

Icelandic gunboats from British trawlers.

The next two years were spent in the Naval Secretary's Department dealing with personnel matters and administering the officer promotion machine.

Hugo White was appointed Captain in 1978 and this was a significant milestone in his career as his seniority meant that he would not be able to return to nuclear submarines. In other words he left the submarine service for General Service duties. His next job was at the Ministry of Defence where his duties included drafting plans for the size and shape of the Royal Navy for the next 10 to 15 years. He was involved with naval planning and the nuts and bolts of budgets. It was his first serious immersion into life in the MOD which was totally different from command of a submarine.

In 1980 he returned to sea in command of the 4th frigate Squadron and as captain of HMS Avenger, a type 21 frigate. This was the first squadron whose eight members were of the same class. Previously it had been policy to have mixed squadrons. He felt that this provided an easier environment in which to work up a team spirit and improve morale. This in turn led to greater efficiency. The Falklands War started with his ship in drylock and all the ship's company on leave. Telegrams were sent out, the crew returned, and work completed in a rush on HMS Avenger. She sailed for the Falklands, arriving after the fastest

Staff Officer to the Chief of Defence staff; this is the military equivalent of a Minister's private secretary. He was working for the then Field Marshal Sir Edwin Bramall, Chief of the Defence Staff. This was the first experience of working in the 'purple service' which is the slang for tri-service defence staff. It gave him a ringside view of the politico-military interface in defence matters rather than just the Royal Navy. And as all servicemen now appreciate, these were crucial years for the future shaping of the United Kingdom's defence requirements.

In 1985 he was awarded the CBE and returned to sea as Flag Captain and in command of HMS Bristol, a super destroyer of cruiser size complete with three funnels whose engines were powered by a combination of steam and gas. This ship, designed to escort a large aircraft carrier, was the prototype of a class that was cancelled. In 1987 he took HMS Bristol into Gibraltar and this was his last visit to the Rock. Little did he think that he would return in 1995 as Governor and Commander in Chief.

He was appointed Rear-Admiral and Flag Officer of the Third Flotilla and Commander of NATO's Anti-Submarine Warfare Striking Force. His command included the administration of large ships such as the Navy's aircraft carriers, Naval aviation and amphibious warfare. The latter involved the Royal Marine Commandos and the Special Boat Service.

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