital skills of veterans, preparing them for a career in technology
- Encouraging managers to interview every veteran application they receive, if they are qualified for the role
- Supporting the MOD's Career Transition Partnership, to give them insight into the skills required to pursue a career in technology
- Matching funds collected by Microsoft staff for military charities and collecting every year for the Royal British Legion Poppy Day

- All military personnel will receive a 10% discount on Microsoft products

Microsoft will also offer greater flexibility to employees who are serving in the reserves, allowing them two weeks paid leave so they can undertake annual reserve training.

Minister for Defence People and Veterans Tobias Ellwood said:

Veterans have so much to give to civilian life, so I'm delighted that a world-leading company like Microsoft recognises this and wants them in their workforce.

The pledges they have committed to will make a real difference for veterans looking to develop their skills tech skills.

By signing the Armed Forces Covenant, Microsoft joins over 2500 businesses and organisations across the country who are supporting veteran and reserve personnel.

[Speech: Raising the Bar for Regional Security Cooperation](#)

It is great to be at my first Shangri-La Dialogue and it is a real pleasure to speak with friends from France and Singapore.

The threats that we've been discussing are threats to our nations and the worlds prosperity and security. They come in the form of a variety of regional dangers. Whether from violent extremism that can provide a platform for global terror. Whether from unpredictable state actors like North Korea and the risk of proliferation of nuclear weapons. Or whether from increasingly aggressive states infringing regional access, freedoms and security through coercion and malign influence. We believe nations should follow agreed rules but this is being ignored by some and what this does is it undermines peace and prosperity of all nations.

Which is why we must work together to uphold the rules order that benefits us all, Being resolute, pushing back against the dangers and shoring up our international system. Today we are talking about 'Raising the Bar'. Not simply reacting to danger, but working strategically, working smarter, working together

This region is home to some of the most technologically advanced nations on earth, with world-class militaries and cutting-edge security capabilities and, we together must aim higher. Joining forces, countries big and small,

making our collective effort count for more than the sum of our parts . Upping our game in maritime security, in counter terrorism, in disaster relief, in peacekeeping and in cyber.

For the threats are multiplying. If I had stood on this stage a year ago and said that a chemical weapons attack was going to take place in a small Cathedral City in the United Kingdom, you would have thought I was scaremongering. But, the recent Salisbury incident demonstrates the very real threats we are facing. When Russia used chemical weapons against Great Britain the power of the response was the fact so many nations stood shoulder to shoulder with us. That shows the values and strength of standing together, so Multilateralism is key. It underpins the Rules-Based System and multilateral institutions in this region are increasingly proving their worth.

We can see this in ASEAN, where the region comes together to act with common cause and unity of purpose.

And the ASEAN Defence Ministers play a pivotal role in supporting a collaborative approach, along with their allies and partners – a unity of effort. And, the United Kingdom stands ready to support in any way we can all the while we maintain our deep-seated commitment to multilateralism, not least through our involvement in the FivePower Defence Arrangements. As part of that commitment I'm delighted to be able to send HMS ARGYLL to take part in exercises with our FPDA friends, such as BERSAMA LIMA later in the year.

As we move towards its 50th anniversary, and as we collectively look to address this more diverse set of threats, we look forward to supporting the modernisation of the FPDA. Broadening its focus to encompass areas such as maritime security and counter terrorism. And we are very keen to work together with friends and partners on a more strategic and multinational approach to the Indian Ocean region – focussing on security, stability and environmental sustainability

We have to make it clear that nations need to play by the rules and that there are consequences for it doing so.

We must speak with one voice. Close coordination and communication has brought Kim Jong-Un back to the negotiating table. Significantly, by working through the United Nations we have brought to bear the combined weight nations to the problem. That's why I deployed HMS SUTHERLAND and HMS ALBION to this region, to work with our allies to help enforce the UN Security Council resolutions against North Korea, and that desire for closer cooperation was the reason we established our British Defence Staff base here in Singapore. We want to look and see how we can do more with our allies in the region, have a bigger effect and make a bigger difference.

And this brings me to my final point: if we are to maintain the pressure, it's not enough to speak out. We must stand up for what we believe in; enforcing sanctions, increasing our interoperability, sharing military capability, training and exercising together. For constant vigilance is vital, if we are to root out the scourge of terror, counter malign influence and preserve our Rules-Based Order for the long-term.

That's why I was so pleased to be able to send three Royal Navy ships to this region, where they have and will work closely with our friends and allies across the region – demonstrating our resolve, alongside our friends, to protect international rights and freedoms.

To that end I'm delighted we are strengthening and deepening our Defence collaboration and relationships across this important region. With Singapore, we are reaffirming our Defence relationship as we head towards the 200th anniversary of the founding of modern Singapore. With Malaysia, we are upgrading our defence relationship, and I look forward to developing this further with my new colleague Mat Sabu. With Japan, we are sending UK Service personnel for a joint land-based exercise later this year – the first time the British Army has exercised on Japanese soil. With Indonesia, where we are increasing our counter terrorism cooperation. With New Zealand, our personnel are working together in the Middle East, Afghanistan and Africa. With Australia, we are working closely on supporting counter terrorism efforts across the region. And these are just a few examples of the tangible cooperation between the United Kingdom and the countries that make up this region.

So, we are living in more uncertain and unpredictable times, but optimism has long been a hallmark of this region and we have not yet reached the summit of our ambitions. By raising the bar of regional co-operation, by standing together, speaking with one voice and standing up for the rules-based order, we can be sure that this region will continue to go from strength to strength as we greet the dawn of an Asian century.