

Vice Admiral James F. Perowne, OBE, Royal Navy

Vice Admiral James Perowne was born in 1947 and was educated at Sherborne School, Dorset before joining Britannia Royal Naval College (BRNC) Dartmouth in 1965. He joined the Submarine Service in 1969 and served initially as Navigating Officer in HMS FINWHALE, a diesel boat, running out of Singapore. On return to UK in 1972, he joined HMS SEA LION, also a diesel boat, based at HMS DOLPHIN, Gosport as Sonar Officer and later as Executive Officer.

After passing the Submarines Commanding Officer's Qualifying Course (Perisher) in 1975, Admiral Perowne assumed command of the conventional submarine HMS OPPORTUNE early the next year. Two years in command were followed by an appointment in HMS WARSPITE, a nuclear fleet submarine as Executive Officer, and in 1979 he was back at BRNC as a Staff Officer, subsequent to which he was promoted to Commander.

In 1981 he assumed his second command, the nuclear fleet submarine HMS SUPERB, based in Devonport, on completion of which he was appointed as an Officer of the Order of the British Empire (OBE). A period on the British Naval Staff in Washington, D.C. was followed by promotion to Captain and command of the anti-submarine frigate HMS BOXER, serving in the Gulf during the Iran/Iraq tanker war. After two years in the MOD in the Directorate of Naval Warfare, he became Captain of the Second Submarine Squadron in Devonport. His most recent sea experience was as Captain, Sixth Frigate Squadron combined with command of HMS NORFOLK, first of the Type 23 frigates.

On promotion to Rear Admiral he served as Senior Naval Member at the Royal College of Defence Studies until assuming the duties of Flag Officer Submarines and Commander Submarines Eastern Atlantic/North Western Europe in February 1996. In November 1998, he was promoted to Vice Admiral and assumed the duties of Deputy Supreme Allied Commander, Atlantic.

Royal Navy Perspective

VADM James F. Perowne, OBE, Royal Navy
Deputy Supreme Allied Commander, Atlantic



Like the other speakers before me, I would like to add my thanks to Admiral Bruce DeMars, Bill Browning, and CAPT Dave Gove for arranging and hosting this memorable event. It has more than fulfilled its aim of being fun but also informative. Of all the symposiums I have ever been to, this is the most ... recent!

Many people talk glibly about the special relationship between the United States and Great Britain, but I put it to you that there is no greater special relationship in these two great countries that share such a common heritage than that between the two submarine services which, for nearly 100 years, has been an extremely close bond of trust and brotherhood. From a personal point of view, I was fortunate to be associated with the USN many times, first as the CO of SUPERB, one of our special fit SSNs when Virgil Hill was OP009G just prior to being here as the Commodore. I don't know whether you remember, Virg, but you told me then, "Now that you have become a bridge between these two great nations, you must always work to preserve the relationship." I hope over the past nearly 20 years you have noted that I have kept that advice. Later when I served in Washington in the mid 80's, my main point of contact in the Pentagon was another DEVRON TWELVE Commodore, Admiral Bruce DeMars, then OP-02B, who did much to preserve future interoperability by giving our SSN20 procurement team many presentations on what was then called SSN21, now the SEAWOLF Class. Sadly our SSN20 foundered in the Treasury budget battles, and the ASTUTE class now in build is the cheaper child. Recently as FOSM my personal relationship with COMSUBLANT, yet another ex-DEVRON TWELVE Commodore, Admiral Rich Mies, was very close both professionally and socially. My abiding memory of that time is of us meeting at a café at Heathrow airport when he was passing through from Naples and agreeing an MOU on our

line to take if approached on an SSBN information exchange with the French. If only the people around us knew the classification of what we were doing in their midst! But back to the very beginnings.

At the start of this century, the British Government's early views of the submarine were predictably anti, summed up by a statement given in the House of Commons in April 1900 that "the Admiralty are not prepared to take any steps with regard to the submarines because the vessel is only the weapon of the weaker nation." The then Controller of the Navy, Admiral Wilson, is quoted as saying, "All Submariners captured should be treated as pirates and hanged." It was only one year later that this position was reversed, and in April 1901, Viscount Selbome announced that five submarine vessels would be purchased, "to assist the Admiralty in assessing their true value." No British submarine design was available, which is not surprising having been described as "underwater, underhand, and damned un-English," and therefore the Naval Attachè in Washington was quickly dispatched to open an FMS case and buy the rights to the design by the American inventor, John Phillip Holland. The construction work was done at Vickers yard in Barrow-on-Furness. It is amazing to me in recounting the rather inauspicious start of our submarine service how little has changed. The Ministry of Defence is still in general terms against them, particularly the cost of nuclear ownership, we still regularly have to come cap in hand to the United States to buy the latest technology, whether it be nuclear power in the form of DREADNOUGHT's power plant; Polaris, Trident, Sub-Harpoon, and most recently, Tomahawk missiles; or narrow band sonar processors in the form of BQR 20 and 22. Of interest, the same yard in Barrow, albeit renamed GEC Marine, still make our boats today.

Submarining has always been a testing and difficult occupation. Since those early days, 173 Royal Navy submarines have been lost, in many instances with their entire crew. The advent of war inevitably takes a heavy toll. Fifty-nine boats were lost in the First World War and 88 in World War II; 341 officers and 2801 ratings failed to return to harbour, which was roughly the equivalent strength of the whole submarine arm at the outbreak of hostilities in September 1939. In all, 35% of British submariners perished in that conflict, which compares with approximately 15% of U.S. submariners and in excess of 65% of German. Those who have passed their Perisher or PCO course, plus Bill Browning, will immediately have worked out that 26 UK submarines were lost in peacetime, and it is this ever present danger that I know drives submariners together; the absolute pressures of mutual responsibility, utter professionalism, and reliance on your fellow shipmates is vital even today, in 20,000 ton Trident boats, as it ever was, and it is this that is the glue that binds us all across international boundaries. At NATO exercise wash ups, you will always see submariners of many countries congregating together, usually close to the bar!

This international club is well illustrated by a true story. In 1977 Commander John Coward was CO of HMS VALIANT and was in the trail of a Type I Nuc in the Eastern Mediterranean. All was going well until VALIANT, who as all the Brits will know was one of our more characterful submarines with a distinct will of her own, decided enough was enough and sprang a bad leak, flooding a machinery space. Although still close to the Russian, there was nothing for it but to surface in emergency, and loud roaring echoed across the sea as the tanks were blown. The leak required the reactor to be scrammed and the diesel generator to be started, reducing the available power to around four knots. Those that know this class of submarine will be aware the diesel exhaust goes along the length of the after casing and up the back of the fin, and on start-up gives off billowing clouds of steam as it dries, which emerge from every orifice on the casing. In the middle of all this chaos, out of the haze at 4000 yards, comes a November class submarine on the roof at some speed heading straight for VALIANT, causing her to go full astern (at four knots) to narrowly avoid a collision, which I think at that stage would have completely ruined John Coward's day which wasn't too bright as it was. This was put down to "Crazy Ivan" who

had lost his cool on hearing a boat behind him blow main ballast, realising he had been trailed, and the dit of this mad Soviet CO went quickly round the back bar in Faslane.

Twelve years later, Rear Admiral John Coward led the first British task force into what was then Leningrad for a formal visit. At one of the many cocktail parties that ensued, a Russian Rear Admiral pushed his way to the front and asked John if he had been the CO of VALIANT in 1977. "Well, what happened to you?" he asked. "I was the captain of PL 123 (or whatever his boat was called) in the Mediterranean, and after I heard you blow main ballast I came to periscope depth to see what was going on. I realised from all the smoke coming from under your after casing that you were on fire, so I surfaced and closed to offer assistance, but you did not reply to my calls on VHF." In the shambles then going on, no one had thought to take the VHF radio to the bridge! I always think that this story illustrates that despite the political differences between NATO and the Soviets, there was still comradeship and some honour among the men who were in the front line.

Well, back to the DEVRON. Our first exchange officer, Commander Buxton, reported for duty here in 1955, and since then there has been a constant stream of a further 22 Brits leading up to Charlie Shepherd, who holds the baton today. I use that metaphor correctly as from the many inputs I received, it seemed to me that not just houses and cars were passed from incumbent to incumbent but also friends, borrowed furniture from Bill and Eileen Ames, funding for the Queen's Birthday cocktail party, and many 110 volt electrical items!

All report deeply satisfying professional work within the DEVRON, and between them they have contributed to many projects, with Terry Thompson involved in Mark 37 torpedo trials, much to the Brits embarrassment as our weapon the Tigerfish was at that time in serious development trouble. Jeremy Larken and Don Mitchell led the team writing the "Submarine Search Manual" in the early 70's (when published as NOFORN it had an interesting note at the front acknowledging authorship by the Brits!). Don also was involved conducting DEVRON/STWG active sonar trials, one of which ended up with the marriage of the contractor, Barbara, to a USN officer, CDR Bill Pugliese. Rupert Best did much work on associated support tactics, and in the mid 80's Dan Conley and Bill Browning did yeoman's work in developing JASA, a TMA aid. What strikes me immediately is the range of activities that the Brits were involved in, and at the time, the sensitivity of the work demonstrating the complete trust between the two services. To quote Terry Thompson, "The understanding, friendships and mutual respect which resulted from this opportunity to be an exchange officer on one of the most forward thinking and influential organizations in your Navy endured to serve me well throughout my career in the Royal Navy, particularly during the time when I was Chief of Staff of our Submarine Force." I am sure there are many others in this room who can relate to those sentiments.

On the social side it was the same, and all report lasting and deep friendships that can clearly be seen today as nearly half of the Brits have returned for this symposium, almost all at their own expense. They had to, of course, for if they did not we all would have gossiped unmercifully about them behind their backs! All have given me dits of their time here, but I must first quote Admiral Julian Oswald who said in 1996 at a submarine reunion such as this, "Many of my older submarine chums seem to have increasingly clear memories of events that never happened!" Not all was plain sailing, and Jeremy Larken reports that as he was forced to pay tax on his newly imported Volvo. When he bought his 21 ft dayboat, he didn't have it registered and sailed it under the Red Ensign (Stars and Stripes at the yardarm of course) as a protest! Acts of immense generosity, in my experience very typical of all Americans, abound-from loaned beds and rocking chairs from Bill and Eileen, to Guy Shaffer lending his garden to Don Mitchell to hold the Queen's birthday party when his cesspool flooded, stinking out his own garden. Tony

Steiner, not so generously, reports that in the corridor outside his office were rows of pictures depicting USN ships beating seven bells out of poor innocent Royal Navy ships going about their honest business of burning the White House in 1812. One weekend he snuck in and replaced them with ones that showed the Brits winning the odd contest, and to his happy surprise, no one noticed. I am pleased to report that U.S. submarines have the occasional engineering casualty, and Dan Conley remembers vividly riding USS DALLAS when all the water onboard became contaminated, resulting in no water being allowed for personal use except for a small amount for drinking. He states, "No similar experience in a diesel boat would compare!" He came home reeking, and Linda made him undress in the yard and hosed him down before he could enter the house.

I would now like to return to the present day and discuss the state of our, the RN's, submarine service, warts and all, and see if what I say strikes a chord with your experiences in the USN, and perhaps act as a lead into this afternoon's discussions. So that I am not accused of plagiarism, I must acknowledge that as Rear Admiral Bob Stevens cannot be here for very good operational reasons, I have taken extracts from an e-mail FOSM sent me at my request to have his input.

Today if you were to visit the British submarine service you would find the people better trained and more professional than the successful days of the Cold War. However, morale is quite definitely lower. The reasons are a number of issues, like insufficient manpower, unprogrammed defects, and a slight sense of loss of purpose following the end of the Cold War. I think most of all what is missing is the unbridled confidence that came from our successes of the past. The talent and professionalism is, of course, still very evident. And the evidence of that talent is startling. First Sea Lord, four other Admirals, both COs and XOs of both the carriers, Commander UK Amphibious Task Group are all submariners; both our engineering schools and both naval bases are commanded by submariners. So what is inhibiting the free spirit that pervaded our service for so long during the 70's and 80's?

I do not think it is a single incident; I think it is a collection of events. The end of the Cold War reduced the instances of demonstrable operations success. I remember myself how high one's standing was throughout the Navy in the early 80's as an SSN CO when we submariners were doing operations taking the Cold War right into the enemy's back yard, something our surface ship brothers could not do. Then the tragic Antares incident in the early 90's when one of our boats hit and sank a fishing-trawler, sadly with loss of fishermen's lives, shook our self-confidence and rightly made us much more safety conscious, inhibiting to some extent the realism of tactical training. And whilst our nuclear plant operations have always been extremely safe, the nuclear regulator's criticism of the dockyard support infrastructure also left us constantly defending our safety record, thus undermining our self-confidence and inhibiting us still further. Incidents of unprogrammed defects left some boats alongside for a long time and as a consequence, questions on the cost of nuclear ownership increased, and for the first time ever these questions were not balanced by impressive operational successes. Suddenly the rationale for Britain's nuclear submarine force was being seriously questioned.

In short, the financiers started to question the cost effectiveness for the Submarine Service. This came to a head during the Strategic Defence Review that took place in '97 and '98. The role of the SSN and the SSBN was questioned in two very aggressive studies. However, the intellectual rationale for both the SSBN and the SSN was unassailable, and the operational case cut through the fog of muddled thinking on safety and cost. The SDR military report showed that 13 SSNs were needed if we were to carry out all the tasks that had been highlighted for submarines, and four SSBNs were needed to underpin the deterrent in both national and

collective defence. But affordability was also featured, and some risk was taken against the size of SSN force, reducing it to 10 by 2006. The most important fact, though, is that SDR removed any doubt about the role of the nuclear submarine, and it is this fact that has laid the foundations for the British Submarine Service to move forward into the next century—12 SSNs till 2003, then gradually reducing to seven Trafalgar Class plus three ASTUTE in 2006, with the promise of two further ASTUTES to be delivered in about 2008 as the older T boats pay off. We have preserved four SSBNs and also the concept of continuous at sea deterrence, despite that also being given a hard examination.

So with an SSN force which is twice the size of the French and about half the size of your operational Atlantic force, we have our numbers for the immediate future. We would like more hulls and to remain at a force strength of 12 SSNs, and I must confess that the Kosovo crisis has come at a good time with *SPLENDID*'s very high profile deployment where she has fired the RN's first TLAMs in anger and those with commendable success, which we all hope will create the same idea in our Secretary of State's mind as well!

So with this bedrock of forces, how do we now recreate the success of the Cold War? Although the RN entering the TLAM era is vital in fostering that success, we need more than just one strength. We must provide the politicians with a spectrum of military choice from strategic to tactical and even down to defence diplomacy—with the least risk. What do I mean by this? Well, the SSN provides indicators and warnings early in a crisis and can continue monitoring the enemy, as *TURBULENT* amongst others presently is doing off Serbia; the SSN can deliver Special Forces and, of course, can carry out precursor operations against the SSK. It is also available to provide strategic coercion and now demonstrable warfighting through TLAM, and escort the Carrier Group in direct support. Underpinning all of this is our SSBNs, with sub-strategic and strategic nuclear missiles providing sufficient deterrent to make anyone think twice about using weapons of mass destruction against the UK. The submarine therefore contributes right across the spectrum in what the Ministry of Defence are calling "Maritime Contribution to Joint Operations" or as the Pentagon calls it "Power from the Sea." Underpinning all of this, of course, are our core ASW skills, and these are the bedrock of our success in the past and must be the bedrock of our success in the future. But we need to develop our joint skills further and successfully provide the Joint Commander with all the important capabilities I have just outlined. To do this we need greater interoperable connectivity, and this has already been our number one item and it will continue to be so until we get it in place.

To be successful the training must be right. Although safe and very much focused on core skills of ASW, our training is still too steeped in Cold War thinking. Captain Submarine Sea Training in Faslane has now conducted a study focusing on delivery of training at the right time and the right place. The specialist joint warfare skills will be incorporated as required, and he is also looking to work closely with the Surface Flotilla to develop our joint skills, and our aim must be to demonstrate that the submarine is indispensable to the Joint Commander, giving him, and the political leadership, options that are not available with a pure surface force.

I have no doubts that these new tasks are and will be the focus of continuing tactical development dialogue between the DEVRON and FOSM's Warfare Staff, and I envy those of you involved in defining the much more varied employment for the SSN, as at last we are learning to use the full range of this most impressive warfighting machine. There is no doubt that, with NATO's new Strategic Concept providing for more out of area operations such as we are seeing today, will do much to remind our Political Masters of the great utility of the SSN, and rather than examine the costs of ownership, they will look at the much greater costs of not owning them and the removal of a tremendous warfighting potential. When this happens

morale will return to Cold War levels, and already in UK with SPLENDID's successes in the Adriatic, it is already showing upward trends.

I am certain that the great and lasting relationship between our two services in general, and the exchange officer here in New London, will go on from strength to strength over the next 50 years, but I do implore the younger officers here from both the USN and the RN to remember those words of Admiral Virgil Hill and remain an active and working bridge between the two communities; otherwise it will wither and die.