

**1SL Founders' Day Speech
Trinity House
Thu 7 Feb 13**

Mr President, Minister, Lady, Brother Officers,

I start by offering my sincere thanks to the President and to the Club Secretary for yet another excellent evening.....and I echo the President's thanks.

On behalf of the Admiralty Board, I would also like to express my gratitude to the Deputy Master and Elder Brethren of Trinity House for again allowing us to dine here.....and to you all, the members of the Royal Navy Club, for the first-class meal, company and hospitality.

Finally, my thanks to the Minister for his words. I am delighted that a Naval Reserve Doctor is able to dine with us this evening.....and that the International Defence Engagement Strategy he spoke of recognises the maritime as a central component to the strategy's ends, ways and means.

Indeed, as we celebrate the 150th anniversary of naval officer training on the Dart this year.....it strikes me that some of the most powerful International Defence Engagement commences in the cradle of the Royal Navy.....where we have, the Minister included, begun.....along with the current heads of no less than 18 other navies around the world.

Mr President, Minister, thank you also for your kind words as I come close to my retirement. You remind me of a tale told by the late Robert Runcie as he approached his departure as Archbishop of Canterbury.

He asked a friend, who was a rabbi, what he thought the role was of a retired Archbishop. The friend put it like this.

There was once a troublesome cat who made a great deal of noise chasing the lady cats in the neighbourhood, disturbing everyone's peace and quiet.

Eventually, the owner had it neutered. When friends asked, 'Did it work?' he answered, 'Well, he's still making a lot of noise; but it is now only in an advisory capacity.!'!

Not that I intend to make too much noise in my retirement!

[RN Activity and Progress]

So to Founders Day – my fourth and final as I prepare to withdraw from the front line of Whitehall and handover the watch to George Zambellas in April.

Just as I have been, George will, I know, be superbly well-supported by a Board that possesses the potent mixture – of past Board experience and youthful intellect – required to steer the Service through the challenges of today and the next SDSR.

Tonight, with over 30 ships and submarines at sea, and nearly 4000 personnel on ops or preparing for ops.....it is once again a welcome opportunity to give you a sense of our achievements and challenges.

The Minister has already highlighted the enduring relevance of the Royal Navy's contribution to cross-Government aims within the margins of our operational activity.

For the Board, 2012 has operationally been a year of significant progress.

In Afghanistan, the security gains being made by our Armed Forces (nearly 900 of whom are sailors and marines) are transforming the country's future.....with the ANSF now responsible for the security of 75% of the population. The focus must now be on ensuring that sufficient momentum remains.....to make such progress irreversible, and allow an ordered withdrawal of Western Forces.

As we all know.....peace at sea does not keep itself. So in the wider Middle East, the Royal Navy (working with other navies) continues to ensure that confidence in vital global maritime trade remains high.....indeed piracy attacks in the Somali Basin and Indian Ocean are at their lowest for a number of years.

And the trust being established and maintained between countries and navies is evermore tangible. Take the Response Force Task Group's highly successful COUGAR 12 deployment to the Mediterranean last Autumn. Whilst providing contingent capability, it also developed the Combined Anglo-French Joint Expeditionary Force.....and exercised with US and Albanian Forces, NATO's oldest and youngest members respectively. Such activity continues to help underpin international security.....as, of course, does the UK's strategic nuclear deterrent.

No assessment of 2012 is complete without mentioning our Service's support to Her Majesty The Queen's Diamond Jubilee celebrations.....and commitment, for many at short notice, to the security of 'the Games'.....which was greatly appreciated by the Government and the British Public.

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Progress is equally evident as we play our part in transforming Defence.....with ownership of capability delivery, Naval Base governance and NCHQ structures continuing to develop as we enter Lord Levene's brave new world of 'holding to account'.

We can take pride too in the considerable progress being made to deliver the Fleet of Future Force 2020.

QUEEN ELIZABETH has begun to crew up and will have fifth generation Lightning II jets flying from her in around 5 years.....a timescale now endorsed by Government.

In a few weeks, the second of the 7 ASTUTE boats, HMS AMBUSH, will be commissioned.

And from next month, the white ensign will be flying from all 6 Type 45 destroyers.

Furthermore, our regenerated Viking all-terrain vehicles are coming back on line.

And by 2016 all our maritime helicopters will have either been replaced or upgraded.....and in the same year we will receive the first of the 4 fleet tankers, building in South Korea.

And in the next decade our Type 23s will be replaced by Type 26 Global Combat Ships.....with new Solid Support Ships and Successor Deterrent Submarines also joining the Fleet.

Whilst the Type 26's are not yet on order, the debate has matured considerably over the past year as numbers, capabilities and resources are squeezed into line.

Challenges of course abound, especially when money is tight. But the Navy Board will continue to ensure that sustaining that future, in terms of manpower and materiel, remains an absolute priority.....so that the Royal Navy can provide credible contingency with the right capability in the years ahead.

[1970 & 2013 Comparisons]

As I am to move on, tonight is – if you will allow me – an opportunity to indulge in a little introspection.

Cadet Stanhope joined Admiral of the Fleet Peter Hill-Norton's navy in 1970.....just as he was delivering two of his main objectives.

The first was, on the basis that it probably didn't do much for the efficiency of an increasingly technical fighting service.....the abolition of the tot.

The second objective was a concordat between him and CAS, Sir John Grandy, to minimise conflict between the naval and air staffs that had been endemic for several years.

It's good to see that we have at least continued to observe one of these objectives!

The world in 1970 was very different. The Cold War at its height and the UK confident that it wanted to be in the European Community!

Hill-Norton's career witnessed the Royal Navy's 'apparent' withdrawal from East of Suez. Although of course, in the event, we never left.

So my career has seen the persistent, policy-led 'return' to a globally engaged security posture.....and one that is primarily in the maritime environment.....ie Tanker Wars, North and South Atlantic Patrols, and so on.

Culturally, the Navy of 1970 was one in which there was prejudice:

- you had elocution lessons at BRNC if you lived north of the Watford gap;
- you had to ask your CO's permission to marry;
- and women would have yet to wait 20 years before they could serve at sea.

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But for all the cultural and organisational change, the continuity of the operational requirement is telling.

1970 celebrated the first year of CASD. This year we will record the 44th year of unbroken continuous at sea deterrence.

In November 1970, under Op Burlap, we provided assistance to, the then, East Pakistan coastal areas following extensive flooding from cyclones. In November 2012, RFA ARGUS delivered 200 DFID Shelter Kits to Jamaica following Hurricane Sandy.

In the Gulf in 1970, Frigates were searching suspect vessels to prevent arms smuggling. Today, under Op KIPION, the British presence in the Gulf continues.....with 8 RN platforms and nearly 1200 personnel.

In 1970, Royal Marines were undertaking regular roulements on the streets in Northern Ireland. And as I speak, 40 Commando is, for their third 6-month tour, conducting COIN operations on the streets in Helmand.

[3 Observations]

But what does all this tell us?

First, that **effective security and defence is a team effort**.....within the MoD and within Whitehall.

We all recognise the importance of the maritime environment.....but it doesn't have a monopoly on the protection and projection of our national interests.

2½ years ago, the twin imperatives of Afghanistan and the economy meant that the Royal Navy 'took one for the team'.....insofar as the short term implications for the Service (and Defence) are concerned.

The loss of ARK ROYAL, the Harriers, the Batch III Type 22s, and MPA.....as well as the reduction in numbers of people, are of course regrettable.

But it is for the long-term, that allegiance to the SDSR will remain in the RN's interests.....and therefore the team's interests. For it will be, I believe, when the final outcomes of the Review manifest themselves, in around 2020, that the re-emergence of a maritime strategy will be more recognisable.

Physically, it will be fuelled by that formidable future maritime equipment programme, totalling over 33 billion pounds.

And conceptually, it will be stimulated by continued logical debate into the next SDSR, and cross-Whitehall initiatives.....for example, the forthcoming publication of the Home Office-led UK National Strategy for Maritime Security.

So, for the long term, I am confident that acting and arguing in the interests of the team is what will make us (and therefore the team) stronger.....and ultimately our security and defence more effective.

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The second thing that strikes me, as I look back to Peter Hill-Norton's era, is that we must **embrace change** or risk being consumed by it.

The pace of social, technological and geopolitical developments has only accelerated over the last 43 years. None of us know with any certainty what the world will be like in 2056, 43 years from now. So we must continue to plan for change.....just as we have always done and reflected in, for example, the adaptability being built into our platforms.

And we must continue to apply the same principle to the management and employment of our people. Ensuring that yesterday's regulations don't become tomorrow's constraints.

For in our increasingly dynamic and unpredictable world, success will not be rewarded to the inflexible.

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Finally, **our relevance endures**. Over the last 43 years the Service has been consistently busy serving the national interest. Excluding activity underwater.....about which, even in this forum, I can't mention.....the Service has conducted some 800 operations.....on which 245 personnel have made the ultimate sacrifice.

In 1970, with a Navy of 86,000, we were involved in 16 operations. Last year it was nearly double that.

Improvements in operational reporting aside(!), it reflects an increasing requirement for maritime forces; our enduring utility; and the significant steps taken – many by our predecessors – to advance our efficiency.

It also reflects the unpredictable and varied nature of operations – both in task and location – with maritime forces demonstrating their flexibility and choice. So as we look to the future, the perpetual need for contingent forces described by our past remains instructive.

As is our response to such operations.....our professionalism a reflection that our very unique business model endures. Founded, as it always has, on an ethos which money can't buy.....our core values of commitment, courage, discipline, respect for others, integrity and loyalty.

So, in many ways, we must continue to do what we have always done.

[Closing]

Lady & Gentlemen, when both Stanley Baldwin and Harold Wilson stepped down as Prime Minister, they said "Once I leave, I leave. I am not going to speak to the man on the bridge, and I am not going to spit on the deck."

2 months hence, neither will I distract the man at the helm, nor create unnecessary work for others.

I close with some very simple arithmetic to keep everything in perspective.

The Royal Navy is over a 1000 years old. And whilst people often don't realise it, our roots continue to grow deeper and stronger in the British psyche.

We are a far better organisation when we remember that we are more than the simple sum of our parts.

And, as I hope I have illustrated this evening, our enduring sense of continuity is compelling.....and our purpose, powerful.

And our people – sailors, marines, regular and reserve, and the civil servants and families who support them – remain at the heart of the Royal Navy's capability.

My tenure as First Sea Lord has occupied but one watch in our long and illustrious history.

And as the next watch hands over to the next, and the Royal Navy returns to being a genuinely balanced force – as I know it will – my nearly 4 years will become an ever smaller, less distinct, fraction of the whole.

In the long rhythm of history, I regard myself as having been a privileged guest.....not just tonight, but for the duration of my appointment as First Sea Lord.....during which the sense of honour has always been mine.

Thank you.