

UNITED KINGDOM

The United Kingdom (UK) is situated off the north west coast of mainland Europe. It is surrounded by sea, facing the North Sea to the east, the English Channel to the south and the Atlantic Ocean to the north and west. Its full title is the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland. Great Britain comprises England, Scotland and Wales. The population of the UK is about 56.5 million.



FIG. 1.- United Kingdom.

The UK is a constitutional monarchy, the present sovereign being Queen Elizabeth II. The capital city is London which is also the seat of government.

The land area is about 94,000 M². No place in the UK is more than 75 miles from tidal water. The prime meridian of 0, established in 1884, passes through Greenwich (London). As the UK lies on the continental shelf the surrounding seas are shallow, usually less than 90 metres. To the north and west, along the edge of the continental shelf, depths increase rapidly from 200 metres to over 1,000 metres.

The country has a long maritime history. From the sixteenth century, for 300 years, explorers sailed throughout the world on voyages of discovery. The UK became a major industrial power in the nineteenth century and is dependent on its industries. Traditional industries were iron and steel, heavy engineering, shipbuilding and the processing of imported goods such as wool, cotton and tobacco. More recently the emphasis has moved to industries which rely on technical and scientific inventiveness, such as the motor and aircraft industries and the manufacture of nuclear power equipment, instruments, man-made fibres and chemical products, as well as electrical goods and machines. The production of oil and gas from offshore fields plays an important part in the country's industry and technology. The country is intensively farmed, mainly for home consumption, but an important export trade in agricultural products has been established.

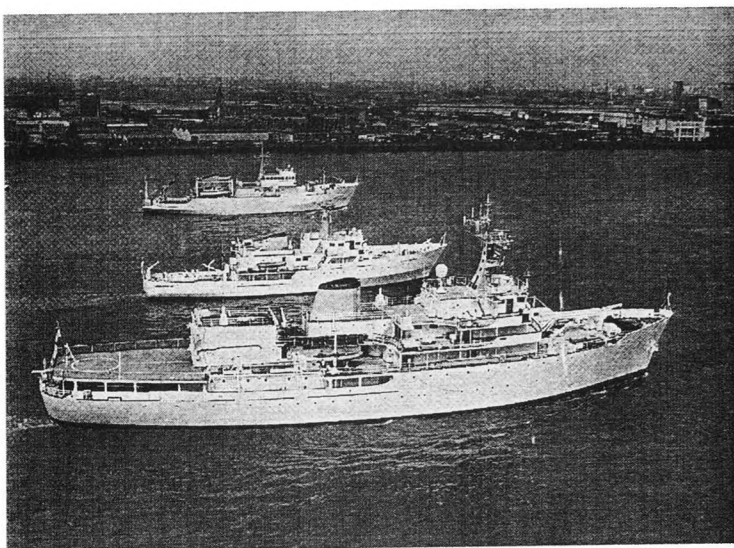


FIG. 2.- HMS HECLA (foreground), BULLDOG (centre), ROEBUCK (rear).

The United Kingdom currently has a total merchant tonnage of 7,043,532.

The Royal Naval Hydrographic Surveying Squadron is an integral part of Fleet and does not form part of the United Kingdom Hydrographic Office (UKHO), although there are close links between them. The Squadron comprises two ocean survey ships, three coastal survey vessels, one ice patrol ship and one survey motor launch, with two naval parties embarked in chartered merchant vessels. The UK's future requirements for Royal Naval Hydrographic Surveys is to be met by four new, larger hydrographic vessels of commercial design, operated under the White Ensign by Royal Naval personnel. The first of the new vessels, HMS SCOTT, is planned to enter service in late 1997.

The United Kingdom Hydrographic Office (UKHO) is located in Taunton, Somerset, in the south-west of the country. It employs more than 800 largely civilian staff. It covers the hydrographic need of all mariners - commercial, civil and leisure and defence. It was formed in 1795 to supply navigational charts and other information to the Royal Navy. Used by generations of mariners, the accuracy and

quality of its services and products 'Admiralty Charts and Publications' are recognised worldwide.

The UKHO has many and varied functions, which include:

- data acquisition from all appropriate authorities to enable compilation of charts and publications. There are 3,300 charts and 17 associated publications.
- supply data for operations that meet the specific hydrographic, oceanographic and geophysical needs of the Royal Navy and other customers.
- issuing immediate worldwide warning to mariners through the Radio Navigational Warnings.
- the provision of charts on paper and, as the Admiralty Raster Chart Service (ARCS™), in digital form.
- a weekly correction service of all charts, notifying the mariner of changes at sea.
- publication of specialist marine publications.
- data acquisition based on observations such as tides, coastline landmarks, nature of the seabed.
- processing of oceanographic data such as the temperature, salinity of seawater and sound velocity.
- holder of a marine archive, dating back to 1760.
- provision of specialist maps for use in conjunction with search and rescue operations.
- training in hydrographic data processing and marine cartography for students from overseas hydrographic offices.

The UKHO is also playing a major role in the development of ENC. Of particular interest is the collaboration with the Electronic Chart Centre of the Norwegian Mapping Authority in the provision of a Northern European Regional Electronic Navigational Chart Coordinating Centre which will provide an ENC service which complies fully with IHO/IMO standards. Such collaboration is an example of the commitment to international cooperation which the United Kingdom has always maintained.

The present Hydrographer and Chief Executive of the UKHO is Rear Admiral John CLARKE CB LVO MBE, who was appointed on 1st February 1996.