

75th ANNIVERSARY OF THE FORMING OF THE BATTLESHIP TRAINING SQUADRON

This year, 2021, sees the anniversary of the forming of the 'Battleship Training Squadron, Home Fleet' at Portland.

On June 14th 2010, a commemorative bench was unveiled at the rear of the Whiteheads Estate, by Rear Admiral John Croydon in memory of the arrival of the Battleships H.M.S. Anson and H.M.S. Howe in June and July '46 respectively. Adding to these was the Aircraft carrier H.M.S. Victorious. These three, on joining the battleship H.M.S Nelson, formed the nucleus of the Battleship Training Squadron, Home Fleet.

Originally, H.M.S. Nelson and the cruisers H.M Ships Birmingham and Cleopatra, together with a collection of Destroyers and Frigates, had been allocated to Portland as part of the Reserve Home Fleet in December 1945. HMS Nelson thus became the first ship of the squadron to fly the flag of the first Flag Officer Sea Training at Portland.

In 1947 H.M.S. Nelson was withdrawn from service. She had been a Royal Navy ship since her commissioning in 1928. She was replaced by the battleship H.M.S. King George V who, along with H.M.S Nelson's sister ship H.M.S. Rodney, had sunk the German Battleship Bismarck in 1941.

The F.O.S.T. Flagship for 1947 was to be H.M.S. Howe. It was decided by the Admiralty, to be fair, that the F.O.S.T. Flag should alternate on a yearly basis between these three ships of the Squadron.

In 1949 both King George V and Anson were withdrawn to be laid up in the Gareloch in Scotland.

H.M.S Anson had one last duty to perform. In the summer of 1949 she was selected to convey Princess Elizabeth and Prince Phillip on a Royal visit to the Channel Islands.

H.M.S Howe was retained at Portland until relieved by the Battleship H.M.S. Vanguard in 1949.

With the 'Battleships' reduced to one, eventually the title of the force became known simply as The Training Squadron. After which the main training vessels were to be Aircraft Carriers. They were HM Ships Indefatigable, Illustrious, Implacable. Later came the smaller Light Fleet Aircraft Carriers H.M.S.'s Theseus and Ocean. These, too, were removed and converted into early versions of the later H.M.S. Hermes type Commando Carriers, ready for a war. That later turned into the Suez debacle of 1956, after which Portland was to be a Helicopter Base, and later still a Sea Warfare Training Establishment Home Fleet.