

## CHAPTER 3

# The Naval Drama Series: *Making Waves*

### *A new Warship?*

After a gap of over 30 years since the first appearance of the BBC's *Warship*, a new naval drama series was aired on British television. *Making Waves* (Carlton Television, 2004) reintroduced the Royal Navy as a distinctive entertainment subject within an established televisual genre. The soap-operatic tenor and widespread appeal of other uniformed serial dramas broadcast by ITV such as *The Bill* (Thames Television, 1983–2010), portraying the Metropolitan Police, *London's Burning* (London Weekend Television, 1986–2002), which followed the lives of members of the London Fire Service, and *Soldier Soldier* (Central Television, 1991–1997), which depicted life in the modern British Army, may have been influential in the decision to develop a comparable naval drama series.<sup>100</sup> In an interview for *Navy News*, the series' project leader for the director of corporate communications (Navy) revealed that:

A concerted effort had been made to build up the Navy's profile following a survey by the Central Office of Information (C.O.I.) which found that the public perception of the Navy was that it was the least relevant of the three Armed Services.<sup>101</sup>

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<sup>100</sup> Although *Making Waves* was commissioned in 2002, former Director of Programmes David Liddiment commented that the idea had first been pitched to ITV 'some years earlier'. David Liddiment, The story of a sunken drama, *The Guardian*, 2 August 2004, <http://www.theguardian.com/media/2004/aug/02/mondaymediasection2> [accessed 18 June 2015].

<sup>101</sup> Anonymous, Royal Navy on the small – and big – screen, *Navy News*, 3 September 2002, <http://www.navynews.co.uk/articles/2002/0209/0002090301.asp> [accessed 12 August 2003].

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Set aboard a fictional Type 23 *Duke*-class frigate, HMS *Suffolk* (with filming taking place aboard HMS *Grafton*), the series featured characters from all ranks, and also incorporated female characters at sea in the form of the ship's executive officer, Lieutenant Commander Jenny Howard (played by Emily Hamilton), Leading Regulator Liz Wilson (Diane Beck), Leading Medical Assistant Anita Cook (Angel Coulby) and new recruit Operator Mechanic Rosie Bowen (Joanna Page).<sup>102</sup> Several key roles were in fact filled by actors with experience from television and radio soap operas, including Alex Ferns from *EastEnders* (playing the ship's captain, Commander Martin Brooke), Lee Boardman from *Coronation Street* (Granada Television, 1960–present) as ship's cook Art Francis, and Stephen Kennedy from *The Archers* (BBC, 1951–present) and *Ballykissangel* (BBC, 1996–2001) in the role of Lieutenant Commander James Maguire. Other cast members had also appeared in *Coronation Street*, *London's Burning* and *The Bill* or comparable series such as *Casualty* (BBC, 1986–present) and *Holby City* (BBC, 1999–2021).

Despite levels of cooperation comparable to *Warship* between the MoD and the production company to provide the ships and settings and to ensure visual authenticity, these casting choices underline the positioning of *Making Waves* as more of a staple televisual narrative series, rather than primarily a naval depiction. These selections, and the series' attempt to balance the same competing representational and entertainment demands as *Warship* in the 1970s, provide some insight into the auspices, aspirations and objectives of *Making Waves*, especially in view of the possibility of its becoming a BBC, not ITV, production during its development. Former ITV director of programmes David Liddiment alleged that the channel's ambivalence towards the project was ultimately overturned by the prospect of a 'Soldier Soldier-scale hit' gravitating to a rival.<sup>103</sup> However, over the period of *Making Waves*'s development and airing, the BBC had also created (and axed) its own costly and low-rated military-detective drama series, *Redcap* (BBC, 2001–04).<sup>104</sup>

The choice of a Type 23 (Figure 3.1) as the setting for the series represented a logical parallel to the selection of the *Leander*-class frigate as the centrepiece of *Warship*. By the new millennium, the Type 23, originally designed as a

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<sup>102</sup> Although there was no HMS *Suffolk* in commission when *Making Waves* was produced, the transformation of HMS *Grafton* (appropriately affiliated with the Suffolk port town of Ipswich) for the series included the creation of cap tallies and a ship's crest: Anonymous, Soap star on board for HMS *Suffolk* drama, *East Anglian Daily Times*, 28 May 2003, <https://www.eadt.co.uk/news/soap-star-on-board-for-hms-suffolk-drama-1-60204> [accessed 12 September 2012]. The recreation of the real HMS *Suffolk*'s list of battle honours (including Barfleur in the 17th century, Velez in the 18th, and action against the German battleship *Bismarck* and in Burma in World War II) is visible outside the XO's cabin in episode two.

<sup>103</sup> Liddiment, The story of a sunken drama.

<sup>104</sup> The producer and writer of *Redcap* Patrick Harbinson had also previously worked on *Soldier Soldier*.



**Figure 3.1:** Type 23 frigate. LPhot Rory Arnold. UK MOD. © Crown copyright 2020: Open Government Licence.

highly specialised Cold War anti-submarine escort for the North Atlantic, had become, by virtue of its numbers (16 having been completed by 2002) and its employment in myriad worldwide tasks, a similarly ubiquitous and general-purpose Royal Navy representative.<sup>105</sup>

As of 2022, though slated for replacement by the Type 26 frigate (or ‘Global Combat Ship’), the Type 23 remains the Royal Navy’s most numerous major warship type, and continues in many international and ‘East of Suez’ operations like the *Leanders*.<sup>106</sup> Ironically, although the Type 23 served exclusively in the Royal Navy (until retired vessels were transferred to the Chilean Navy), its successor, the Type 26, has proved a successful design for export and like the Type

<sup>105</sup> Norman Friedman, *British Destroyers and Frigates: The Second World War and After* (Barnsley: Seaforth, 2017), pp.305–309; Leo Marriott, *Royal Navy Frigates Since 1945*, 2nd ed. (London: Ian Allan, 1990), pp.129–136.

<sup>106</sup> Anonymous, Fact Sheet 3, *Ministry of Defence SDSR 2015 Defence Fact Sheets* (Crown Copyright 2016), p.10, [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/492800/20150118-SDSR\\_Factsheets\\_1\\_to\\_17\\_ver\\_13.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/492800/20150118-SDSR_Factsheets_1_to_17_ver_13.pdf) [accessed 25 August 2019]. Notably, the *Leander* name was deliberately reinvented with nationalistic as well as nostalgic connotations in the competition to design new general-purpose frigates for the Royal Navy and for export. Publicity for the Cammell Laird bid for construction contracts included their *Leander* design in a Union Jack ‘dazzle’ camouflage scheme. Anonymous, Cammell Laird and BAE Systems Showcase Leander Type 31e Frigate, *Ocean News*, 26 February 2018, <https://www.oceannews.com/news/defense/cammell-laird-and-bae-systems-showcase-leander-type-31e-frigate> [accessed 4 March 2018].

12/*Leander* will be incorporated into the Australian and Canadian navies in the 21st century.<sup>107</sup> *Making Waves*'s portrait of the Navy in the new millennium was rounded out with location shooting at the Portsmouth naval base (including scenes aboard HMS *Victory* in episode two) and appearances of numerous other ship types, including the aircraft carrier HMS *Invincible*, the destroyers HMS *Gloucester*, *Newcastle* and *Bristol*, frigate HMS *Sutherland* and patrol ship HMS *Lindisfarne*.

*Making Waves* underwent an extended gestation period. The idea for the programme had originated from Ted Childs, who had produced some of ITV's most successful long-running entertainment series, such as the medical drama *Peak Practice* (Central/Carlton Television, 1993–2002), courtroom drama *Kavanagh QC* (Central Television, 1995–2001), and police detective series *Inspector Morse* (Central/Carlton Television, 1987–93), in addition to the highly successful *Soldier Soldier*. At the same time, lobbying from the naval establishment for more concerted televisual representation had also taken place:

The MoD is all too aware that beyond its heartlands, the navy is often misunderstood by the public and has spent more than two years trying to persuade TV companies to produce a prime-time drama series.<sup>108</sup>

However, the project was held to have 'an old-fashioned feel to it that was out of sync with the new generation of ITV drama,' perhaps because of its perceived resemblance to *Warship*.<sup>109</sup> As with the earlier series, any controversial subject matter was vetted rather than simply vetoed. Lieutenant Commander Kevin Fincher, who acted as principal adviser to the series, was instrumental in agreeing the terms under which the series could be made and broadcast, for the programme makers as much as for the Navy:

First and foremost the agreement had to cover what the RN was willing to allow them to depict and what it was not and the editorial role the RN would play. This was actually quite easy and certainly took Carlton by surprise, in that the RN was willing to allow them to depict whatever

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<sup>107</sup> George Allison, BAE Systems Type 26 Frigate wins Australian frigate bid, *UK Defence Journal*, 28 June 2018, <https://ukdefencejournal.org.uk/bae-systems-type-26-frigate-wins-australian-frigate-bid/> [accessed 25 August 2019]; Jon Rosamund, Canada Confirms Type 26 Design for Surface Combatant Programme After Legal Tussle, *USNI News*, 11 February 2019, <https://news.usni.org/2019/02/11/canada-confirms-type-26-design-surface-combatant-program-legal-tussle> [accessed 25 August 2019].

<sup>108</sup> Anonymous, Navy is set to rule airwaves, *The News – Portsmouth Today*, 1 August 2002, <http://www.portsmouth.co.uk/spare445/Navy-is-set-to-rule.249001.jp> [accessed 14 April 2010].

<sup>109</sup> Liddiment, The story of a sunken drama.

they wanted, as long as they also depicted the way in which the RN would deal with that given situation. With regard to the editorial role, although legally no editorial control could be given and hence none was sought, the RN negotiated a robust right of consultation, which was very effective throughout the production.<sup>110</sup>

Fincher estimated that, in addition to the involvement of numerous other ships, over a thousand naval personnel supported or served as extras during the production. Despite an inevitable ‘clash of cultures’ between the different parties involved, the complexities and costs of realistic shooting at sea were eventually accommodated, with the film crew taking over accommodation vacated by part of HMS *Grafton*’s company.<sup>111</sup> Given the track record of those involved and the precedent of *Warship*’s popularity, there was good reason to expect a successful and enduring series would result from this cooperative process. Storylines for a second series were supposedly in preparation following the completion of filming, with expectations that blocks of 13 episodes would be needed for the United States market and that DVDs, books, T-shirts, merchandising and a website for the series would follow.<sup>112</sup>

The series was therefore expected to fulfil the role of informing the public about the Navy and driving recruitment that the short films and presentations of the 1960s and ’70s had performed. The particular role of drama (as opposed to documentary) in representing the Navy therefore requires scrutiny, since expectations of extremity and excitement within entertainment stand in contrast to the observation of the quotidian and coincidental, and the recognition of the real, in factual television. While unanticipated events may produce moments of spectacle (such as the unexpected helicopter rescue on HMS *Ark Royal*’s ‘birthday’ in *Sailor*), which may be heightened (or not) by conspicuous stylisation, the contrived crises of drama are framed by (and audience enjoyment derives from) the responses of crafted characters. To refine the Navy’s self-protective position towards the representation of potentially controversial situations in *Making Waves* (anything might be depicted, as long as the Navy’s official response was also made plain), it is worth acknowledging that the (fictional) characters and actors chosen to portray them therefore embody a publicly accessible and putatively authentic institutional identity. For public relations purposes, the creation of diverse, credible and recognisable characters is necessary to underpin the representativeness of the Navy itself of and for the watching nation: for future recruits to ‘see themselves’ before they decide to

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<sup>110</sup> Kevin Fincher, *The Making of Making Waves*, <http://webarchive.org/web/20040818185425/www.royal-navy.mod.uk/static/pages/7030.html> [accessed 14 April 2010].

<sup>111</sup> Fincher, *The Making of Making Waves*.

<sup>112</sup> Fincher, *The Making of Making Waves*; Anonymous, *Royal Navy on the small – and big – screen*.

join. Therefore representativeness, realism and recognition appear crucial to the identity of (and individual and institutional identities depicted in) a uniformed service drama like *Making Waves* and require accommodation within the demands of popular entertainment.

### Plots and prerequisites

Each programme of the six-part series contained multiple plot lines pursued at a frenetic pace (for example, the first programme began with a fatal error during a wire transfer at sea, showed sailors going AWOL and missing *Suffolk's* sailing, and the frigate and its helicopter intercepting a shipload of Albanian immigrants who needed to be rescued when their vessel began to sink, and introduced a fateful narrative thread in a professional disagreement about the state of the warship's engines). However, all this current affairs and service-related content framed a dominant and more soap-operatic storyline. During this first episode it was revealed that Leading Marine Engineering Artificer Dave Finnan (Paul Chequer) was responsible for Charge Chief Marine Engineering Artificer Andy Fellows's (Steve Speirs) unmarried daughter, Teresa (Chloe Howman), becoming pregnant. This plotline punctuated the action of the series, working to connect the shipboard and shore-based communities, and reflecting *Making Waves's* intended status as a prime-time entertainment series with quotidian as well as extraordinary content. This domestic, shore-based dimension was augmented by scenes involving Brooke's wife and stepson and the female executive officer Jenny Howard and her fiancé, exploring the pressures of balancing family connections with a life, more than simply a career, in the Navy and at sea.

In comparison with the male-oriented and officer-dominated environment of *Warship*, the greatest visible alteration to characterisation and dramatic construction in *Making Waves* was related to the presence of female personnel at sea.<sup>113</sup> A separate Women's Royal Naval Service (WRNS, known colloquially as the 'Wrens') existed in both world wars, albeit mostly in shore-based support roles, but falling recruitment necessitated the incorporation of females into ships' companies in 1990, and full integration of the Navy (and therefore the disbanding of the WRNS as a separate service) took place in 1993.<sup>114</sup> Although

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<sup>113</sup> The timeliness and relevance of reviewing rather than introducing the subject of women within the Navy and serving at sea within *Making Waves* was highlighted by the 'Women at Sea: 25 years and Counting' symposium held in 2003 and reviewed by the USNI *Proceedings* magazine in 2004. Lori Lyn Bogle, 'Women at Sea: It's All about Leadership', *USNI Proceedings*, March 2004, <http://www.usni.org/proceedings/Articles04/PRO03bogle.htm> [accessed 17 March 2005].

<sup>114</sup> Anonymous, History, *The Association of Wrens and Women of the Royal Naval Services*, <https://wrens.org.uk/history/> [accessed 25 August 2019]. The first female volunteers for operational service went to sea in HMS *Brilliant* (see Chapter 6).

the depiction of mixed crews clearly provided different and additional dramatic potentials (in romantic, not inevitably heterosexual, and taboo relationships given their forbidden-ness between crew members at sea), in contrast to *Warship*, the inclusion of female crew members was also a prerequisite for a timely, relevant and appropriate portrayal of the 'new' Navy (though the characters portrayed remained, with the exception of LMA Cook, overwhelmingly white). The additional potential complexity of relationships aboard therefore vied in *Making Waves*'s plotting and character arcs with a more predictable staple of naval dramas, the balancing of life aboard with relationships ashore. Consequently, in terms of sympathy and screen time, the 'XO' Jenny Howard, was arguably more central to the series than the (comparatively distant and one-dimensional) figure of the ship's captain.<sup>115</sup> Key narrative incidents related to the ship's operational roles (such as escorting a ship carrying nuclear waste, diplomatic visits, disciplinary issues and taking part in training and exercises) were frequently integrated through Jenny's difficulties in reconciling her career with her life outside the Navy. At the same time, the beginning of an inappropriate relationship on board ship between Lieutenant Commander Sam Quatermaine (Adam Rayner) and Medical Assistant Anita Cook highlighted or perhaps exploited the predictable controversies of the integrated service within the public's perception. In episode two, a visit to Portsmouth by an Argentinian admiral and his female staff officer precipitated expressions of sympathy and solidarity between veterans of both sides of the Falklands War, and between female sailors from both navies forging careers within male-dominated environments. In another echo of *Warship*, episode three portrayed environmental concerns about the transport by sea of nuclear waste, but also connected this issue with blunt male and female gender stereotyping, and with a cynical portrayal of pragmatic naval justice. Within its frequent depictions of professional and disciplinary problems, *Making Waves* also encompassed suggestions of incompetence and corruption in naval officers, and a court martial process and imprisonment for Dave Finnan for striking a superior (*Warship*'s third episode, 'Off Caps', had addressed a similar conflict between junior and senior engineers).

Like *Warship*, these individual character concerns were fitted within the pattern of the central ship's missions (although, with only six episodes, these were considerably curtailed in comparison with HMS *Hero*'s very varied commissions). The principal concentration lay upon HMS *Suffolk*'s return to readiness following the opening fatal accident, with intensive training and exercises (and a succession of missions at sea) building towards the ship and crew being subjected to FOST (Flag Officer Sea Training) testing and inspection. The

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<sup>115</sup> As part of her preparation for the role, Emily Hamilton shadowed the executive officer of HMS *Kent*, at that stage the only female XO in the Navy. Ian Wylie, Telly Talk: Why my rear got a cheer, *Manchester Evening News*, 19 February 2007, <https://www.manchestereveningnews.co.uk/whats-on/film-and-tv/telly-talk-why-my-rear-got-a-cheer-1116161> [accessed 27 November 2018].

extensive cooperation offered by the Navy at sea and on shore was recorded in the service's own news reporting, and the series was eagerly anticipated by its participants and the Navy community as a whole.<sup>116</sup> However, rather than constituting the climax, the FOST scenes (which required the greatest concentration of filming at sea, with multiple ships involved) occupied episode four. Ironically, this episode was pulled from the schedules on the day it was due to be broadcast because of the series' poor ratings to date and the rest of the series was never aired, much to the Navy's chagrin.<sup>117</sup>

### *Making Waves: the aired and unaired episodes*

Where *Warship* began with the inactive HMS *Hero* under a cloud, *Making Waves* initiates the story of HMS *Suffolk* with tragedy: a fatal accident occasioned not by misfortune but by incompetence. The pre-credit sequence of the opening episode, accompanied by an ominously tolling bell on the soundtrack, features a rapid montage of aerial and moving shots of two Type 23s steaming in parallel, conducting the wire transfer. Initially overseeing the operation from the bridge wing, *Suffolk's* captain becomes ill and hands control to the ship's executive officer. The Principal Warfare Officer, Lieutenant MacGuire, then alerts the XO to a nearby merchant ship on a collision course, necessitating a complex staged turn by both ships to maintain the connecting lines. Inexplicably the XO hesitates in his command for the manoeuvre, disastrously compromising the wire transfer. On the bridge, Jenny Howard observes the impending disaster dispassionately, intoning fatalistically: 'Wessex has started her turn ... we've left it too late.' When the lines between the two ships are pulled apart, the female officer being transferred is flung against the side of the frigate before falling into the sea. The emotionless treatment of this incident is completed when a rescue boat approaches the body in the water, and after inspection a crew member signals a bleak thumbs down.

The credit sequence then follows the new captain Commander Brooke, a former naval pilot, and new rating Rosie Bowen as they arrive at the ship together. Rosie is established as naïve comic relief by her inexperience, her breaking of regulations and her prominent Welsh regional accent, yet Brooke's tolerance of her mistakes is contrasted with his uncompromising ('sink or swim') attitude towards Jenny Howard, who is not 'a fully-qualified XO'. *Suffolk's* outgoing captain, who has resigned following the court martial of the previous XO, nonetheless says Jenny is 'smart and capable' and reminds Brooke that she is 'old Navy':

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<sup>116</sup> Anonymous, Groundbreaking filming for TV's *Making Waves*, *Navy News*, 2003, 587, 11.

<sup>117</sup> Tom Newton Dunn, Fury of ITV Chop for the Navy, *The Sun*, 28 July 2004, <http://www.thesun.co.uk/sol/homepage/news/92316/Fury-of-ITV-chop-for-Navy.html> [accessed 18 June 2015].

her father is a serving admiral. The initiation of Jenny's testing follows (in a parallel to *Warship's* opening episode) with the captain's introduction to his sceptical officers. Lieutenant Commander Lewis (Ian Bartholomew), the chief engineer (who opines that Brooke's background in flying makes him unsuitable to be a ship captain and dismisses Fellows's concerns about the main engines as 'neurotic tinkering'), assures the captain that the 'operational deficiencies' are 'all routine problems ... nothing we're not used to in this ship.' In return, Brooke insists that *Suffolk's* performance must improve in all departments: 'Flag Officer Sea Training won't want to hear excuses about one of our front-line ships – neither will I.' In private immediately after his briefing, Brooke remarks on knowing Jenny's father: she raises the issue of her inexperience but Brooke points out that her previous captain had full confidence in her. She states her intention of completing the necessary qualification to become XO, for which she will need his recommendation. Jenny's challenges at the top of the frigate's hierarchy are immediately contrasted with Rosie's, in simply finding her way around the ship. Rather than offering help, the Leading Chef, Art Francis, instead starts a sweep-stake, inviting bets on 'who cocks up first', the new rating or the new captain. In another later scene, the captain uses the same phrase to his wife Cathy (Hilary Brooke) as they move into their new home, confessing he 'doesn't want to cock it up.' The series' assertion of the synergy of home and professional life, and Cathy's value and loyalty as traditional service wife, are encapsulated in her assurance that he has not done that with his stepson. Having established the ship- and shoreside threads involving Fellows, Finnan and Brooke, the opening episode also expands on Jenny's circumstances and multiplies her dilemmas by introducing her fiancé's request for her to leave the Navy and join him with his new job posting in New York. Reassuringly, Rosie is taken under the wing of Liz Wilson. Liz is plainly attracted to Rosie, and when they share a drink later Rosie defends the honour of her new ship from the insults and assaults of crew members of the *Wessex*.

The domestic and personal emphases rapidly established in this first episode appear to significantly and narratively outweigh the professional content, though the professional and emotional challenges are (as in the brief scene featuring the captain's wife, but above all in the case of Jenny's characterisation) shown to be intimately linked to the naval setting. The concentration upon relationships explored in the pub environment (Rosie's integration and association with Liz, and Andy's ironic confiding in Dave about his feelings and his daughter's circumstances) is furthered by this being the setting for Steward 'Scouse' Phillips (Darren Morfitt) and Operator Mechanic Mickey Sobanski (Lee Turnbull) picking up some local girls, getting drunk, going AWOL aboard their yacht and missing *Suffolk's* departure. What could become a simple and self-destructive disciplinary issue instead mushrooms into an improbably calamitous situation, when the yacht is hijacked and the sailors are confined aboard a ship carrying illegal immigrants. When the people smugglers' ship collides with a merchant vessel and starts to flood, Sobanski broadcasts an SOS

and tries to save the passengers. The *Suffolk* responds to the mayday message but is immobilised by a main engine failure, confirming Fellows's fears. As the ship begins to sink and before Rosie arrives in a rescue boat, Sobanski loses his nerve and proves unable to save a drowning child. Having reprimanded the chief engineer, Brooke lessens the punishment for Scouse and Sobanski in view of their courage in putting civilian lives before their own.

Numerous plotlines commenced in the opening instalment persist and interconnect in subsequent episodes to furnish the series with a soap-operatic consistency, which therefore departs markedly from the discrete episodic narrative format of *Warship*. This serial drama approach subsequently foregrounds Sobanski's struggles with guilt over his inability to save the immigrant child, Jenny's experiences of prejudice and questioning of her future inside or outside the Navy, and the acrimonious family arrangements of Andy, Teresa and Dave. However, the pacing and resolution of these threads act curiously to close down certain areas of potential drama within this representation of service life. The origins of Sobanski's guilt in his wilful misconduct become obscured in the support and counselling he receives to overcome his trauma through episodes two and three. In addition to exhibiting further erratic and aggressive behaviour, he fails a 'DRIU' (Damage Repair Instructional Unit) tank test where he must work to control flooding because of the fear he experienced on the refugee ship. The psychologist he visits assures him that his fears of being dismissed as unfit for service are unfounded: 'This isn't the seventeenth century: the Navy doesn't throw its wounded over the side.' He must retake the DRIU test to remain in the Navy, and it is Rosie's support and encouragement (after he reveals the truth to her) that actually enables him to pass.<sup>118</sup>

Jenny's apparently difficult choice between her fiancé and the Navy is by the end of the second episode decided definitively in favour of her career. The captain has stated his support for her application for the sea command qualification and encouraged her to take a leading role in the ship's preparation for FOST after a failed action drill forming the opening sequence of episode two. Her fiancé Alex's inability to comprehend her decision does, however, provide an opportunity to question her attitude. Putting her emotional life into perspective, she tells him that, from the day her dad brought her to Portsmouth when she was five, she 'fell in love with' the Navy. She insists her job is 'not like a gap year' that she can 'pick up again where she left off'. His angry response is to denigrate wider, vaguer and unspoken motivations rather than address

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<sup>118</sup> Negative perceptions and stigmatisation of mental health problems within the armed services, and their impact on efficiency, promotion and community culture, are therefore left unexplored within the series in what might otherwise have provided a serious dramatic and innovative representation: see Victoria Langston, Neil Greenberg, Nicola Fear, Amy Iversen, Claire French and Simon Wessely, Stigma and mental health in the Royal Navy: A mixed methods paper, *Journal of Mental Health*, 2010, 19(1), 8–16.

her personal wishes: 'What's it for, Jen? Who's it for? Is it Queen and Country? You think anyone really cares?' The balance or distinction between personal fulfilment and patriotic duty in her decision is perhaps deliberately not made clear but it is notable that the series elects to address the perceived significance of a Navy career through the preferences of its most prominent female cast member. As the only character for whom the choice and value of a Navy career are directly questioned or articulated, Jenny's positioning within *Making Waves* becomes markedly more important because of this scene.

Jenny's positioning within a Navy marked by transition and tradition is explored further in episode two by the *Suffolk's* crew welcoming a delegation of Argentinian naval officers to Portsmouth. The need for *Suffolk's* successful diplomacy is attributed entirely to the maintenance of 'trading partners' and 'keeping the coffers full'. The arrival of Admiral Esquivel (Arturo Venegas) and his female flag lieutenant, Elisa Balzani (Ilaria D'Elia), prompts potentially divisive recollections of the Falklands War but also contemporary kinship in the common work experience of the female officers. Elisa mocks the preservation of tradition when given a tour of HMS *Victory* ('So charming this old-fashioned history, from when you were once a great power'), to which Jenny responds with conservatism and restraint ('We take pride in our history: pride in everything we do'). Although the majority of the crew are too young to have experienced the conflict, Brooke asks his steward what he thinks of entertaining 'the old enemy': 'Off the record, sir, lives were lost in the Falklands, but that said most of our crew weren't even born then. So, I suppose you move on but you should never forget.' Without offering his own view, the captain deems this opinion 'suitable for public relations'. Ironically, while agreeing with Jenny in her views on male colleagues and masculine leadership, Elisa advises her to accept her fiancé's proposal and leave the Navy, not to 'settle down' but to 'have fun'. Equally unexpectedly, Andy Fellows (the only Falklands veteran aboard) is recognised by the admiral (a survivor of the *Santa Fe*) because of his medal ribbon, and the 'brothers of war' bond by swapping family photos and stories. The legacy of the Falklands returns briefly with stock footage of the conflict accompanying the reading of Andy's will, written aboard HMS *Hermes*. A similar ignorance of the Navy's past is exhibited by the younger crew members in episode three, when Brooke seeks to mark 'Taranto Night' with a celebration aboard ship, with a speech honouring *Suffolk's* namesake in World War II and the history of the Fleet Air Arm. Brooke's wife is also comically confused about the 'Tarantino Dinner' but is exemplarily supportive in saving the galley's special cake when it is accidentally ruined by Scouse and Sobanski.

These attempts to provide informative reminders of the Navy's history and significance stand alongside other plot points that show the service in less flattering lights. In episode two, Quatermaine accompanies Scouse and Sobanski to the local radio station for a well-spun public relations interview about the people-smuggling incident, saying nothing about their going AWOL and instead stressing that 'You two are a credit to the Navy' and 'not even our Royal

Navy heroes could prevent the tragic death of little 8-year-old Tomas. Episode three centres on *Suffolk's* escorting of a ship carrying nuclear waste, which is intercepted by the *Emerald Light*, a tug crewed by the 'Sea Sisters', a feminist ecology group. The group refuses to communicate with anyone aboard the frigate except Jenny (MacGuire observes that an all-female crew 'has to mean trouble') but when the *Emerald Light* suffers a hydraulic failure Brooke senses the opportunity for positive public relations in helping the group. Instead, the 'Buffer' (Geoff Bell) leading the boarding party is accused of assaulting one of the women. The captain investigates the incident (described by one of his superiors as the 'run-in with bearded ladies'), which 'makes the Navy look like a bunch of fascist boot boys' and the local paper's headlines condemn the misconduct of 'Navy thugs'. He questions Rosie and the Buffer (who is rumoured to have a history of domestic abuse) but the allegations made by the captain of the 'Sea Sisters' eventually prove to be unfounded. If discipline is portrayed as questionable within lower ranks, then the portrayal of officers suggests a cultural environment of failure and dishonesty, from the opening sequence's fatal accident onwards. The captain worries about the appraisal of HMS *Suffolk's* performance in FOST since the assessing officer bears a personal grudge: Brooke had an affair with the officer's late wife while they were both stationed at Yeovilton.<sup>119</sup> Sam Quatermaine is judged to both break rules and abuse his position in his relationship with the lower-ranked Anita Cook. Above all, the condemnatory characterisation of Lewis established in the series opening and exacerbated in episodes four and five provides the most negative embodiment of authority. Lewis is responsible for the mechanical breakdown during the rescue, for another (real) engine failure after the faults simulated as part of FOST, and his decision to activate the BTM fire-suppressant system precipitates Andy's death. Jenny's discovery of Lewis's doctoring of the ship's maintenance documents ultimately vindicates Dave Finnan's accusation against and his (punishable) assault on his superior officer. Although Brooke's intervention when the truth is revealed leads to a lessening of Finnan's sentence and Lewis's departure from the ship, Jenny points out with some justification that the captain's action is inconsistent with the service's standards and sets a dangerous precedent for future breaches of discipline: 'I spent my entire career trying to persuade people I got where I am on my own merits – most of all you, sir.'

The treatment that Sam Quatermaine and Anita Cook's relationship receives, across the episodes in which it begins, is pursued and then terminated, is also ambiguous. Where prejudicial perceptions of female sailors' suitability, competence and staying power are addressed seriously via the XO's characterisation, Sam is repeatedly sexually objectified. When he first comes on board, Anita and Rosie jokingly compare him to a costumed male 'stripper-gram': despite him being 'gorgeous', Anita warns Rosie that as an officer 'he can't share his

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<sup>119</sup> This subplot echoes an episode from *Warship's* third series, 'They Also Serve' from 1976.

bunk with you.’ Later female sailors watch Sam shirtless, performing tai chi on the helicopter deck, but Anita is dismissive: ‘He’s not my type ... he’s much too pleased with himself.’ Sam is objectified again when he is revealed to be the scantily dressed figure carrying the round boards at Rosie’s female boxing match. This repeated privileging of a female voyeuristic gaze in these instances complicates the responsibility and motivation for the developing relationship. Anita seems to pursue Sam, yet when the couple are observed in a hotel by MacGuire he accuses the male officer of abusing his rank. When the situation is revealed to the captain, Sam’s defence is that it is not just an affair and that he and Anita have plans for marriage – which Anita denies in her separate interview with the XO. These inconsistencies lead to Sam as the senior officer suffering the more severe punishment: both of them are put off the ship immediately (incongruously on ‘Families’ Day’, when *Suffolk* is hosting crew members’ spouses and children), but after training due to take place ashore Anita will have the chance to return. The final irony is that Sam observes Sobanski and Rosie kissing as he departs, advising them to ‘take it ashore.’<sup>120</sup> Although there might be narrative inevitability and soap-operatic satisfaction in a relationship developing across the series between Rosie and Sobanski, this is hardly less transgressive in service terms than Sam and Anita’s. Notably it is Jenny who responds punctiliously to naïve observations from the captain’s wife about the inevitable results of ‘all these twenty-somethings cooped up’ on a ship and advises the captain that Sam deserves severer treatment, though she regrets that it means ‘two careers ruined.’<sup>121</sup> In terms of Fincher’s description of the original conditions for the drama – being prepared to depict controversial situations, while also depicting the Navy’s proper response – the ambiguities in motivation displayed in Sam and Anita’s relationship are perhaps less important (though dissatisfying dramatically) than portrayal of the regulation punishment. However, this appears inconsistent with Rosie and Sobanski’s characterisation. While acknowledging the separation of the crew from loved ones as *Suffolk*

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<sup>120</sup> Although Rosie is the newest recruit on board, she archly offers to show Sobanski ‘the golden rivet’.

<sup>121</sup> Unsurprisingly, in the years since female sailors first went to sea as part of ships’ companies and gained officer and command billets, the press has repeatedly reported on breaches of conduct and their disciplinary consequences, including the dismissal of the first woman to command a Royal Navy warship for having an affair with a married male subordinate: Jane Merrick, If we want true gender equality, Commander Sarah West must be treated the same as any man. And that means no concessions for wrongdoing, *The Independent*, 30 July 2014, <https://www.independent.co.uk/voices/comment/if-we-want-true-gender-equality-commander-sarah-west-must-be-treated-the-same-as-any-man-9638026.html> [accessed 22 January 2018]. See also Rosemary Bennett, Captain’s Mistress gave mock orders to submarine crew, *The Times*, 16 October 2017, <https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/captains-mistress-gave-mock-orders-to-submarine-crew-pzrgpkgrq> [accessed 26 November 2019].

leaves Portsmouth, episode six ends on the promise of a Caribbean deployment and the continuation of Rosie's and Sobanski's relationship.

Despite this excess of incident and the inclusive spectrum of characters, *Making Waves* failed to gain an audience and only the first three of the six completed episodes were aired before the series was shelved, with the rest of the episodes remaining un-broadcast. The programme's audience fell drastically over its truncated run, and critical commentary was almost universally negative:

The show looks like it was made in 1978 ... But the biggest problem, a problem that even the most talented bunch of writers and actors would struggle to overcome, is this simple truth: Unless it's set in war-time, a drama about what goes on in the Navy is always going to be pretty dull.<sup>122</sup>

This verdict overlooks the plethora of dramatic situations (fires, floods, accidents, scandals and breaches of discipline) which *Making Waves* contains, albeit that the series' spectacle of major exercises (the FOST 'Thursday War') was never aired. The series' failure to find and retain an audience might be attributable to the overhanging pall of failure, disunity, unpreparedness and inexperience established by the opening episode and embodied by individual characters subsequently. Refreshingly, however, within this pattern the most consistently positive character remains the female XO, with the female contingent in authority on board *Suffolk* bolstered further by Charge Chief 'Eddie' Worthy (Sian Reeves), the replacement for Andy Fellows, joining the ship in the final episode.

In retrospect, the failure of *Making Waves* has been attributed to its scheduling as much as to its content and cast. Perhaps, as the perceived need for publicity for the Navy behind the creation of the series suggests, it is the service that has an old-fashioned image, which the serial drama format reinforced rather than overcame. However, this failure needs to be seen against the background of the many comparable popular precedents on British television, and also in contrast to popular military-based drama series in other countries.

### *Sea Patrol*: the most successful naval drama

In the United States, the hybrid naval/legal investigative drama *JAG* (Paramount/CBS/NBC, 1995–2005) and its spin-off US Navy- and US Marine Corps-related detective series *NCIS* (CBS, 2003–11) enjoyed considerable and widespread success over the same period as *Making Waves*'s troubled and abortive development. In Australia, following the popularity of the BBC's *Warship*

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<sup>122</sup> Ian Hyland, Drowned at Berth, *The Sunday Mirror*, 25 July 2004, [http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi\\_qn4161/is\\_20040725/ai\\_n12900173/](http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_qn4161/is_20040725/ai_n12900173/) [accessed 14 April 2010].

and a locally produced series, *Patrol Boat* (ABC, 1979–83), naval drama was successfully reintroduced to Australian television in the form of *Sea Patrol* (Nine Network, 2007–11), which ran for five seasons and 68 episodes. Film and television producers Hal and Di McElroy acknowledged the successful precedent of the original series, but, given the significant changes to the RAN and its role over the intervening years (with mixed crews and the tackling of immigration, drug-trafficking, terrorism and environmental issues), a new approach was needed. Yet the seriousness and topicality of these themes did not preclude a deliberately embedded positive, entertaining and nationalistic ethos:

‘Today, the tasking of the patrol boat service is very difficult and necessarily, therefore, our stories are very different. Frankly, they are much more dramatic than they were back in the earlier days. Not surprisingly, the series will deal with issues such as illegal fishing and immigration, boat people, drug-running, people-smuggling and a whole range of other issues’ ... ‘We thought that the series should be about a small “family”’, Mrs McElroy said. ‘The important thing for me is seeing how this ‘family’ of people operates on a patrol boat.’ ... It’s all about the Navy’s heroes; not about flawed heroes with feet of clay’, Mr McElroy added. ‘We really want to show audiences what it’s like to live and work on one of these boats, in extremely arduous conditions on a small platform of 42 metres and 24 people, in the tropics, 24/7, in any weather. Our stories will show good young honest Navy people doing a dangerous, difficult, very tough job, not getting paid fabulous money, but loving it.’<sup>123</sup>

Although these series are not explicitly related, *Patrol Boat* exhibited a strong resemblance to *Warship*, and *Patrol Boat* and the first season of *Sea Patrol* were set aboard the same *Fremantle*-class patrol craft tasked with safeguarding Australia’s coastal waters, repeating the same episodic, crew character-based format.<sup>124</sup> By the time the series’ fifth season appeared in 2011, *Screen Australia*’s online summary encapsulated how the formula of dramatic action, frenetic pacing and purposefully patriotic flavour had established its popularity:

<sup>123</sup> Barry Rollings, Navy’s Starring Role, *Navy News*, 5 October 2006, <http://www.defence.gov.au/news/navynews/editions/4918/topstories/story02.htm> [accessed 5 May 2015].

<sup>124</sup> Four *Fremantle*-class ships appeared in *Patrol Boat* (HMAS *Launceston*, *Townsville*, *Warrnambool*, *Whyalla* and *Woolongong*) and HMAS *Ipswich* portrayed HMAS *Hammersley* in *Sea Patrol* before being replaced by the *Armidale*-class boats HMAS *Broome* and *Launceston*. Anonymous, Farewell to the Fremantle Class, *Semaphore*, 2005, 17; Michael Idato, All ship shape, *Sydney Morning Herald*, 31 March 2008, <https://www.smh.com.au/entertainment/all-ship-shape-20080331-gds7ch.html?page=2> [accessed 30 July 2017]. During the series’ run, *Hammersley* is also seen to operate with other RAN ships including HMAS *Melbourne* and HMAS *Manoora*.

Young Australians battling the elements to defend Australia's borders and enforce its economic zone, providing security, surveillance, protection, support and relief for the world's longest coastline. Our heroes are the officers and crew of Australian Naval patrol boat, *Hammersley*. Together, they share in the adversity, self-sacrifice and rewards that come with Naval service. Explosive action and monumental stillness. Blue skies and throbbing motors. Mysterious events and deadly consequences. These are the things that characterise SEA PATROL. Everyday heroes doing an extraordinary job.<sup>125</sup>

The series therefore overtly signals and celebrates the challenges and opportunities of naval service, championing mutually supportive positive personal and institutional identities in ways which echo the Australian government's aspirational statements:

The Australian Defence Force (ADF) reflects the kind of country we are, the role we seek to play in the world, and the way we see ourselves. The sense of security that our armed forces give us underpins our optimistic outlook and the confidence with which we engage the region.<sup>126</sup>

*Sea Patrol's* success, as (at the time of its making) the most expensive production on Australian television, throws the failure of *Making Waves* into sharper relief.<sup>127</sup> It also prompts an in-depth consideration of the series' differences and similarities, their objectives and achievements as service-based (and service-supported) productions, and their characteristics as television dramas that balance entertainment values, recruitment potentials and realist representation. As a sustained serial drama, *Sea Patrol* exhibits a similar soap-operatic emphasis on long-running emotional and relational storylines, with many themes and incidents echoing the treatments of *Warship* (and indeed *Making Waves*). The drastically divergent receptions of these series given their strong superficial resemblances warrant detailed consideration.

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<sup>125</sup> Anonymous, *Sea Patrol* series 5 – Damage Control (2011) – The Screen Guide. *Screen Australia*, [https://www.screenaustralia.gov.au/the-screen-guide/c/sea-patrol-productions-\(mini-series-5\)-pty-ltd/16291/](https://www.screenaustralia.gov.au/the-screen-guide/c/sea-patrol-productions-(mini-series-5)-pty-ltd/16291/) [accessed 9 September 2019].

<sup>126</sup> Australian Government, Department of Defence, *Defence 2000: Our Future Defence Force* (Canberra: Commonwealth of Australia, 2000), p.iii, [https://www.aph.gov.au/About\\_Parliament/Parliamentary\\_Departments/Parliamentary\\_Library/pubs/rp/rp1516/DefendAust/2000](https://www.aph.gov.au/About_Parliament/Parliamentary_Departments/Parliamentary_Library/pubs/rp/rp1516/DefendAust/2000) [accessed 9 September 2019].

<sup>127</sup> Robert Fidgeon, *Testing the Waters*, *Herald Sun*, 4 July 2007, <https://www.herald.com.au/entertainment/television/testing-the-waters/news-story/7957296c9a278d80b0dad11c039382a6?sv=82c89a7dc819008f95d0bfb6f79d2a5d> [accessed 9 September 2019].



**Figure 3.2:** HMAS *Launceston*, which appeared in *Sea Patrol* as HMAS *Hammersley*. 2009. Brendan OhUiginn, CC BY-SA 3.0, via Wikimedia Commons: <https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:HMASLaunceston.jpg>

The setting of *Sea Patrol* aboard the *Fremantle* and *Armidale* classes of coastal craft rather than a frigate-sized warship represents an adept accommodation of the needs of televisual drama and nationally specific naval representation (Figure 3.2). The boat's smaller crew provided the opportunity for a limited and consistent cast of characters and the roving brief and multifarious tasks of Australia's patrol craft presented the scope for varied but contained plots for individual episodes.<sup>128</sup> However, in addition to the consistency of crew characters providing enduring and evolving plotlines, each season also featured a single underlying narrative (the 'Bright Island Mystery' in the first season; the coup attempt in the fictitious 'Samaru Islands' in the second), explored through and eventually concluded within its run of 13 episodes. This format was a criteria of *Sea Patrol*'s support from the Australian Film Finance Corporation and underlined

<sup>128</sup> In actuality, the *Armidale*-class units are not assigned permanent crews, but personnel rotate between boats within operational groups to maximise availability and crew relief. Julian Kerr, Plain sailing: Australia's Armidales prove fit for task, *Jane's Navy International*, 2008, 113(1).

the commercial aspiration for overseas sales of FFC-funded miniseries.<sup>129</sup> The composition of HMAS *Hammersley*'s crew, in both engendering the series' soap-operatic interactions and dramas and articulating its messages of self-fulfilment, professionalism and devotion to duty, bears comparison with the casting of *Making Waves*. *Sea Patrol* gives similar prominence to female crew members, and, though all its significant recurring characters are white, the series seeks to represent the multicultural nature of contemporary Australia through their varied immigrant backgrounds.<sup>130</sup>

As in the Carlton production, perhaps the most significant character is the female XO Kate McGregor, played by the series' most well-known star, Lisa McCune. Although the commanding officer is again male (Captain Mike Flynn, played by Ian Stenslake), the ship's other regular officer character is the navigator Lieutenant Nikki Caetano (Saskia Burmeister). The only additional consistent female crew member in the earlier series is Rebecca 'Bomber' Brown (Kirsty Lee Allan), the ship's cook, initially a disruptive influence on board because of her bad temper and secretiveness about her family. In later seasons she is replaced by Jessica 'Gap Girl' Bird (Danielle Horvat), a high school student taking advantage of a gap-year placement on the *Hammersley*. Notably, like HMS *Suffolk*'s senior female XO, Kate is an ambitious career officer, but her professional conduct is repeatedly undermined by her previous, and rekindled, relationship with *Hammersley*'s captain. Similarly, Nikki engages in an illicit and forbidden relationship with a male subordinate, Leading Seaman Josh Holiday (David Lyons). While Nikki's and Josh's relationship runs through the first two seasons (and is ended by Josh's death), Kate's complex entanglement with her CO, awareness of the incompatibility of her position, rank and feelings, and Mike's continual failure to commit to a relationship with her in favour of his naval career permeate all five. This abiding dramatic dilemma is eventually resolved by Kate and Mike marrying at the conclusion of the final season. However, after frequent disappointments in her attempts to gain promotion and a command of her own, it is left tellingly unclear whether Kate is able to continue in the Navy at all, while Mike is seen to be rewarded and promoted to fleet headquarters. Therefore, despite a similar significant emphasis upon the professional development and personal dilemmas particularly affecting the most senior female character, *Sea Patrol* appears more conservative than *Making Waves* in the definition by, and reward or punishment of, its female characters on the basis of their emotions, even where these prove crucial to the successful completion of the ship's missions. The concentration on female characters and

<sup>129</sup> Idato, *All Ship Shape*.

<sup>130</sup> The paradoxical mixture of representation of youth and espousal of multiculturalism with conservative ideology and circumscribed gender portrayals is traceable in Australia's most successful soap operas. See Lesleyanne Hawthorne, *Soap Opera in Multicultural Australia: Home and Away v Heartbreak High, Bureau of Immigration, Multicultural and Population Research Bulletin*, 1995, 15, 32–35.

their narrative and thematic threads in *Sea Patrol* (and *Making Waves*) might appear to suggest a melodramatic attunement of the series towards a female audience. However, the vagaries of *Making Waves*'s changing scheduling aside, both series were broadcast as early-evening dramas, not daytime soap operas.

The basing of the Armidale boats at Darwin in Northern Territory and at Cairns in Queensland underlines their tasking in policing the periphery of Australian sea space. If another obstacle to the success of *Making Waves* was the lack of clear purpose and specific direction for HMS *Suffolk* and her crew within the modern Royal Navy, the setting and format of *Sea Patrol* are by comparison actively focused on the contemporary Royal Australian Navy's explicit responsibility for national defence and regional stability, as defined in the Australian government's official statements: 'We cannot effectively protect Australia if we do not have a secure nearer region, encompassing maritime South-East Asia and South Pacific (comprising Papua New Guinea, Timor-Leste and Pacific Island countries).'<sup>131</sup> However, as with *Making Waves*, *Sea Patrol* was conceived within a competitive commercial context for serial drama, and many of the cast also appeared in similarly successful and long-running series on Australian television: the police series *Blue Heelers* (Seven Network, 1994–2006), and *Water Rats* (Nine Network, 1996–2001), on both of which Hal McElroy had worked as producer in the 1990s, the hospital-based drama *All Saints* (Seven Network, 1998–2009), and the widely exported soap operas *Neighbours* (Seven Network, 1985–2022) and *Home and Away* (Seven Network, 1988–present).<sup>132</sup> Since it is impossible to review the entirety of the content of *Sea Patrol*, the following provides an analysis of significant themes, characterisations and incidents from episodes selected from several seasons that evidence the programme's interweaving of the patrol boat's duties, the Navy's responsibilities and the crew's problematic relationships.

The fourth episode of the first season (entitled 'Irukandji') has several crew members being stung by jellyfish while rescuing a family of immigrants from a sinking fishing boat. The migrants had sought help from (drunk) Australian male fishermen, who fired flares at the 'pirates' to drive them away. 'Buffer' (Boatswain) Pete Tomaszewski (played by Jeremy Lindsay Taylor) befriends the only English-speaker in the group. Knowing that the family will be interned if they reach Australia, Buffer appeals to the captain, saying

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<sup>131</sup> Australian Government, Department of Defence, Defence White Paper 2016 (Canberra: Commonwealth of Australia, 2016), p.33, <https://www.defence.gov.au/about/strategic-planning/2016-defence-white-paper> [accessed 9 March 2022].

<sup>132</sup> The popular success of *Sea Patrol* as a series can be gauged from the fact that individual episodes and the first two entire series appear five times in the list of the top 20 audience-rating Australian television programmes from 2001 to 2009. Anonymous, All-Time Top-Rating Australian Mini-series on Television, 1978–2009, *Screen Australia*, <https://www.screenaustralia.gov.au/fact-finders/television/australian-content/in-the-archive/top-mini-series-of-all-time> [accessed 9 March 2022].

the fishermen should be charged with assault. Buffer also reflects on his own family, who entered Australia without papers and have gone on to contribute to the life of the country, but who now would be treated as 'illegals.' (Prejudices towards the immigrants the *Hammersley* encounters recur in episode six of the first season.) The arbitrariness of such values and fates is underlined when one of the affected crew members (about to propose to his girlfriend) recovers from the venom but the other dies. In the fifth episode ('Under the Radar'), the *Hammersley* tackles illegal shark fishermen. Nikki and Josh express their sympathies with green issues and environmentalist groups, but when the *Hammersley* tries to apprehend the fishermen's mother ship, 'eco-militants' interfere with their policing action. Two eco-militants have to be rescued after the mother ship fires upon them as they try to disable it with cables around the propellers, but Captain Flynn receives no gratitude for their assistance. Flynn then sets up a secret operation to catch the rest of the eco-militant group by leaving the XO and small party aboard the mother ship, tempting them to return and get arrested. Although he is subsequently reprimanded by his superior officer, Commander Marshall (Steve Bisley), for making his crew act like 'undercover cops', boatswain's mate 'Spider' Webb (Jay Ryan) visits Flynn in his cabin to express his support for the captain's actions. Although he was considering changing his career after their ship-mate's death, he is now convinced that the Navy is the 'best job'.

The relationships aboard the *Hammersley* receive constant and occasionally ironic acknowledgement. The consciousness of family connections resurfaces in the eighth episode of the second season as 'Spider' Webb and 'Bomber' fall overboard when 'Bomber' nearly loses a bracelet she received as a birthday present from her estranged mother. Tomaszewski as officer of the watch fails to notice their disappearance as he is distracted by a phone call about his own terminally ill mother. In the first season's seventh episode, both Kate and Nikki become jealous of the attention given to Claire Watts (Nadia Townsend), a young, solitary yachtswoman who claims to have been attacked by pirates. Nikki makes a mistake during an interception of illegal fishermen, which is interrupted by another mayday from Claire, but redeems herself navigating coral reefs to Claire's last position in uncharted waters. In the last episode of the first season, Tomaszewski admits to Kate that he is attracted to a female federal agent on board. When he asks the XO if she knows if she's single, Kate warns him that she's a 'uni type', leading Buffer to finish her sentence for her: 'so she wouldn't be interested in an uneducated Popeye like me?'

The increasing complexity of relationships aboard dominates the second season. Although Nikki and Josh try to obey the rules and evade censure by Josh accepting a shore posting, he is forced to return to the *Hammersley*, renewing the complications of their proximity. When both partners are endangered their feelings for each other are inevitably revealed to the CO. This occurs in a fraught episode (disingenuously entitled 'Birds') involving investigations into illegal fishing and Asian bird flu and marked by the admission of

other distracting relationships: Kate's and Mike's mutual jealousy when she is attracted to an army officer and he pursues a relationship with a marine biologist. In the fourth episode of the fourth season (entitled 'Ransom'), Kate challenges the captain over his lack of commitment and her desire for marriage and family, while she and the rest of the crew negotiate a faked kidnapping, rescuing a stepdaughter from her criminal father. Against the background of the ongoing but unspoken relationship between the captain and XO, in the fifth episode of the fourth season ('Paradise Lost') the radio operator 'RO' Dixon (Kristian Schmid) scrupulously reports himself to Flynn, because of his 'non-regulation fraternisation' with Bomber. RO's commitment to the Navy is later questioned in season two's fifth episode ('Giving Up the Dead'), when he appears drunk on duty and is suspected of illegal drug use. As he reflects on the likelihood of losing his career, a Navy poster (with the tagline 'INTEGRITY') is visible in his cabin (from the third series onwards, the Navy's stated values – Honour, Honesty, Courage, Integrity, Loyalty – appeared on screen during the opening credits). Similarly, the nature of Kate's commitment to her own career, to the Navy or to the captain comes into question. At the end of the second season as the *Hammersley* is instrumental in preventing the coup attempt in the Samar Islands (analogous to the RAN's intervention in the Solomon Islands in 2003), Kate receives a tacit promotion when she takes command of the ship in Flynn's absence.<sup>133</sup> Yet she is presented with an emotional dilemma when both the captain and his rival for her affections, SAS captain Jim Roth (Ditch Davey), are both brought back aboard wounded. While they are treated in *Hammersley*'s wardroom, Roth (thought to be unconscious following a concussion) overhears Kate whispering 'please don't die' to Flynn. He reveals that he knows and bids her farewell, apparently tying her fate conclusively to Flynn and the *Hammer-sley*. Although Kate's and other crew members' commitment to the ship and the captain are frequently restated (as with the transition from *Fremantle*- to *Armidale*-class vessels at the end of the first season), it is the soap-operatic uncertainty of the tension and collaboration, disruptiveness and partnership of the captain's and XO's relationship that permeates the series and provides its melodramatic continuity.

### Conclusion: barely a ripple

After the sustained success of *Warship*, the perceived disaster of *Making Waves* stands as a failure of both commercial television production and Royal Navy public relations. Although critical responses to the series were relatively sparse, the contemporary and retrospective reactions to *Making Waves* have agreed in

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<sup>133</sup> Anonymous, The Royal Australian Navy and the Restoration of Stability in the Solomon Islands, *Semaphore*, 2005, 13, <https://www.navy.gov.au/media-room/publications/semaphore-13-05> [accessed 18 June 2015].

disparaging the project, and itemising and explaining its failure in terms of both accidental and deliberate mistakes in its conception, creation and delivery:

Unfortunately, despite its comparatively high production values, *Making Waves* suffered from serious scripting and other problems. ITV's lack of faith in the end product was reflected in its decision to hold off broadcasting until the middle of the summer when many people would be away on holiday. *Making Waves* then generated both disappointing reviews and poor audience figures, prompting ITV to withdraw the series from its schedule after only 3 episodes had been broadcast.<sup>134</sup>

Discussing this 'debacle', producer Ted Childs ascribed the series' demise to its delayed and altered scheduling and its denial of adequate promotion and publicity, and to its inability to gain (rather than capacity to lose) viewers when placed in competition with stronger, audience-pleasing programmes (reality television series such as *Supernanny*, broadcast by Channel 4, and *The Long Firm*, an equally expensive but successful BBC2 drama series).<sup>135</sup> If the misfortune of *Making Waves* offers particular insight into both the processes of production and the vagaries of broadcasting for costly commercial television drama projects seeking large and predictable (and potentially international) audiences, it also illuminates retrospectively the accomplishment of *Warship* in reconciling entertainment and recruitment as successfully within the demands of the television and service establishments. S.P. Mackenzie, as one of very few scholars to address either of these series, has produced this verdict on their different features, and fates:

The success of *Warship*, whether as a recruiting tool or as a means of heightening general public awareness of what the senior service of the 1970s was like, was due in part to the ships and men provided by the Royal Navy. Ultimately, however, audiences were drawn to stories in which hardware featured rather than to the hardware itself ... *Warship* had succeeded where *Making Waves* failed because those involved – the multi-talented Ian MacKintosh above all – managed to create varied and interesting characters and plots in which RN frigates and other vessels served as useful backdrops for the action. *Warship*, in short, helped the Royal Navy through a combination of competent writing, acting and direction rather than through simply using its equipment as a showcase. As the *Making Waves* debacle showed, hardware alone, no matter how impressive, could not draw in audiences on a significant scale.<sup>136</sup>

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<sup>134</sup> Mackenzie, *Broadcasting the New Navy*, p.121.

<sup>135</sup> Ted Childs, *Lost with all hands*, *The Guardian*, 16 August 2004, <http://www.theguardian.com/media/2004/aug/16/mondaymediasection8> [accessed 18 June 2015].

<sup>136</sup> Mackenzie, *Broadcasting the New Navy*, p.121.

Such criticism seems less justifiable when a certain level of visible hardware was clearly necessary for the realism and appeal of the series, and notably the segment most reliant on images of ships at sea (episode four) was never broadcast. Inadequacies of plotting and characterisation, rather than an alleged over-reliance on spectacle and hardware, are isolated as *Making Waves's* flaws.<sup>137</sup> Although unfortunately Mackenzie's analysis of these British examples does not extend to comparisons with *Sea Patrol*, it is tempting to attribute the Australian series' obvious success to an efficient writing and acting combined with topical storylines, equivalent to *Warship's* accomplishment in the 1970s despite its clearly different national, commercial and aesthetic contexts. *Sea Patrol* went on to be widely syndicated abroad while *Making Waves* failed to gain a home audience, let alone an international one.<sup>138</sup>

Given the duration and success of Childs's *Soldier Soldier* (seven seasons and 82 episodes over a period of six years), the disappointment of *Making Waves* appears difficult to fathom and easy to ascribe to its specifically naval subject matter, in contrast to the repeatedly successful serial narrative depictions of other uniformed and dutiful communities. It is noticeable that many of the dramatic elements of *Making Waves* are in themselves palpably downbeat, let alone in comparison with the hectic action, emotional intensity but constantly affirming narratives of *Sea Patrol*. Equally, the final episode of what must have been assumed to be just the first series of *Making Waves* ends on the promise of an apparently positive relationship between Rosie and Sobanski unaffected by rank (but still forbidden aboard ship) and the prospect of visually appealing, potentially recruitment-oriented episodes portraying overseas deployment. *Warship* concentrated predominantly on officers, and overwhelmingly on the key relationship of HMS *Hero's* captain and first lieutenant. Oddly perhaps, in deliberately framing an egalitarian emphasis upon other characters and ranks, *Making Waves* rendered the figure of the captain remote and peripheral to the personal crises, entering only as arbitrator in their final resolution. Whereas in *Warship* lower ranks drove dramatic episodes in terms of below-decks conflicts and confrontations with authority, discipline and efficiency, non-officer characters in *Making Waves* provided the longest and most heightened soap-operatic storylines (in the relationships between Rosie and Sobanski, between Andy and Teresa Fellows and Dave Finnan, in Andy's death, and Dave's imprisonment and release). *Warship's* conflicts in 'officer country' sprang from the contradictions of service and tradition – Beaumont's family connections, Nialls's command style and Timothy Penn's political and ideological opposition to the Navy as culture and community. By contrast, the potentially radical figure of Jenny

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<sup>137</sup> Hyland, Drowned at Berth.

<sup>138</sup> Anonymous, Nine Network's Sea Patrol Snapped Up by Hallmark Channel to Air in Over 100 Territories Throughout the World, *Nine Network Media Release*, 19 April 2007, [https://www.pblmedia.com.au/Images/pblmediaimages/Document/Sea\\_Patrol\\_Broadcast\\_Deal\\_Media\\_Release.pdf](https://www.pblmedia.com.au/Images/pblmediaimages/Document/Sea_Patrol_Broadcast_Deal_Media_Release.pdf) [accessed 14 April 2010].

Howard performs an additional conservative function in embodying the family traditions of a naval career. By comparison, the other male officer characters remain only partially developed: Lewis is an incompetent martinet and Quatermaine's motivations in his relationship with Anita Cook are never adequately explained. Overall, and (almost) entirely positively, it is the female characters that dominate *Making Waves*, registering the importance of significant change within the Navy's personnel. The series therefore importantly extends in dramatic form the representation (and controversy) of women in the Navy and at sea, which received documentary treatment in *HMS Brilliant* (BBC, 1995) (see Chapter 6).

Despite its strong resemblances to *Warship* (as in starting the series, establishing the frigate as setting and introducing the new captain as an ambitious figure by presenting the *Suffolk* as a ship to be fixed), *Making Waves* differs in tone from *Warship* (and indeed *Sea Patrol*). All three present service life for all ranks and for male and female personnel as riven with contradictions and difficulties, and all three series share a necessarily narrow focus on a select few crew members, but whereas (from a 21st-century perspective) the outdated and conservative class- and gender-cohesion of *Warship*'s male officers nonetheless manages to acknowledge a service in active and positive transition, the crew of *HMS Suffolk* appears to embody a range of dramatically fertile but often pessimistically presented differences. However, in terms of *Making Waves*'s failure these aspects are not noticeably inconsistent with the emotional and professional crises portrayed in other successful serial uniformed dramas. This communal and environmental difference is all the more marked in comparison with the (albeit conspicuously circumscribed) diversity of the Australian Navy crew in *Sea Patrol*. Aboard *HMAS Hammersley*, interpersonal and heterosexual relationships and individual problems are abidingly successfully resolved alongside each episode's iteration of the ship's national duty. The inevitable dramatic involvement of the crew members in the individual episodes' drivers (ecological concerns, border protection and immigration, disaster relief, criminal investigations, and terrorism) is redeemed (often like the characters themselves) by their participation in the resolution of these personal and professional drivers (for example, explicitly in episodes such as 'Through the Storm' and 'Giving Up the Dead'). However, perhaps the success of *Sea Patrol* is most straightforwardly attributable to its accomplished integration of the demands and expectations of popular television drama with the specificities of its naval subject, and vice versa. The necessary emphasis upon the incarnations of personal and cultural identity in these drama series' representations of national institutions can be compared with Alexandria Innes's interpretation of British soap operas' conscious concretisation of topical debates on ethnicity, cultural diversity and immigration.<sup>139</sup> In comparison with *Making Waves*, *Sea*

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<sup>139</sup> Alexandria J. Innes, 'Everyday Ontological Security: Emotion and Migration in British Soaps', *International Political Sociology*, 2017, 11, 380–397.

*Patrol* appears particularly successful in this regard, mitigating conservative national immigration policy with humane crew responses to such storylines. Similarly, seen as a soap opera, *Sea Patrol* evinces the successful combination of the emotionally universal and the nationally specific that Graeme Turner attributes to Australian serial dramas.<sup>140</sup> Its overt nationalistic and celebratory tone does not need to make concessions to sea-blindness or lack of knowledge about the armed services in its audience, in contrast to *Making Waves*'s conspicuous insertion of Falklands history and Fleet Air Arm heritage within the context of the fictional crew's own ignorance. In the long term, the impact of the *Making Waves* may be felt not so much in the lack of any similar naval drama since its premature demise but in the comparative proliferation of naval documentaries in the same period.

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<sup>140</sup> Graeme Turner, Cultural Diversity, Soap Narrative, and Reality TV, *Television and New Media*, 2005, 6(4), 415–422, p.417.