



From the Deputy National Welfare Advisor

Dear Area/Branch Secretaries, Welfare Officers and Shipmates

CORONAVIRUS (COVID 19) – BEREAVEMENT UPDATE 3

This update looks at an offer from the Royals worth following up and updates on access at end of life in hospital, care homes and funeral attendance. Do not forget your **Area or Branch Welfare Officers** or the **RNA Helpline (07542 680082)** are there as points of contact and help outside the family. They may not be trained counsellors but they are shipmates and can signpost you to the right advice for you.

Paying musical last respects at funerals - Music has always been a large part of a matelot's life and should be at the funeral with paying of respect by Last Post and Reveille. For many it is not been possible in the past to find a bugler or indeed currently to have present but the Royals have risen to the challenge! The Royal Marines (RM) Band has made a video production of Last Post and Reveille that can be used with permission at veterans' funerals during the COVID-19 lockdown. **Copies of the video file can be requested by email from Captain Sam Hairsine RM, SO3 RM Band at Samuel.Hairsine464@mod.gov.uk.** The request can come directly from Naval Service Charities, Branches of Associations, a family member or Funeral Directors and is available to be used at a funeral service of any veteran from the Naval Service that dies during lockdown. On your behalf, RM Band has been thanked for their perception of need and speed in putting this together so that we can all do the right thing for our shipmates and the veteran community during this pandemic crisis and guarantee consistency and quality of service. What more can you ask from The Royal Marines Band which remains the best Military Band Service in the world.

What has changed on access to those in hospital and care homes? The most painful thing for those who have suffered bereavement during the pandemic crisis has been the inability of family to visit shipmates in hospital and sometimes seeing them dying alone. On a quick, limited survey of hospital websites and care homes there are no consistent "rules" and each hospital or care home has its own guidance or interpretation. Many hospitals for example are now letting **one** member of family attend at end of life so shipmates do not cross the bar alone. However many units are saying that for an end-of-life patient they balance compassion with safe care with the number of visitors permitted is at the ward or care home manager's discretion but that restrictions may be relaxed in exceptional circumstances only. So, if sadly, you have a shipmate at end of life I suggest you check with your local hospitals's or care home website and/or ring the ward or care home manager.

What about attendance at funerals? Attendance at funerals remains restricted in terms of numbers allowed and other normal practices such as parading a standard as a mark of respect. Again a quick, limited survey online suggests this still varies widely across the country so always ask your Funeral Director who should be aware of the local position or check the website of your local Crematorium. At least crematoria re-opened to the public from 21st April whilst the Church of England has kept closed all of their churches as have many other religious organisations enforced similar policies thus funerals may now only happen at the Crematorium or at the graveside. However remember funerals in crematoria currently generally remain restricted to the smallest possible number of attendees consistent with social distancing of 2m to help reduce the risk of spreading the infection. Numbers will vary in each crematorium as determined by the size and circumstance of the venue. However do look into sharing the funeral online with the most common way being by web casting or live streaming. Many funeral directors now offer this service which allows many people to attend a funeral without putting anyone at risk. Again check with your



funeral director and/or the crematorium. All it needs is some co-ordination and possibly cost with an email invite sent out with link-in details.

What about commemorations and memorial services of lives well lived? These sadly remain restricted. The social distancing restrictions have sadly meant that we have not been able to give shipmates the usual marks of respect at funerals by attendance at their funeral or afterwards. Central Office advises that the honorary RNA chaplain and the Chaplain of the Fleet, The Venerable Martyn Gough, has offered to conduct a memorial service to all our shipmates who crossed the bar during the crisis. **The likely “national” venue will be the National Memorial Arboretum with some regional options under consideration.** Central Office will update later on this.

Locally can I suggest that all Branch Secretaries they inform their Area Secretary and/or Welfare Officer of shipmates who have crossed the bar during this period? That information can be collated and shared to Central Office and also be used for any future local Branch or Area memorial service. As above, technology can help and you can have a virtual local memorial gathering now via Facebook, WhatsApp or conference apps such as Zoom available to download on laptop or mobile phone.

Please distribute this widely, keep following government public health guidelines and look after your shipmates and oppos by phone. text, e-media or letter.

Stay safe, stay well and stay at home,

Geoff Apperley