

# SEMAPHORE CIRCULAR



## ► DARK BLUE TATTOO FOR EDINBURGH

It was the Royal Navy's turn at the helm at this year's Royal Edinburgh Military Tattoo in the grounds of Edinburgh Castle. The entertainment extravaganza, held on the Esplanade of Edinburgh Castle during August, featured a wide variety of musical talent.

At the forefront were the Massed Bands of His Majesty's Royal Marines, including their world-famous Corps of Drums. The mesmerising musicians were proudly playing at the event which took place on the 350th anniversary of the formation of the Royal Marines.

The theme of this year's Tattoo was 'Journeys', with a nautical feel as the Senior Service took its turn as the lead Service. Among those who joined the Royal Marine Band each night were the United States Navy Ceremonial Guard and the United States Sea Service Band – each of the 26 shows featured

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**Semaphore Shorts and Semaphore Circular:** The monthly Semaphore Circular appears on the first Friday of each month, notes for branch officers on the second Friday and Semaphore Shorts on the remaining Fridays of each month. On occasions the publication date might be delayed for operational reasons – if so we will endeavour to tell you in advance by email and/or through our social media channels.

**The next Semaphore Circular will be published on Friday 4 October, notes for Branch officers on Friday 11 October, and Semaphore Shorts on Friday 18 and 25 October.**



more than 800 performers. This year, for the first time, the Tattoo's Lone Piper was provided by a member of the Royal Marines Band, complete with a unique Commando tartan kilt. L/Cpl Frank Rochford passed the Army School of Bagpipe Music and Highland Drumming's highly competitive Pipe Major Course to claim the role.

Growing up in Campbeltown, Argyll, Frank has played the pipes since he was five years old. He joined the Royal Navy in 2013, and his primary role is as a musician in the Royal Marines Band Service based in Scotland. His impressive repertoire includes fiddle, clarinet and the bagpipes. The Tattoo also included a Royal Navy Guard of Honour.

The Tattoo also saw the Pipes and Drums of 1st Battalion Scots Guards, the Pipes and Drums of the Royal Gurkha Rifles, the Australian Federal Police Pipes and Drums, the Combined Pipes and Drums of the Royal Tank Regiment, and the Scottish and North Irish Yeomanry. The Majestic Drum Corps, India Teamwork Arts, and the Citadel

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Regimental Band and Pipes also featured. Continuing the Naval theme, the lead charity for this year's Tattoo was the Royal Navy and Royal Marines Charity (RNRMC). Senior Naval officers attended for a number of performances, and the Tattoo is a major attraction during Edinburgh's busy summer – there was an

overall attendance of 96 per cent over the whole programme, and tickets for the 2025 version are already on sale – next year the Tattoo, like the Royal Naval Association, celebrates its 75th anniversary. For more details of the 2025 programme – which runs from 1-23 August – see [www.edintattoo.co.uk](http://www.edintattoo.co.uk)



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## ➤ CENTRAL OFFICE OPEN DAY – GALLERY

Images by RNA photographer S/M Nigel Huxtable









## ► FROM THE GENERAL SECRETARY

### Ahoy Shipmates!

Desperately sad news to start with unfortunately. I just wanted to reiterate our sincere condolences as an Association to the family of the fatal casualty reported yesterday. The incident was reported as a result of a ditching of a Merlin Mk4 helicopter in the Channel off the Dorset coast whilst on a night training exercise with HMS Queen Elizabeth on Wednesday evening. First Sea Lord Admiral Ben Key was "intensely saddened by the tragic loss." Sir, we share your grief.

**New Chairman.** On a much happier note, I am pleased to announce that at the National Council meeting this morning Shipmate Andy Christie was elected as the Association's new National Chairman. The vote was unanimous. Andy (*pictured below handing his Deputy National Chairman Chain of Office to his successor, Pete Chivers*), of course, is no stranger to the workings of the RNA, having been a

member of the Central Office team for many years before retiring to do even more work for the Association, albeit unpaid – I'm still trying to work that out! For my part, I'd like to impart some sound management advice if I may. Never be horrible to your staff. You see, you never quite know when the tables might turn and your employee becomes your Boss! Andy, I look forward to a few keel haulings!!

This, in turn, left Andy's position as Deputy National Chairman vacant and the National Council voted in the National Council Member for 5 Area (East Anglia), Pete Chivers, as the new Deputy National Chairman. Pete works for Citizens Advice in his day job so brings a lot of experience and knowledge to the Board of Trustees and no little wit and humour to keep us amused.

The management shuffle came about as Shipmate Peter Godwin sadly had to step down as National Chairman in July when he realised that the commitments of his new full-time day job meant that he was no longer able to give the National Chairman position the time and energy it deserved. I'd like to pay tribute to Peter, who is a sad loss to the National Council as he had a huge depth of knowledge and expertise in the management of the RNA and was always a forward thinker, pushing the Association forward to keep it relevant in modern society. Best wishes Peter.

**RNA 75th Anniversary.** 2025 is an important anniversary year for the RNA, and things kick off literally with the Association being the sponsored charity at next year's Army v Navy match at Twickenham on 3 May. Now that the RNA has its own bar in the stadium close to our allocated seats, it has really become a great occasion to meet old shipmates and watch the game together. Presale tickets are already available and are advertised later in this edition of the Semaphore Circular. See you there!

**2025 Diaries are in!** For those who still like a pocket diary please email Sara directly to get one – contact her on [ams@rnassoc.org](mailto:ams@rnassoc.org)

Best wishes,

*Bill*



# ► RMA HAS NEW CHIEF EXECUTIVE

Capt Bill Oliphant, Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of the RNA, has congratulated Matt Jackson DSO on his appointment as CEO of our sister charity the RMA – The Royal Marines Charity.

With a distinguished career in leadership, strategic planning, and over two years as a Charity Trustee, Matt (*pictured right*) brings a wealth of experience and a deep commitment to serving the Royal Marines family.

A former Royal Marine with more than 30 years of service, Matt is a highly respected leader known for his exceptional dedication to both his military and civilian careers.

During his tenure in the Royal Marines, he gained invaluable experience in operations, command, and organisational leadership. Matt has also gained invaluable experience of the RMA – The Royal Marines Charity as a Trustee.

Since he joined the Board of Trustees in January 2022, Matt has helped drive impactful initiatives that support veterans and their families.

In his new role as Chief Executive, Matt will be responsible for guiding the charity into its next chapter of growth and success. He will focus on expanding the charity's outreach, enhancing support services for veterans and their families, and strengthening the bonds within the Royal Marines community. His strategic vision and proven leadership skills will be instrumental in advancing the charity's mission to provide lifelong support to Royal Marines, veterans, and their families. Matt said: "It is an incredible honour to lead RMA – The Royal Marines Charity, an organisation that holds such a vital place in the hearts of all who have served. I am deeply committed to building on the strong foundations laid by my



predecessors and ensuring that we continue to offer unwavering support to our Royal Marines family. Together, we will work to meet the evolving needs of our community, ensuring that every Royal Marine and their loved ones receive the care and support they deserve."

The Chair of the Board of Trustees, Lynn Fordham, said: "We are thrilled to welcome Matt Jackson as our new Chief Executive – he is well known to us and the community we serve and we look forward to working with him in this new role. His exemplary service in the Royal Marines, combined with his experience gained as a Trustee, makes him especially qualified

to lead RMA – The Royal Marines Charity. We are confident that under his leadership, the charity will continue to grow and thrive, delivering on our commitment to support the broader Royal Marines family."

RMA – The Royal Marines Charity is dedicated to providing lifelong support to the Royal Marines family. The charity offers a wide range of services, including welfare support, transition assistance, and employment opportunities, ensuring that Royal Marines, veterans, and their families receive the care and assistance they need throughout their lives.

For more information see [www.rma-trmc.org](http://www.rma-trmc.org)

# ► BAND PLAYS FOR POPPY SCOTLAND

Scotland's best-known military band, the Band of the Royal Regiment of Scotland, has launched a series of concerts, 'Sounds of Scotland', to raise funds for Poppy Scotland, the nation's best-known Armed Forces charity this autumn.

Renowned for their performances at Holyrood Palace and the Royal Edinburgh Military Tattoo, the talented musicians will be touring venues in Livingston, Inverness, Peebles and Glenrothes, led by Director of Music, Major Brenden Wheeler.

The tour is a collaboration with renowned folk

musician and songwriter Alan Brydon. All proceeds from the concert will raise vital funds to help us provide life-changing support for members of the Armed Forces community across Scotland.

Venues and dates are:

Livingston, Saturday 14 September

Inverness, Saturday 26 October

Peebles, Friday 6 December

Glenrothes, Thursday 19 December

For full details and booking links see <https://tinyurl.com/w4mmbeer>



## ONCE NAVY ALWAYS NAVY

### ► NEW RNA WEBSITE IS LIVE – AND EVOLVING

As you have probably already noticed, we have launched our new website!

The new address is the same as the old one – [www.royal-naval-association.co.uk](http://www.royal-naval-association.co.uk) – but some of the links are different, so you may have to refresh your browser page when visiting the new website until your computer gets used to it.

Branch Secretaries and Special Interest Group (SIG) leaders are kindly asked to check their information on the new site – we are expecting to have a lot of updated information – so please send corrections, amendments and additions to [cml@rnassoc.org](mailto:cml@rnassoc.org).

There will be further instruction in the monthly Branch email next Friday.

For everyone else, if you experience any difficulties with the website, or spot something that needs correcting, please do let us know on the email address above.

Although we are delighted to see the site go live, this is something of a soft launch as we intend to add more

information and content in the coming weeks and months. This includes useful documents, back copies of Semaphore Circulares and Semaphore Shorts, as well as articles and features that we believe will be of topical or enduring interest to our members (and others dropping by – potential new members!).



The Royal Naval Association's Thinking Together Programme supports Shipmates' mental and physical health through activities and get-togethers.  
Resilience is built-in through peer support and a sense of community.  
Each event is led by an RNA mental health first aider, who can offer signposting and support.

## ➤ RNA FLIES THE RED DUSTER

The Royal Naval Association was proud to mark Merchant Navy Day by flying the Red Ensign on 3 September as we acknowledged and remembered mariners who have served their country in numerous conflicts, including during Op Corporate, the operation to liberate the Falkland Islands in 1982, in Ships Taken Up From Trade (STUFT). The Merchant Navy is as relevant today as it was during the dark days of the Battle of the Atlantic during World War 2 when 4,700 British-flagged ships were sunk and more than 29,000 merchant seamen died. As an island nation, we remain dependant on merchant seafarers who are responsible for transporting more than 95 per cent of the UK's trade.

The RNA offers comradeship, special offers, sports tickets, events, weekends away and support when you need it most. For you, and for your family.

## ➤ SERVICE FOR SEAFARERS: BOOK YOUR FREE TICKETS

The Annual National Service for Seafarers (ANSS), organised by The Seafarers' Charity and Trinity House, will be held at St Paul's Cathedral on Wednesday 9 October at 5pm.

You can book your free tickets through this link: <https://tinyurl.com/yp5xrsdw> using the code GENNAVE

The doors will open at 3.45pm for general entry, you must ensure you arrive in good time for any security requirements on the day and be seated by 4.30pm. Please remember to bring photographic identification as proof of identity may be required. The service was first held in October 1905, and has been held annually ever since. The purpose of the ANSS is to recognise, celebrate, and express gratitude. Often, our reliance on seafarers is taken for granted or not fully appreciated, and this Service acts as a reminder of their importance.

Many who attend the Service have served at sea in conflict or perilous conditions, or are present to honour the memory of an individual who has perished whilst serving this country, often a family member or former shipmate. Their intensely personal tribute is shared by those who may not have direct experience of the seafaring life themselves but who recognise the obligation of this island nation to honour the sacrifice and courage of those "that go down to the sea in ships, that do business in great

waters."

The great affection and loyalty attached to the Service derive hugely from the tradition and constancy that lie at its heart. Many of the congregation travel some distance and are of advanced years; they bring with them memories of family members and shipmates who have given their lives at sea in the service of this country. They derive great comfort and reassurance from the words and music that they hear, and from the shared experience of this Act of Remembrance.

The service is dedicated to seafarers from various maritime professions, including the Merchant Navy and Royal Navy, fishing fleets, workboats, cruise liners, commercial shipping, yachts, ferries, and anyone who makes a living working at sea. One of the unique aspects of the ANSS is its ability to unite seafarers from all sectors of the maritime community. It extends beyond seafarers alone; the service also welcomes maritime welfare charities, nautical schools, maritime youth groups, veterans' associations, and people of all faiths and nationalities.

The ANSS is open to all, and it is free to attend. Seafarers from all countries, faiths, and backgrounds, as well as those who support them from ashore, are encouraged to join in this solemn celebration.

## ➤ FREE BUS TRAVEL FOR VETERANS SEEKING WORK IN GLOUCESTERSHIRE

A travel card providing free bus travel has been made available to veterans who are seeking employment in Gloucestershire. The initiative has been introduced by Gloucestershire County Council in partnership with the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) and Jobcentre Plus.

The county council has produced and funded the travel cards, while Jobcentre Plus establishments in the county will issue them. The initiative was launched at the Veterans Café in Gloucester, which was set up earlier this year with the support of the county council. The café is based at the Soldiers of Gloucestershire Museum and provides a space for serving Armed Forces personnel, veterans and their families to gather, socialise and support each other.

The travel card will be available to veterans over aged 16 who are claiming Universal Credit or receiving a DWP benefit in Gloucestershire. It will entitle them to free bus travel throughout Gloucestershire.

Each card can be used for 50 single free trips and even if a veteran gains employment before the trips on the card run out, they can continue to use it. If the veteran is still seeking employment after the card runs out, they will be issued with a new card.

Cllr Mark Hawthorne, leader of Gloucestershire County Council, said: "I'm delighted we are able to introduce this travel card, in partnership with the Department for Work and Pensions. This will help us provide support to veterans while they are seeking employment in Gloucestershire by offering them free bus travel."

Cllr Andrew Gravells, Armed Forces Champion for Gloucestershire, said: "I'm pleased that we are able to offer this travel card to veterans in Gloucestershire. It will provide extra support to veterans seeking employment and underlines the county council's commitment to our Armed Forces."

Jobcentre Plus staff will confirm eligibility and issue the cards to veterans when they make contact at the Jobcentre. The cards cannot be used by anyone else.

Further information on the scheme can be found on the Veterans' Travel Card webpage at [www.gloucestershire.gov.uk/veteranstravelcard](http://www.gloucestershire.gov.uk/veteranstravelcard)

## ➤ SLOPS AVAILABLE

Shipmates are reminded that items such as blazer badges, pin badges, ties, beret badges etc are still available for purchase from Central Office. If you would like to obtain such items, please contact Central Office on the main office number (023 9272 3747).

# ➤ COMING OUT DAY IS STILL RELEVANT

National Coming Out Day was first celebrated in 1988. More than 30 years later, it is still on calendars—but why do we need it?

National Coming Out Day is an annual celebration that takes place on 11 October. It was first celebrated in 1988 to honour the bravery of LGBTQ+ individuals who decide to come out and live openly. Although it started off as an American awareness day, the meaning of National Coming Out Day is still highly relevant to all LGBTQ+ communities and is now more widely celebrated across the world. Coming out is a unique experience for each LGBTQ+ person. It's not a one-time event; many LGBTQ+ individuals who come out to their closest friends and family may later come out at work or school, to their extended family, or to casual acquaintances. For some, coming out is no longer a big deal – it can be a simple matter of correcting someone's assumptions about you or introducing your partner. For others, coming out is still a huge challenge. The very real fear of facing discrimination, bullying, or judgement can cause LGBTQ+ people to stay 'in the closet', struggling with anxiety while they strive to be themselves. Whether you identify as LGBTQ+



or an ally, celebrating National Coming Out Day is an important way to raise the visibility of our communities. It reminds us all of the ongoing struggles LGBTQ+ people face not just for being themselves but also for the joy and pride of being openly LGBTQ+. What can be done to support?

**Celebrate Openness:** Celebrate those who have come out and show your support for their courage and authenticity.

**Share Stories:** Share your own coming-out story or the stories of friends and loved ones on social media or in-person to inspire others.

**Advocate for LGBTQ+ Rights:** Support organisations and initiatives that work toward LGBTQ+ equality, including anti-discrimination laws and policies.

**Attend Awareness Events:** Participate in or organise awareness events, workshops, or discussions in your community or organisation.

**Offer Support:** Be a supportive friend, family member, or ally to individuals who are considering coming out or who have recently come out.

**Fighting With Pride (FWP)** is a military charity, created on the 20th anniversary of the complete lifting of the ban on LGBTQ+ service in the UK – the 'gay ban'.

They are there to support LGBTQ+ veterans, serving personnel and their families, particularly those who were affected by the 'gay ban', ultimately lifted on 12 January 2000. Before then, thousands of LGBTQ+ Service personnel were removed or forced from service and abandoned, after serving with pride. In the years ahead it is their aim to restore the military covenant and bring this community back into the military family. They are working with veteran supporting organisations to build capacity for LGBTQ+ veteran support, to recognise their service and help resolve the challenges they face in their lives beyond military service.

FWP is a 'lived experience' LGBTQ+ charity, supporting those seeking help and a resource for those who seek to help them.

For more information on Fighting With Pride see [www.fightingwithpride.org.uk](http://www.fightingwithpride.org.uk)

# ➤ SERVICE HONOURS PRISONER-OF-WAR VICTIMS OF JAPANESE SHIP LISBON MARU

A Memorial Service for those who died in or were affected by the sinking of the Lisbon Maru will be held on Wednesday 2 October this year at the National Memorial Arboretum.

Following the service last year relatives were invited to organise a structure that would enable events such as this to continue into the long term. Several relatives have been working hard in a Steering Group to set up just such a structure, which will be known as the Lisbon Maru Memorial Association (LiMMA), which will be formally set up in the near future. For this year a Crowdfunder page has been set up seeking donations to help cover the significant cost of organising the service. The link is: [www.crowdfunder.co.uk/p/lisbon-maru-memorial-service-2024](http://www.crowdfunder.co.uk/p/lisbon-maru-memorial-service-2024)

The main aims and objectives of the association are:

- Maintaining the Annual Memorial Service to honour the memory of those affected by the Lisbon Maru tragedy.
- Fundraising for continued activities and future projects: they aim to raise funds to support these memorial services and other initiatives.
- Educational outreach: they are committed to educating future generations about the events

surrounding the Lisbon Maru.

• Preserving POW histories: they are working to compile a comprehensive database of the prisoners of war (POWs) involved in the Lisbon Maru incident, sharing their stories and experiences with the public. LiMMA's monthly online meetings are crucial for planning and organising our activities.

Looking ahead, they may require personal or corporate sponsorship to sustain activities, and are seeking individuals with expertise in fundraising and sponsorship to assist in securing essential funding. If you could help, please contact them if you are interested in contributing: Anthony Jones: [limmauk@outlook.com](mailto:limmauk@outlook.com) and copied to Brian Finch: [bfinch1941@gmail.com](mailto:bfinch1941@gmail.com)

Lisbon Maru was a 1920 Japanese cargo liner converted to an armed troopship during the war. It was torpedoed by an American submarine on 1 October, sinking the following day. On board were 700 Japanese army personnel, who were evacuated; of the 1,816 British POWs from Hong Kong, held in the hold in appalling conditions, around 800 men died; it is claimed that most of the deaths were as a result of them being deliberately trapped in the hold, or being fired on as they tried to escape.

## ► DATE SET FOR HMS ROYAL OAK SERVICE

The HMS Royal Oak 85th Anniversary Memorial Service will be held at The Hard, Portsmouth, on 6 October.

The service commemorates the sinking of the battleship with the loss of 834 souls at Scapa Flow on 14 October 1939.

The event, which will commence at 11.00am, has attracted wide interest, and is expected to be attended by senior Royal Naval Flag officers, an RN Guard, Band, Sea Cadets, various religious denominations, TV and Local media, and Portsmouth City Council (PCC) who will provide support with the overall organisation of the site. PCC are currently in the process of erecting a 2.3 meter obelisk to commemorate the occasion.

RNA and other veterans and maritime organisations are requested to support the event with the display of your standards.

Timings for the event will be published on an order of



**Battleship HMS Royal Oak. Image from the Imperial War Museum collection (IWM (Q 65782))**

service that will be sent to all interested parties. For further information, in the first instance contact Sarah Bewley, RNA Communications Lead, on [cml@rnassoc.org](mailto:cml@rnassoc.org)



**This beautiful, RNA-branded diary, with helpful member-focussed information on the inside pages, is available now. The cost is £6.50, which includes postage. If you would like a copy get your order in quickly – email [ams@rnassoc.org](mailto:ams@rnassoc.org) or call Central Office on 023 9272 3747.**

### OP HONOURS

Twice a year, Operational Honours and Awards lists are published in the UK's official public record, The Gazette. The lists recognise the bravery, commitment and commendable service of personnel in the British Armed Forces. The recipients have all shown outstanding courage and dedication while on operations.

To read more about the lists see <https://tinyurl.com/4hwz4u>

## ► VIDEO EXPLAINS WORK OF SCOTTISH VETERANS CHARITY

Scottish Veterans Residences, a charity founded in Edinburgh in 1910, have released a powerful new mini documentary giving an insight into the impact of their work supporting homeless ex-Servicemen and women. The 11-minute video was produced by Edinburgh-based film-maker Rob Waugh, of Simmerdim, and has been launched to raise awareness of the services offered by SVR across their three sites at Whitefoord House in the capital, Bellrock Close in Glasgow, and Rosendael in Dundee.

The link to video is <https://youtu.be/0jYo6RgTH8A>

SVR provides accommodation and help to veterans who are homeless, at risk of homelessness, or in need, and their work includes tailored one-to-one support, counselling, occupational therapy, an activities programme, and a range of initiatives and partnerships to help them work towards a independent living and successful transition to civilian life.

In the video, the charity's CEO Martin Nadin explained: "Veterans are all volunteers, but they are extraordinary people who have done extraordinary things. Where we can, we should make sure that veterans are never homeless. They served the nation, they did the nation's bidding, and therefore I believe there is a duty to them to make sure they are safe and always accommodated."

"Our vision is for all veterans to live as independently as they are able in a place they are proud to call home." The video includes thought-provoking stories from residents and staff, including veteran James, who put a life of crime and substance misuse

behind him with the assistance of SVR. He said: "This place gave me my first chance, and only chance in life to become the person I should have been. I'm not a mess any more, and I'm not doing anything I shouldn't be doing. I'm not looking over my shoulder any more, I'm just looking forward."

Mark, another veteran, arrived at SVR at his lowest ebb, but emerged from crisis to rebuild his life, and now has his own flat and works for the charity. Looking back at his journey, Mark says: "I got into trouble with the police, which led then to the breakdown in my relationship and the breakdown of my mental health. When I first came here I literally have no recollection of the first few months here."

"My wife, who I still have a great relationship with, had said that before you got there you tried to kill yourself, so they literally saved my life."

Leading the Activities programme at SVR is former Royal Marines PT Darren Morgan, whose work was recognised this year at the Scottish Veterans Awards. He said: "The reason these residents have arrived within SVR is that the wheels have come off and one of my aims is to put those wheels back on."

"For someone who has maybe been cooped up for quite a while, not really having any direction, if they are willing to embark on that activity programme just to get them into the outdoors and get some fresh air again, it makes them realise that life definitely is worth living."

If you are a veteran who needs help, or know of someone who does, contact SVR at [info@svronline.org](mailto:info@svronline.org) or visit [www.svronline.org](http://www.svronline.org)

**3rd May Twickenham Stadium**



# **Army v Navy Rugby**



**Reserve your RNA  
subsidised tickets now**

**Only £43 per person**

**including access to our exclusive  
RNA Bar**



**Our seats are in the Cat1 section M33/34 - an excellent  
position on the centre line.**

**The bar is next-door - no long trek or queues for drinks.**

**The RNA is delighted to announce it is the  
Army v Navy Chosen Charity in 2025!**

**The RNA's Branch Support Fund can help out with transport  
costs (tickets must be purchased via the RNA)**

**[engagement@rnassoc.org](mailto:engagement@rnassoc.org) for more details**



## ➤ FIRST CREW VISIT HMS LEDBURY

One of the Royal Navy's minehunters was in the unusual position of having two ship's companies recently – those who sail her today, and her original crew from the early 1980s (pictured together above). The original crew of HMS Ledbury (pictured right – 40 years ago – and below) met up in Portsmouth from all over the United Kingdom to visit her again for the first time since the Falklands Conflict. The ship was launched in 1981 and this crew saw her from build and commission to conflict, deploying immediately to the Falkland Islands, with only a brief afternoon's refuelling stop at Ascension Island. The former crew enjoyed a tour and chance to chat with the current crew about the changes



that have been made over the years. Everyone agreed that she looks in fantastic condition and that, given half a chance, they could sail her down to the Falkland Islands tomorrow. Bill Oliphant, CEO of the RNA, said: "The RNA are delighted to support activities like this reunion. "The camaraderie amongst these men is

admirable, and a perfect illustration of how service brings people together and creates bonds which last a lifetime." This core group of former HMS Ledbury crew stay in touch and meet up occasionally. They are open to new members, so if you served in HMS Ledbury please get in touch via [cml@rnassoc.org](mailto:cml@rnassoc.org).



## ➤ SHIPMATES TACKLE RUN FOR RNA

Some brave Shipmates are competing in the Great South Run on the 20th October to raise funds for the RNA.

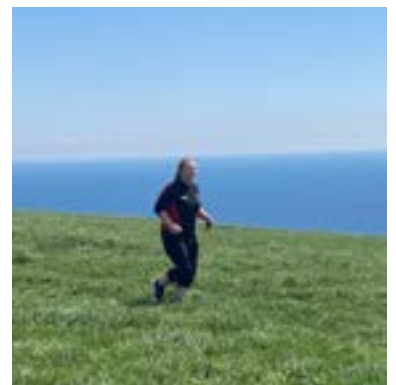
Amongst the RNA runners are Josh Weeks (Member), Dave MacAskill (central office staff) and Sarah Bewley (central office staff) are representing the three RNA team speeds.

Josh (above, right) is a personal trainer and the RNA is delighted that he offered to run for us. His company, The Personnel Project, assists young service leavers to transition into civilian life.

Dave (above, left) has been in training hard and is confident that he'll make it around in one piece. Sarah (below) has dodgy knees and will be doing a brisk walk and hoping to arrive at the finish line before sun-down.

The course is 10 miles, through historic Portsmouth. Why not join the team and run (or walk) for the RNA? Or you can support us by donating or by visiting our cheer-point and offering moral support to the runners.

Email [engagement@rnassoc.org](mailto:engagement@rnassoc.org) for more details.





## ► HASLAR DEVELOPERS SUPPORT RNRMC

Haslar Developments Ltd, the developers undertaking the regeneration of Royal Haslar, the Grade II-listed former Naval hospital in Alverstoke, have announced their campaign to raise £100,000 in aid of the Royal Navy and Royal Marines Charity (RNRMC).

Set in 62 acres of grounds, Royal Haslar overlooks the Solent and is being transformed into a new waterside village. Once complete, Royal Haslar will provide over 550 converted and newly built residential houses and apartments, including market sale and senior living homes, convenience retail, pub/restaurant and leisure facilities, on-site medical centre, business premises and a new Haslar Heritage museum.

With effect from 1 September for each new home sold at Royal Haslar, Haslar Developments will donate £1,000 to RNRMC\*, with an initial target of £100,000 over a two-year period.

RNRMC was established in 2007 as the principal charity of the Royal Navy, and is at the heart of supporting Royal Navy, Royal Marines and Royal Fleet Auxiliary personnel and their families, past, present and future. RNRMC funds projects and facilities that boost morale for those who serve today and also distributes millions of pounds annually to organisations and charities which care for those in the naval community.

Andrew Jameson, RNRMC's Chief Executive said: 'As the principal charity of the Royal Navy, we naturally have ties to the Royal Haslar site and the people it cared for. Located just across the water from the RNRMC offices at Whale Island, the regeneration of this historic former Naval landmark by Haslar Developments Ltd promises to greatly benefit the local community. "With many former serving personnel and their families choosing to settle in Hampshire, synonymous with the home of the Royal Navy, it is fitting that this generous donation from Haslar Developments will give back to the very people the original hospital once served."

For more information on Royal Haslar and the homes available visit [www.royalhaslar.com](http://www.royalhaslar.com)

## ► TOP TIPS FOR TRANSITIONING BETWEEN SCHOOL STAGES

Every parent knows that starting school is not just about buying uniforms and pens, writes *Clare Scherer MBE, Chief Executive Officer of the Naval Children's Charity.*

The beginning of a new school year can be a rollercoaster of emotions, brimming with excitement but also churning feelings of anxiety and uncertainty, both for children and parents.

Here are some top tips that may help the transition run a little smoother.

### **Communication is key:**

One of the main concerns as a parent is how your child will adapt to changes, particularly when they're moving to a new school or transitioning between year groups.

It is a crucial time to open the lines of communication in these situations.

Children may not immediately embrace changes, and it's vital for parents to acknowledge their feelings, listen to their concerns, and provide them with a platform to express their emotions. Try not to become defensive and try to understand their perspective, even if it's challenging.

Offer reassurance that with a little time and patience, you child will adjust and thrive in their new surroundings.

### **Adjustment period:**

When it comes to transitioning between school stages, like moving from nursery to reception or primary to secondary, it's crucial to remember that there's no fixed timeline for settling in. Each child is unique, and their adjustment period may differ significantly.

Don't try to rush this process and give your child the time they need to adapt to the new environment. Some children may seamlessly integrate, while others might take weeks or even months to fully settle in.

### **Helping bashful children shine:**

Parents often worry about how shy children will make friends in a new school setting.

This is where you can take proactive steps, like arranging



playdates with classmates or engaging in school-related social activities. Encouraging children to express their interests and assisting conversations about shared hobbies can also help them form connections. It's essential to let your child go at their own pace.

### **Additional needs:**

These school transitions can be particularly challenging for children with additional needs. It is crucial for you to maintain consistent routines at home to provide a sense of stability. Planning ahead for school routines and discussing potential challenges with teachers can be immensely helpful.

Additionally, exploring local resources, such as Council for Disabled Children, Special Needs Jungle, and BBC Bitesize, can provide valuable information and support during this process. The transition to a new school can be hard, but with patience, open communication, and proactive steps, parents can help their children navigate these changes successfully.

Remember that every child is unique, and the adjustment period varies, so try providing support and understanding in tune with them.

By following these tips and being attuned to your child's needs, you can ensure a smoother transition to the new school year.

Here are some further resources you may find useful:

**Young Minds** – Supporting school transitions

**Place2be** – Getting ready to start Primary school

**Moving up!** – The transition to secondary school

**Barnardo** – 5 things to do with your child before they start school

**All Aboard the Toilet Train** –

Getting your child toilet trained in time for school.

## ➤ TAKE A CHANCE ON THE RNA LOTTERY

Just a reminder that you could win up to £25,000 in the Royal Naval Association Weekly Lottery, which gives supporters the chance to win some wonderful cash prizes as well as backing our rank-blind network of serving, veterans and family members of the Royal Navy.

Once players have registered online they will be entered into the draw every Friday they are in credit (£1 per line, per week).

Captain Bill Oliphant, Chief Executive of the RNA, said: "Our lottery is an exciting way of fundraising for and with at least 50 per cent from each £1 donated supporting the work we do, we will be able to help those in our community who need it most.

"The RNA is free to join but relies on donations to help continue the good work. Since Covid, we've done so much more in the welfare/wellbeing space with our veterans, and having an RNA Lottery allows us to do even more.

"Please do sign up and play our lottery, and if you're not a member – join us!"

Visit [www.RNALottery.co.uk](http://www.RNALottery.co.uk) to sign up.

## ➤ TRAINING OPPORTUNITY

Following the success of Standard Bearer Training at HMS Scotia on 24 August, the RN have kindly offered to do another session on the evening of Wednesday 9 October, for an hour or so, for training in advance of this year's November ceremonies. If you are interested, please let Scottish Area Secretary S/M Karen Elliot know on [kelliot250666@gmail.com](mailto:kelliot250666@gmail.com) by the end of September, with your name and details of your car.

## ➤ SPECIAL INTEREST GROUPS

Shipmates might be interested to become involved with the popular and successful RNA Specialist Interest Groups. Whether you are already a part of a group or are yet to join one we highly recommend you get involved and see what it's all about. For more information on each group please contact the designated leaders, listed in no particular order:

Camping and Caravanning – Ron Shilton: [rnammcc@outlook.com](mailto:rnammcc@outlook.com)

Classic Cars – Mike Burnham: [hon.secretary@rnarayleigh.org](mailto:hon.secretary@rnarayleigh.org)

Cricket – Mark Smith : [Markmiff1962@gmail.com](mailto:Markmiff1962@gmail.com)

Cycling – Craig Fulton: [craig@govguide.co.uk](mailto:craig@govguide.co.uk)

Decorative Ropework – Bob Jones: [oldsalt69@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:oldsalt69@hotmail.co.uk)

Divers – Bill Lawless: [billylawless40@yahoo.com](mailto:billylawless40@yahoo.com)

Fishing – Gus Honeywood/Selwyn Davies/John Stephenson: [rna.fishing.sig@gmail.com](mailto:rna.fishing.sig@gmail.com)

Golf – Colin Dinsdale: [rna.golfers@gmail.com](mailto:rna.golfers@gmail.com)

Model Makers – Gary Daisley: [RNA.Modelmakers@gmail.com](mailto:RNA.Modelmakers@gmail.com)

If you are interested in forming a Special Interest Group please contact [admin@royalnavalassoc.com](mailto:admin@royalnavalassoc.com)

## ➤ MONDAY NIGHT FIRESIDE CHATS

Next Monday's Fireside Chat features Kevin Watkins.

RNA member Kevin has already rowed the Atlantic, but this wasn't enough – he's now preparing to row the Pacific too!

Not only this, but he's raising money

■ For shipmates who are unaware, there is an ongoing series of 'Fireside Chats' on subjects of Naval and wider maritime interest. The presentations are held on Monday evenings commencing at 1830 using 'Zoom'. All are welcome.

Meeting ID – 288 830 5105 Password – Shipmate (case sensitive) Or, click on the link [here](#)

\* Lecture subjects may change at short notice.

\*\* Shipmates please note that the 'Fireside Chat' commences at 1830

for the Royal Naval Association too. So many questions: What drives him? How do you start with a project like this? What does Mrs W think of it all? How can we help?

All these questions, and more, will be answered on Monday night. Join us then!

The programme for the rest of the autumn is still being finalised, and

will be announced through the usual channels – Semaphore Shorts and our RNA Facebook page – so keep an eye out for future Chat.

And if you have an idea for a subject – or perhaps would be able and willing to deliver a Fireside Chat yourself on a subject of interest to shipmates – contact the Comms team on [cml@rnassoc.org](mailto:cml@rnassoc.org)

Date	Presenter	Subject
Mon 9 Sept	Kevin Watkins	Rowing the Oceans
Mon 16 Sept	TBC	TBC
Mon 23 Sept	TBC	TBC
Mon 30 Sept	TBC	TBC

## ► VETERANS GET CHANCE TO REVISIT RALEIGH

The Public Relations office at HMS Raleigh has set up a couple of opportunities for veterans to return to their old stamping ground at Torpoint. PRO Chris Cleary started the initiative of opening the training establishment's gates up to Royal Navy veterans who would like to revisit old haunts and see what the site is achieving today.

The project has been a great success, and there has been a welcome increase in applications from RNA groups in recent times.

Although Chris has now moved on, his successor Claire Axford will be picking up the baton, and there are two more dates on the horizon for those who are interested.

The final events scheduled for this year will take place on 18 October and 8 November.

It is planned that the programme will then start up again in March next year. Any members wishing to apply for either of the 2024 dates should contact Claire at [Claire.Axford624@mod.gov](mailto:Claire.Axford624@mod.gov).

uk but please be aware that the PRO role is currently gapped and Claire is not expected to take up the post until 1 October.

HMS Raleigh fulfils several roles on its 239-acre site in south-east Cornwall. As well as running the ten-week Initial Naval Training course for new recruits, Raleigh is also home to the RN Submarine School, the RN Board and Search School, the Military Training Unit, the RN School of Seamanship and the School of Maritime Survival.

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## ► BRANCH NEWS

### Cardigan and District Branch

On 20 August shipmates and Wrens with their partners and guests gathered at the Cliff Hotel, Gwbert on Sea, to celebrate the 40 years Cardigan and District Branch has been in commission since 10 August 10 1984.

Lunch was presided over by the current Chairman, S/M Ben (Mike) Hodges. The lunch was excellent, and toasts to the King,

the RNA and Absent Shipmates were held at the end – along with an also excellent glass of port. The Branch is now down to nine members from 60 at the commissioning.

A small display of newspaper cuttings and a photobook of the dedication of the Standard 1986 were on a side table. Members' condolences go to those who could not attend for various reasons.



### Aldershot Branch

**Aldershot Branch held a banyan evening on 30 August at Aldershot Football Club, which was well attended (and thoroughly enjoyed) by regulars and newbies alike – around 80 people in all, who were well fed and entertained.**

**The event was free but organisers asked for donations if attendees enjoyed themselves. There was plenty of food for all, cooked by members of the Branch who were not chefs, and they had two musical acts to entertain the guests, who came from several RNA branches, Royal British Legion branches and other groups.**

**There was a raffle with some 20 assorted prizes, ranging from alcohol to books to soft toys.**

### Mansfield and District Branch

This Sunday, 8 September, will see Mansfield Branch's final gazebo visit of the season. Shipmates have attended Armed Forces Day and many fêtes, events and shows throughout the spring and summer months, covering all areas of their district, and are finishing by supporting the Pleasley Pit Trust Open Day – very fitting in an area which has a great mining heritage.

They will be celebrating the 20th anniversary of Commissioning Day with a get-together at the Hostess restaurant on the actual date itself, Tuesday 26 of November. All 20 years have been with their President/Chairman/Life Member S/M Brian Dykes at the helm. A massive BZ to Brian for starting the branch and for his steerage throughout our time.

### Dorchester Branch

Dorchester shipmates enjoyed their branch's annual skittles tournament and charity raffle on 21 June at the Trinity Club in Dorchester.

The event aimed to provide a platform for friendly competition while also highlighting the spirit of giving back and making a positive impact.

Teams from Portland Branch, Dorchester Branch, Portland Fleet Air Arm Association, C/Coy 6 The Rifles Dorchester and Drumgrange Ltd showcased their skittle skills, with one of the Portland Branch teams emerging as the overall winners.

Tony Holmes, Head of Operations at Drumgrange Ltd also presented a £450 sponsorship cheque to S/M Jim Armstrong, Chairman of Dorchester Branch, S/M Pat Knight, Branch Treasurer, and Paul D'Arcy, Vice Chair of W&P Fleet Air Arm Association.

Drumgrange is pleased to demonstrate its support to the Armed Forces community by signing the Armed Forces Corporate Covenant.

This donation and the monies raised on the evening will contribute to the ongoing efforts of Dorchester Branch in serving the community and supporting charitable initiatives. This year's chosen charity is the National Coastguard Institution (NCI) Portland Bill. The Charity Raffle raised £333.





### Bracknell Branch

Although Bracknell Branch has not reported in for a few months, it continues to flourish. Since the beginning of March the Branch Standard has been paraded nine times – at four funerals, in Salisbury Cathedral (for a St George’s Day Concert), at two local events marking the 80th anniversary of the D-Day landings (those at Binfield and Maidenhead), at the Falkland Islands Memorial Chapel at Pangbourne College for the Annual Service of Remembrance, and finally at the Sea Sunday service at Maidstone Branch. Shipmates have had the benefit of hearing from a variety of interesting speakers at their monthly meetings, covering a wide variety of topics including the first Gulf War, ‘World War 1 – RN Embarrassment & Tragedy’, ‘Heritage and Family History’, and a talk from a local MP about Parliament as well as an entertaining quiz. Branch shipmates have also attended local Armed Forces Veterans’ Breakfast Clubs in the area as well as other Area events, including two local Armed

Forces Veterans’ Hubs, run by Royal Berkshire Fire & Rescue Service, at Crowthorne and, more recently, Maidenhead Fire Stations. Shipmates have enjoyed three outings – to Milestones Museum in Basingstoke, the Weald & Downland Living Museum in West Sussex and, most recently, to the Central Office Open Day in Portsmouth. And the sun shone every day..... A St George’s Day Dinner was held on 20 April, and a Collection Day in June at a local Tesco store raised more than £550. Several shipmates enjoyed the Annual Presentation Evening with the local Maidenhead Sea and Royal Marines Cadets Unit (TS Iron Duke) – they noted that the commitment, discipline and achievements of these young people is admirable. On 17 July Bracknell Branch held their first Race Night – a great success which was much enjoyed by all. At the end of the event the Branch had raised £115 – and several shipmates went home richer than they had arrived!



### Forth Valley Branch

Members of Forth Valley Branch paid a visit on 31 August to the Admiral Ramsay Museum at Coldstream. After an 80 mile drive in their hired minibus, and a slight delay when the doors were found to be locked, Will Ramsay, the grandson of Admiral Ramsay, appeared from the big house, and made sure the visitors had a first-class intro to his family history. The museum was exceptional in its information and displays, for which Will gave praise to his wife for being the lead in collating and presentation. Will spent some time with the Forth Valley shipmates and answered many of their questions and agreed to a photo once he had raised the White Ensign for that outside (see right). He then escorted the group around the beautiful garden and another photo opportunity arose as they gathered round his grandfather's statue (pictured above). Branch Chairman Ian Barber presented Will with a cheque for £100 towards the Museum's upkeep, and all shipmates present thanked him for being so generous with his time.



Branch members were taken aback when he informed them that his calling was not to the Senior Service but a Commission in the Royal Scots Dragoon Guards. Will is wearing the red shirt in the pictures.



### Stocksbridge and Deepcar Branch

The newly installed RNA board for Stocksbridge and Deepcar Branch at Stocksbridge Park Steels FC. This board represents a significant step in enhancing community visibility and support for local initiatives. Shipmates are pleased with the positive reactions and feedback. Come on branches - Central Office can help you with design - there's no reason why we can't see these gorgeous boards all over the world!

### York Branch

A York war hero who was presented with his Victoria Cross by Queen Victoria herself was remembered at a service in the city attended by members of York Branch. At the age of 24 Bombardier Thomas Wilkinson of the Royal Marine Artillery was decorated when he displayed conspicuous courage and gallantry during the Crimean War, placing sandbags to repair damage around the advanced battery he was in at Sevastopol while under heavy enemy fire. Thomas was one of the first 62 men to be presented with the new award in June 1857 at Hyde Park in London. He was also awarded the French Legion d'Honneur. He died in September 1887 at the age of 56 and was buried in a public grave at York Cemetery. York RNA and RMA held a service at Bdr Wilkinson's grave on 2 June to remember him.



**Portsea and Portsmouth Branch**

Portsea and Portsmouth Branch held their annual barbecue at the Rose in June pub in Milton, and as per usual they welcomed as guests some of the staff and residents from Admiral Jellicoe House in the Milton/Eastney area of the city – the veterans’ care home is the Branch’s chosen charity. Also in attendance as was S/M Fred Flood, Area 3 Vice President, and Branch President Vice Admiral John McAnally.

Even a downpour could not dampen spirits as they moved into the lounge to avoid the deluge.

On the Sunday there was a good turn-out from branch members at the Royal Marines Association-led Fort Cumberland Memorial Service, held at the RM Memorial Gardens at Eastney.

Eight Marines lost their life in a Luftwaffe attack at Fort Cumberland in August 1940. The service was led by RMA Portsmouth Secretary Andy Williams and the Rev Godfrey Hillier (whom the branch hopes to have recruited to be a branch member...)

Pictured above and below left are guests, including S/M Fred Flood and staff and residents from Admiral Jellicoe House.

Pictured on this page are AJH guests including Fred Flood.

Pictured left are S/MS Trevor Martin, Craig Beetlestone, Alex Blincow and Branch Chairman Tom Frank.

Pictured top left are Standard Bearers S/MS Mike Berry and Clive Sutton.





**Rushden and District Branch**

Rushden & District members joined forces with the Royal Navy recruitment team and colleagues from Northamptonshire emergency services at the Emergency Services and Armed Forces event at Chester House, near Rushden. More than 1,000 people attended

the event, and many of them explored the branch's RNA promotional stand and their new fundraiser – Battleships. S/M Michael Thompson, Branch Chairman, explained that lots of parents played Battleships as a child, and the subject proved an excellent opportunity to engage with people

of all ages and promote the great work of the Association. Pictured above are S/Ms Judith Thompson and Dene Goff at the Branch's promotional stand, while below is Branch Chairman S/M Michael Thompson and Welfare Officer S/M Dene Goff with the Royal Navy recruitment team.

**Wansbeck and District Branch**

On 5 July Wansbeck Branch celebrated their 42nd anniversary, having been formed at Ashington in 1982. On 6 July 17 members and guests enjoyed a celebratory three-course meal at the Half Moon in Stakeford, Northumberland – an excellent meal enjoyed by all. Shipmates had the usual toasts prior to the meal, and to round off the day there was a raffle with some excellent prizes. Some of the Branch's Associate Members are also former members of the Royal Regiment of Fusiliers, part of which was once Royal Northumberland Fusiliers until their amalgamation into the RRF in 1969. Following this event they are now looking to plan their Branch Trafalgar Night next month, hopefully on the 21st, which this year would be their Branch meeting night anyway. On 13 July Branch members attended a race night at Z Company, Fox Barracks in Cramlington, organised by the Royal Regiment of Fusiliers. More than 50 people attended, and the evening included a fish and chip supper.







### Purley Branch

Members of Purley Branch RNA enjoyed a day out on HMS Belfast in the Pool of London.

This visit took place on 11 July and proved a popular activity, as 21 shipmates made the short trip north from the suburbs. The group shared this visit with members of the Fellowship of Naval Men and The Fulham and Chelsea Division of the HMS Ganges Association.

Some had visited before, but for others their first time, and to mark the occasion they had a joint photograph taken as they got onto the walkway (see above).

Once on board they seemed to split up and get merrily lost whilst enjoying the ship visit. There being a few ex matelots amongst the group, they were able to give their various groups a running commentary as most of what they saw, they had worked with on ships they served in during the 1970s and 1980s – not much appeared to have changed!

Branch Chairman S/M Jack'o Jack admits to forgetting his age, not being the young man he once was, going down the ladders face first, as they used to! He's getting his nose reset next week and getting fitted for dentures soon after... not really, but he had a few close calls!

Other members of the group seemed to see just about all there was access to, whilst one member wouldn't leave the ship till he'd found the rum issue store...

At the end of their visit it was agreed that a most enjoyable time had been had by all. Having left the ship they made their way to the Pommeliers Rest, a nearby pub for lunch, after which they headed home.

Pictured below are S/M Jack'o Jack with Barry Chubb and Ken Atkinson (Fellowship of Naval Men); left is S/M Peter Bowen, and top left is Ken Atkinson with S/Ms Mary and Liam Troy, of Purley Branch.





### Maidstone Branch

Maidstone Branch hosted a single service for both the Area 2 Sea Service and their own Sea Service on 28 July. Shipmates from across the Area, and neighbouring Areas 5 and 6, joined Maidstone members in parading standards as the Sea Cadet Band from TS Brilliant, based in Royal Tunbridge Wells, entertained everybody with their rousing music.

Sea Cadets from Maidstone's own unit, TS Scott, members of HMS President and Area shipmates marched the short parade route returning past the dais where Cdr Laura Harrison, VR, took the salute.

Cdr Harrison and the Mayor of Maidstone, Cllr John Perry, accompanied by Area chairman shipmate Steve Susans, Maidstone chairman shipmate Gerry Brown and shipmate Dennis Potter from Chatham Branch, inspected the assembled shipmates (*pictured above right*).

The 'Bish', Revd Ruth Peet from Aylesford church in Kent, led the Drumhead Service, and all were in fine voice as they sang the Naval Hymn and thanked the Lord for the fine



weather.

Following the service, they moved into the Civil Service Club where the tot was taken.

Presentations were made to the Mayor and Cdr Harrison, and Revd Ruth Peet accepted honorary membership of the Maidstone branch.

Following the presentations all present once again gathered under the mast for sunset.

This event was partly sponsored by Kent County Council and they all enjoyed a fine buffet and social evening courtesy of the Civil Service Sports and Social Club, catching up with shipmates old and new, spinning dits and generally keeping the bar staff busy.

### Tyne Branch

Shipmate Ron Cunningham celebrated his 100th birthday on 25 July.

S/M Ron transferred to Tyne just prior to lockdown in 2020, having moved to North Shields from Bournemouth to be closer to his family. He is a Life Member of the RNA, a Life Vice-President of Ferndown and District (his previous Branch) and being a veteran of D-Day, Ron was awarded the Legion d'Honneur, the highest French order of merit.

Ron also served during the Battle of the Atlantic.

Shipmates from Tyne Branch were delighted to help Ron's family celebrate this special day at the surprise party held at Christ Church in North Shields on the afternoon of his birthday.

His grandson brought Ron to the Church to hear the peal of the bells which were being rung in his honour – alongside his family, shipmates formed up as a guard of honour for him at the church door and he joined them for the first photo of the day. They were joined by Cdr Ed McNaught DL (representing the Lord Lieutenant of Tyne & Wear), Lt Cdr Paul Ladislaus from HMS Calliope and Steve Cox, Chair of North Tyneside Council. Branch Chairman S/M Knocker Tony White presented Ron with a photo album of Ron's time with Tyne from the Branch and, more importantly, Ron's treasured barograph, which the Branch had arranged to have repaired.

A letter from Eric Donjon (French Consul in NE England) was read out on

his behalf by S/M Roslyn Hastie-Murray (NCM 11) who then presented Ron with a bottle of Pussers Gunpowder Rum and a special RNA card from Capt Bill Oliphant on behalf of the Royal Naval Association, with thanks and appreciation.



After receiving his card from King Charles III and Queen Camilla, Ron opened it in front of everyone, and it is now in pride of place in his home.

Ron said he was "completely overwhelmed by the huge surprise", and he was so pleased to see so many of his friends and family.

Ron sends his thanks and appreciation to everyone who sent him greetings, cards and gifts – he has received over 100 cards.

It was a lovely occasion; Ron thoroughly enjoyed his get-together with his family from around the U.K. and Australia.



## St Neots Branch

Pictured (top right) are staff from the Coffee Shop that kindly save small jam pots for S/M Maureen Ridley, of St Neots Branch.

"I use these as they hold just a tot of rum," said Maureen. "This has been very popular at times when we issue tots and members feel they cannot partake as they are driving.

"I always say 'no return, no refill'. They take their tots home with them and always return the pot for refill!

"The Coffee Shop were delighted with the Thank You card from the Branch."

On Saturday 17 August members of the Branch helped shipmate Dick Wood celebrate his 100th birthday.



A number of members from St Neots Branch – including 100-year-old S/M David Berry – were invited to Dick's family party in Sandy. S/M Lt Cdr Derek Francis, a serving officer based at RAF Wyton and also a member of the Branch, presented Dick with a bottle of Pussers Rum, and S/M Keith Ridley presented Dick with his Life Membership.

And centenarians were prominent again when the Branch held their monthly lunch on 21 August at the Three Horseshoes, Graveley. Among those attending were the two senior members of the Branch, S/Ms Dick Wood and David Berry. They were certainly not short of appetite! But that was not enough for the folk of St Neots; after the lunch Secretary S/M Tony Webley and S/M Derek Francis took Dick and David to visit another 100-year-old member, S/M Bob Patten, who lives in St Neots, to join him for a tot of rum. As you can see from the picture (right) it was very much enjoyed – and there is 300 years of history at that one table.



## ➤ KOREAN WAR VETERAN ROWS FOR CHARITY

A 91-year-old Royal Navy Korean War veteran rowed with today's sailors around Portsmouth Harbour in his latest effort to fight Alzheimer's disease.

One day after his birthday, retired officer Charles Wylie climbed into a boat with two serving Royal Navy Atlantic rowers to glide for a couple of miles past the warships alongside in port.

The distance might have been relatively short, but Portsmouth is one of the busiest harbours in the UK – and Charles hadn't rowed since the early days of his Royal Navy career 70 years ago. But once on the water with Lt Cdr Hugo Mitchell-Heggs, a veteran of the HMS Oardacious Royal Navy team which rowed in the Talisker Atlantic Challenge, and Lt Cdr Nic Hall, who is hoping to complete the same race this winter, Charles said: "It just came back naturally" and pulling a few strokes "made me feel 31 not 91" as he and his shipmates brought the specially-designed ocean rowing boat back to the Navy's sailing centre at HMS Excellent after an hour on the water.

"I miss the sea so I was in my element out there." Charles, who lives near Wickham, in Hampshire, celebrated his 91st birthday with a 'jump for joy', a tandem parachute jump with the Army's Red Devils, which raised more than £23,000 for Alzheimer's Research – his wife of 65 years, Jean, has been struggling with dementia for the past decade.

The couple vowed when Charles retired from the Navy after a 39-year career in 1987 to "have fun for the rest of our lives together".

Nearly four decades on, they continue to live by that mantra. "I count my blessings that at my age, I am still fit and healthy and have the ability to do something like this,"



said Charles.

"My wife brought up our children – being in the Navy I was away mostly – and she taught me to be a thoroughly decent person.

"Dementia is a dreadful affliction, and while there is nothing anyone can do now for Jean, hopefully in the future there will be."

Charles joined the Royal Navy in the late 1940s as a boy and left four decades later at the age of 54 as a commander, having served in 28 ships and 34 submarines, including command of a frigate and a flotilla of reservist minesweepers.

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# OBITUARIES

## Shipmate Reg Etherington

Tyne Branch has reported with great sadness the death of their shipmate Reg Etherington BEM, former CPO OMECH1, at the age of 92.

Reg Etherington was born on 10 December 1931 and brought up in Surrey, training as an electrician at Technical College before joining the Royal Navy at the age of 21 on National Service in 1952, based at HMS Collingwood.

Ships on which Reg served during his 27 years of service with the Royal Navy included HMS Hampshire, HMS Fleetwood and HMS Lynx, HMS Bristol and HMS Newcastle.

Probably one of the most significant periods of his life took place in the early 1970s, involving Bristol.

Whilst standing by Bristol on the Tyne in 1971, Reg met his future wife Jean during a dance at the Mayfair Dance Hall, and they married in 1977.

They had four children, 13 grandchildren and many great grandchildren.

Reg's time in Bristol included an incident which is best described by his friend and shipmate, Alan McCarthy: "Reg stood by HMS Bristol - D23. She was built by Swan Hunter on the Tyne and sailed to Portsmouth on 17 December 1972.

"I joined her on 18 December 1972



where I got to know Reg.

'The ship was at anchor in 1974 at Milford Haven, preparing to sail for Hamburg, when fire broke out. The fire started in the Boiler Room/Steam Turbine Room. The fire was ferocious and we were at a 40-degree list, with tugs deployed to keep us from going further over; the civilian Fire Brigade was also involved.

"Under Reg's leadership, we got the ship back to Portsmouth under Olympus gas turbines. We entered Portsmouth Harbour dressed in Number 8s (not Number 1s) due to the ship being filthy and the crew being tired, having had very little sleep for four days and four nights.

"Reg had a saying – 'strive for 100 per cent in any job you are doing and if you

can't get that, 99.9% will have to do. Something that I have never forgotten."

Following this incident, Reg was awarded the British Empire Medal (BEM) for bravery by the Queen. This was presented to him by Admiral Jannion while he was at sea (*pictured*). When Reg left the Royal Navy he joined the Merchant Navy for six years and travelled the world, his wife Jean often flying out to join him.

After he retired from the Merchant Navy aged 55, Reg joined the Arriva transport company as a bus driver and worked up to age 70, which saw him notably become the oldest bus driver in the North East of England.

He became the recruitment face of Arriva with his face emblazoned on the sides of the buses. He would receive thank you letters and presents from passengers who took note of his gentlemanly manners as he would get off the bus to help the 'elderly' on and off the bus.

Reg, who died on 2 August, can best be described as a true English gentleman, kind and caring – he was a quiet man who did not like to stand out in a crowd. He was very modest about his achievements in life and very well-liked by everyone who knew him.

He will be greatly missed by shipmates at Tyne Branch.

## Shipmate Tom Oates

The HMS/M Resolution Association has reported the death of POCK Tom Oates, who served on Resolution Port's 1st commission.

Tom passed away peacefully in hospital in Armadale, West Australia, on 5 August, at the age of 83, and his funeral took place on 15th August.

The service was live streamed and is available to be viewed on Seasons Funeral website.

Tom was born in Liverpool on 7 December 1940, the eldest of five siblings. He was the adventurous one, always on the move, and that translated very much into his adult life. So too did his outlook on life – his primary school report card stated that Tom was "well-mannered, always presentable, and always punctual."

He left school at an early age, and joined the Royal Navy at 19, seeing service during the Malaya Conflict and during the Cold War, serving for much of the time as a Cook on board submarines.

Another milestone in Tom's life came when he attended a dance in Glasgow, and spotted the woman who was to become his wife across the dance floor. Jean – known as Phil – spotted Tom too, and they went on to date before getting married at a church in Glasgow on 26 August 1962.

Just days later Tom was back to sea, his parting words to his new wife being along the lines of 'you can make your way out to Singapore, can't you?'



Phil did, and that was the start of a life of travel together – the couple, who went on to have three children, spent three years in the Far East before returning to the UK and living in Plymouth, Portsmouth, Helensburgh and Rosyth over the next few years.

Tom was naturally a good cook (he was renowned for his Manchester tarts, though his penchant for roll mops was not so popular with the family) though Phil recalls that he seemed to use every pot and pan available in the kitchen.

Another major change for the family came when they emigrated to Perth, Australia, in 1980, and although Tom tried working as a civilian chef (in a prison for two years) the call of the sea was too strong, and he went on to serve a further 20 years, this time with the Merchant Navy.

His final job was two years as a civilian bus driver.

**Our picture is of HMS Resolution on trials in the Atlantic in September 1967. Image from the Imperial War Museum collection (IWM (A 35105)).**

## ➤ COMMITTAL OF ASHES AT SEA

The Maritime Volunteer Service (MVS) is a uniformed national charity that performs a number of functions – one of which is the dignified committal and scattering of ashes to the sea.

The MVS was formed after the disbandment of the Royal Naval Auxiliary Service in 1994, and there are now over 400 members in more than 30 units around the coasts and estuaries of the UK.

Each unit meets weekly for training which is put into practice afloat using a range of craft including RIBs, launches, dories and purpose-made rescue craft.

Their primary aims are to provide training in nautical skills, a support emergency service and assistance at maritime events, and their Patron is Prince Michael of Kent.

The first unit was created in Portsmouth, and it is here that the 34ft Nelson launch Arkwright is used to commit ashes to the sea – and the service is not only relevant to former Royal Navy sailors, as there is also demand from Merchant Navy veterans and those who either have connections to the above, or are just enthusiasts who loved life on or by the water.

The officers and crew are uniformed and have carried out many committals of ashes services for various denominations over the years, including Buddhists and Hindus. They do not carry a cleric or padre, but the Skipper is authorised to conduct services at sea and the service celebrant has many years' experiences conducting services of this kind.

**Four sailors guide the flag-draped body of a shipmate into the sea during a traditional burial on the quarterdeck of cruiser HMS Black Prince during World War 2. The chaplain conducting the service is reading a passage. The image is from the Imperial War Museum collection (Image: IWM (ABS 483))**

If required, more than one person's ashes can be committed in a dedicated service.

The personalised service itself (if you wish to have one) lasts around 15-20 minutes and can be an updated version of the traditional burial service at sea, or a humanitarian service, or it can represent the particular religious and philosophical beliefs of the departed. The religious or non-religious service is uniquely written in memoriam to the loved one whose ashes are committed to the sea.

Where possible they include information about the ships, Merchant or Royal Navy, yachts, and maritime organisations that the departed served with, or were connected to, during their earthly life in addition to any land-based careers.

Family wishes regarding words and prayers they want included to the service will be accounted for. They normally include in the service of choice the famous sea poem 'Sea Fever' by John Masefield, but this can be changed as required, perhaps by including appropriate poem(s) of your choice in memory of the departed.

The MVS provide a framed certificate signed by the officer who captains the boat in memoriam of the occasion and an additional signed certificate – more if requested. The certificate shows the exact latitude and longitude where the committal was carried out, which can be input to Google to show the location. A hard copy of the service is provided, and is also available as soft copy.

There is no age restriction on Arkwright; all (including youngsters) wear life jackets. There is a limit of seven passengers on Arkwright (excluding the crew).

The captain and crew have extensive experience of the nautical world – many being ex-Royal Navy and

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ex-Merchant Navy personnel.

The family, or those acting on behalf of the departed, don't have to get any permissions to allow the committal – the MVS have guidance and permissions to the areas where committals can be conducted in the Solent region. They normally suggest the area close to where the Mary Rose foundered in the Spithead anchorage area, if a specific area has not been requested, which is not too far from shore – about mid-way between Portsmouth Harbour and the Isle of Wight.

However, they can deposit ashes at requested latitude and longitude locations almost anywhere in the Solent area, out as far as the Nab Tower to the east and the Needles lighthouse to the west, and south-west of the Isle of Wight between Bembridge and Shanklin. The committal service itself is usually about 15 -20 minutes, though it can be longer depending upon your requirements for the service, such as songs, or a eulogy . The journey out and back, including the service, can be as little as just over an hour or longer of course – upwards of four hours if the location requested is the Nab Tower, for example, or eight hours if it is to the Needles.

The family and friends party will be able to step directly on board Arkwright from a landing stage in Camber Docks, Old Portsmouth, which backs onto a car park, and detailed directions will be given as required on how to get to the Camber Docks area where the party boards. The satnav post code is PO1 2JL.

The MVS operates seven days a week between 10am and 4pm. As a charity, they do not charge for this service but can accept minimum donations of £200 for services they provide on the occasion; however, should you request the location of the committal further than two miles from the harbour, the minimum donation requested will increase to correspond with the additional fuel costs. For example, the Nab Tower is 11.2 miles from Portsmouth Harbour.

If the donation made is by cheque, or cash, or by BACS, they would be delighted if the provider of the donation (paying tax) would fill out a Gift Aid form on the day (just address details) that enables the MVS to apply for Gift Aid.

Cheques should be made out to 'MVS PORTSMOUTH'; details of their account will be sent if you choose to donate by BACS.

It is worth noting that the Skipper and crew are all volunteers and pay their own expenses. The donation is used entirely to support the training and service objectives of MVS Portsmouth, for example, the maintenance of boats, engines, insurance, mooring fees, training, and the marshalling of nautical events at sea – and, of course, continuing this service of committal of ashes at sea.

If a written receipt is required on their headed notepaper for the donation, this can be provided on request.

The crematorium provides a certificate with ashes urn – the MVS just need to confirm they have seen it; they don't need to keep it.



Footwear and dress for the boat should be 'sensible', that is no high-heeled shoes, no long dresses. For the ladies, jeans, slacks, or trousers are recommended.

Pictures and videos can be taken at any time during the committal event, and the crew will be happy to take pictures if requested.

Some committal parties have brought wine or spirits to toast the departed – if that is the wish of your party feel welcome to do so.

The MVS need a minimum of three weeks' notice, though this might extend given the day requested falls within a busy committed period of activity.

As you might expect, the day and timing agreed is ultimately dependent upon the weather and sea conditions – they maintain a constant weather watch and will advise in advance if they do not recommend proceeding as planned.

You will be advised no later than 36 to 48 hours prior, or before, if they decide the weather is unsuitable for them to proceed with the committal. A standard screw-top plastic urn is usually supplied after the cremation service, and this can be brought so the ashes can be scattered in the sea.

If sea and wind conditions make scattering from a standard urn hazardous, they will recommend puncturing the urn so it can sink with respect – they will prepare the urn.

It can otherwise be a scattering tube, a biodegradable 'pillow shaped' urn, or it can be in a casket. If it's a casket the undertakers should provide such weighted and holed as required, however, to ensure it does meet the necessary specifications, such arrangements should be discussed with the MVS before the casket is prepared.

An appropriate flag – such as a Union Jack, a St George's cross, a Merchant Navy Flag or a Royal Navy White Ensign, as deemed appropriate – will be displayed on the boat in respect to your departed loved one.

The MVS craft will circle the area immediately following the service allowing time for private prayers and loving thoughts, and to cast into the sea, as wanted, flowers or biodegradable wreaths, the playing of music and such like.

For further information on this service email **committalofashes.mvs@gmail.com**

For more on the organisation and its work, see **<https://mvsportsmouth.wordpress.com/>**

Image of a painting by A Bublikov of the sinking of HMS Vittoria. See 1 September. Image © IWM (Q 69744)



## ► SEPTEMBER SWINGING THE LAMP

**'Swinging the Lamp' events are drawn, by permission, from the Naval history reference book *The Royal Navy Day by Day*, written by Honorary Shipmate Lawrie Phillips and published by The History Press ([www.thehistorypress.co.uk](http://www.thehistorypress.co.uk)). The book is issued to all HM Ships and Establishments and is 'probably one of the most well-thumbed and valued books that Captains of HM Ships possess'. It is currently available online for around £45 (search ISBN number 978-0750982665)**

### 1 September 1919

Admiralty V-class destroyer HMS Vittoria, converted to a minelayer, was lying at anchor off the island of Seiskari in Kaporsky Bay, near Leningrad (now St Petersburg) in the Gulf of Finland when she was torpedoed and sunk by the 1916 Bolshevik Bars-class submarine Pantera on 1 September 1919. The submarine was part of a British force aiding the White Russians against the Bolsheviks in the Russian Civil War (1918-25). Eight sailors died in the attack. Vittoria's sister ship HMS Verulam sank three days later in the same area, probably the victim of a mine. Both wrecks were formally handed over to Finland in December the same year, but when salvaging was attempted in

1925 it was found that both destroyers had been broken in two and were thus unable to be repaired. The wreck of Vittoria was rediscovered by Russian divers 11 years ago in 30 metres of water; the site is now in Russian territorial waters.

### 2 September 1944

Veteran paddle steamer HMS Glen Avon foundered during a gale in Seine Bay with the loss of 15 crew on 2 September 1944. The ship was built by Ailsa Shipbuilders in Scotland in 1912 as an excursion ferry for service in the Bristol Channel, but was taken up by the Admiralty during World War 1 as a minesweeper. Having returned to commercial work in 1919 she was called up once again on the outbreak of World War 2, and was involved in Operation Dynamo in 1940, making two trips to Dunkirk to rescue more than 880 troops from the advancing German army. She undertook a minesweeping role in the first part of the war but in 1942 was switched to anti-aircraft duties in 1942 and sometimes acted as a target ship for aircrew practising dropping torpedoes off the Fife coast. The 510-ton steamer was moored off Normandy when she sank in a storm at the beginning of September 1944.

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**An elderly woman is hoisted aboard American freighter SS City of Flint after spending the night in a lifeboat following the sinking of SS Athenia. See September 3. Image from the Imperial War Museum collection (IWM (HU 51008))**

### **September 3 1939**

The Donaldson liner SS Athenia was torpedoed at 1945 by U-boat in the North-West Approaches, sinking the following day – the first British merchant vessel lost in World War 2. Built at Fairfields in Glasgow in the early 1920s, the 13,500-ton ship had left Glasgow bound for Montreal on 1 September, calling at Liverpool and Belfast en route. When she set out into the Atlantic she had just over 1,100 passengers on board, mainly from Canada, the United States and the UK, though she also carried around 500 Jewish refugees. Her crew numbered 315. Although the outbreak of war appeared imminent she was not prevented from sailing, and on the late afternoon of 3 September she was around 70 miles south of Rockall and apparently darkened and following a zig-zag course – Britain had officially declared war on Germany earlier that day – when she was spotted by U-30. The submarine's captain, Oberleutnant Fritz-Julius Lemp, claimed he believed the ship, which he said was outside normal shipping lanes, to be a trooper or to have military connection, and after tracking her for three hours he fired two torpedoes, one of which struck close to the liner's engine room. Her distress calls were answered by a number of ships, chiefly destroyers HMS Electra and Escort, Swedish yacht Southern Cross, American freighter City of Flint and Norwegian cargo vessel

Knute Nelson, who between them picked up more than 980 passengers and crew. The attack and subsequent rescue caused the death of almost 100 passengers and 19 crew (some died when lifeboats were smashed by a ship's propeller, by falling from a ship or when a lifeboat capsized). The ship remained afloat until the following morning, when it sank stern-first. Almost 30 of the victims were American citizens, and the news alarmed German commanders who feared the incident might draw the Americans into the war on the side of the Allies. Consequently, German involvement in the attack was denied, and suggestions floated that it might have been a British mine, or even a British attack to sway American public favour. The truth was only revealed at the Nuremberg Trials of 1946. The liner was the second Donaldson ship named Athenia that was sunk by a U-boat – a 1903-vintage liner sank after a similar attack off the north of Ireland in 1917. U-30 undertook eight war patrols before being retired with persistent engine problems; it was used as a training boat in the Baltic for the remainder of the war and scuttled in May 1945 to avoid being handed over to the Allies. The wreck was raised in 1948 for scrap.

### **4 September 1915**

Submarine HMS E7 was caught in nets in the Dardanelles and attacked with depth charges on 4

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September 1915. The 800-ton submarine, built at Chatham in 1912, started World War 1 operating out of Harwich but later transferred to the Gallipoli Campaign, where she rapidly built a reputation for herself. On 30 June 1915 she departed on a 24-day patrol in the Sea of Marmara during which she sank more than a dozen ships and damaged many more. She set out on patrol again on 2 September, but two days later she became entangled in anti-submarine nets off Nagara Point in the Dardanelles north of Canakkale. Ottoman forces attempted to destroy the submarine by detonating mines on the netting but failed to cause much damage. The captain of UB-14 and a member of his crew heard of the attempts and rowed over to lend a hand. Using a plumb-line they located E7 and dropped an Ottoman mine with an adapted fuse, which exploded close to the hull of E7. At that time the captain of the British submarine ordered his crew of 26 to come to the surface, where they scrambled off having set scuttling charges, while Ottoman guns shelled the submarine – between the various explosives the submarine eventually sank. No lives were lost; the British sailors were taken prisoner.

#### **5 September 1914**

HMS Ark Royal was launched at Blyth Shipbuilding on 5 September 1914 – the first ship designed and built to carry aircraft, in her case seaplanes. The ship was bought by the Royal Navy shortly after her keel was laid down as a collier at Blyth Shipbuilders, allowing a complete redesign to be carried out before much work had been done on her, using lessons learned from the pre-war conversion of cruiser HMS Hermes. Her superstructure, funnel and machinery were shifted

aft, allowing space for a working deck forward and the creation of a rudimentary hangar and workshop space, accessed by use of a sliding hatch and two steam cranes that could either lift the aircraft onto the deck or straight onto the surface of the water. The deck was never intended to be a true flight deck; seaplanes equipped with floats (of which she could carry five) would warm up their engines there before being lowered into the water for take off, while more conventional wheeled aircraft (of which she carried up to four) could take off but had to return ashore to land. As she proved too slow to work with the Grand Fleet she was sent off to the Mediterranean in early 1915 to support the Gallipoli Campaign through the use of reconnaissance and spotter planes, arriving on station on 17 February 1915. She lost her first aircraft on 5 March when a Sopwith 807's propeller was shattered at 3,000ft; the two-man aircrew was recovered by HMS Usk. The 7,570-ton ship launched numerous reconnaissance flights during the campaign, including the Anzac landings on 25 April, though enemy submarine activity forced her to move to a safer anchorage at Imbros the following month, where she acted as a depot ship for all seaplanes in the area while still supporting the Gallipoli campaign with her own aircraft. She continued to move from island to island over the following two years or so, continuing with her dual role of depot ship and operational carrier in the Dardanelles region and the wider Aegean Sea. When the war ended Ark Royal was switched to a support role for British forces in the Russian Civil War, operating in the Black Sea and Caspian Sea, then in British Somaliland in 1920. Reduced to reserve in 1923, Ark Royal was recommissioned in

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**HMS Ark Royal. See 5 September. Image from the Imperial War Museum collection (Q 75600)**





1930 as a training ship, taking part in early catapult trials. Renamed HMS Pegasus in December 1934, she switched from training to transport at the start of World War 2, then became a prototype fighter catapult ship in late 1940 for around six months before reverting to a training role. By now something of an anachronism, the carrier was repurposed as an accommodation ship in 1944 and was sold in October 1946 to be converted to the merchant ship Anita 1 at Antwerp. Sadly, her new owners could not afford to complete her conversion, and having been seized by creditors in 1949 she was sold for scrap and broken up the following year. Ark Royal was, and remains, the only aircraft carrier designed to carry a sail – she had a small sail on her mizzen mast to help keep her head into the wind.

#### **6 September 1940**

Flower-class corvette HMS Godetia I sank on 6 September 1940 following a collision with freighter SS Marsa three miles off Altacarry Head in Northern Ireland, thus ending one of the briefer ship histories of World War 2. The corvette was launched at the Smiths Dock Co yard on Teesside on 8 May 1940 and commissioned on 15 July the same year. Her first action was to leave exercises off Tobermory in Scotland in early August and join the latter stages of Convoy SLF 40 from Freetown to various British west coast ports. On 25 August she picked up a handful of survivors from British freighter Empire Merlin and tanker Athelcrest, scuttling the latter by gunfire. On 6 September, less than two months after commissioning, the 925-ton Godetia – pennant number K72 – collided with merchant ship Marsa 3 in the North Channel

between Scotland and Northern Ireland; 33 Royal Navy sailors died in the incident, and one man from Marsa. The freighter was herself sunk in the North Atlantic after being bombed by German He177 aircraft on 21 November 1943 – just one of her crew of 48 was lost in the sinking.

#### **7 September 1923**

Sloop HMS Espiegle was sold in Bombay on 7 September 1923, at which time she was the last operational Royal Navy ship afloat and in commission to carry a figurehead, besides HMS Implacable. Espiegle was one of the six-strong Cadmus class of screw steel sloops built at the turn of the 20th Century – amongst the last Victorian-style colonial gunboats to be built for the Royal Navy, and pretty much obsolete as soon as they hit the water. Equipped with both a full barquentine-style rig for sails as well as a steam engine driving twin screws, the 1,100-ton ship – which never actually carried sails – was launched at Sheerness on 8 December 1900, and was immediately put to work on the task for which she was designed, that is, peacetime patrols of British colonies around the globe. Espiegle started off on the China Station, at one stage keeping an eye on British interests in the Russo-Japanese War of 1904-5. At the outbreak of war in 1914 she was on the East Indies Station and took part in operations at the Shatt-al-Arab waterway, which forms the modern boundary between Iran and Iraq, where she was protecting British oil interests – her shallow draft allowed her to operate on the Tigris River and engage Ottoman forces. She was not, however, built for warfighting and maintained a fairly low profile for the remainder of the war. Afterwards she

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An RAF Cierva C30A autogyro of the type that operated from HMS Furious during trials in September 1935. See 9 September. Image from the Imperial War Museum collection (IWM CH 1426)

continued to patrol the Gulf, the Arabian Sea and the Bay of Bengal, ranging from Myanmar (Burma) to Tanzania and from Iraq to Ceylon. She secured to the North Wall in Bombay Dockyard for the final time on 27 April 1923, and was sold on 17 November the same year.

### 8 September 1914

Armed merchant cruiser HMS Oceanic was lost on a notorious reef off the island of Foula, in Northern Scotland, on 8 September 1914. The warship began life as a White Star Line ocean liner, and from her completion at Harland and Wolff in Belfast on 26 August 1899 until 1901 she was the largest ship in the world. The 17,300-ton ship was built for luxury rather than speed, and could accommodate more than 1,700 passengers – 410 in First Class, 300 Second Class and 1,000 Third Class, along with a crew of almost 350. Much celebrated by the British public – her launch was watched by a reported 50,000 people – the ship left Liverpool for New York on her maiden voyage on 26 August 1899, making the trip in just over six days at an average speed of 19.5 knots, which became her standard speed as anything faster set up an unpleasant vibration throughout her slender hull. While assuming the title of Queen of the Seas and winning a place in the hearts of people either side of the Atlantic it did not all go swimmingly; on 7 August 1901 she collided with a smaller steamer, the Kincora, in thick fog, sinking her with the loss of seven lives. In May 1912, by now operating an express service out of Southampton, Oceanic picked up three bodies in a lifeboat from Titanic, burying the victims at

sea. With the outbreak of war, Oceanic was quickly taken up by the Admiralty – she had, like numerous other merchant ships at the time, been built with Naval conversion in mind, and under a system of annual grants that made her eligible for war service under the White Ensign. Accordingly, the ship was fitted with 4.7in guns and the passenger liner RMS Oceanic commissioned as armed merchant cruiser HMS Oceanic on 8 August 1914. Her military career, sadly, would be brief. She left Southampton on 25 August to patrol the seas around Shetland searching for shipping with German connections, and it would appear that an unhappy combination of poor navigation and confusion over who was actually in charge of the ship led to disaster. Having sailed from Scapa Flow, a wildly inaccurate fix on the evening of 7 September meant the bridge team assumed they were well to the south west of the island of Foula whereas in reality the ship was directly east of land and heading for the dangerous reef known as the Shaalds of Foula. Oceanic's Naval captain had just retired after a night watch, leaving her Commander, the ship's master in her liner days, in charge. Cdr Henry Smith RNR, who had commanded the ship for two years, believed it would be safer to operate such a large ship in more open waters and accordingly ordered that she be steered west and out to sea, according to her position on the charts, though in reality that put her on a course which would take her between Foula and the deadly reefs. Her Naval captain, William Slayter, noticing the change of course, returned to the bridge to overrule Smith, but in changing course he inadvertently steered her towards the Shaalds.

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On the morning of 8 September, in fine weather and on a flat calm sea, Oceanic struck the reef. An Aberdeen trawler was the first to answer her distress call and attempted to pull her clear but to no avail, and in any case Oceanic had suffered extensive damage to her hull. The ship's crew were successfully evacuated, with the last man leaving her being First Officer Charles Lightoller, who had survived the sinking of the Titanic two years previously. The wreck was destroyed in a violent storm just two weeks after she was wrecked. The disaster was hushed up at the time – it was thought that the loss of the first Allied passenger ship to be lost in the war, and through blunders rather than enemy action, would not do much or morale.

### **9 September 1935**

The first landing of a Service rotary wing aircraft on one of His Majesty's ships happened on 9 September 1935. The Cierva C30A autogyro aircraft was flown onto and off from aircraft carrier HMS Furious in the Channel by Wg Cdr Reggie Brie of the RAF, who had been a test and demonstration pilot for the Cierva company since 1930. The autogyro was a production version of a series of developments of a machine invented by Italian Juan de la Cierva and which first flew in 1933, combining the thrust of a propeller-driven

aircraft with an unpowered, free-spinning rotor which provides the lift normally provided by fixed wings. It was built under licence by three nations – the UK (where it was built by Avro as the C30A), France and Germany. There was space for two people on board (one being the pilot), and could fly at 110mph. Avro built 78 Cierva C30As, of which 12 were ordered by the RAF and designated Avro 671 Rota Mk1s (the Service later obtained further civilian-owned aircraft during the war). One was fitted with floats as a Sea Rota in early 1935, and later that year was flown onto Furious by Wg Cdr Brie, an RAF reservist who took an early interest in autogyros and spent most of the 1930s in a mix of trials, test flights, delivery and pleasure flights and a series of informal challenges against other aircraft. HMS Furious, meanwhile, was an early aircraft carrier, essentially a battlecruiser with a hangar and flight deck built during World War 1 but far from perfect – at first her flight deck only covered her foredeck, leaving pilots with a tricky landing in attempting to avoid her superstructure. A second flight deck aft, added in 1917, was blighted by air turbulence, preventing its use, so in the 1920s she was rebuilt with a full-length flight deck and officially became an aircraft carrier in 1925, though her main role was as a Naval aircraft trials and training ship, displacing 27,000 tons

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**HMS Ariadne. See 10 September. Image from the Imperial War Museum collection (© Crown copyright reproduced under delegated authority from The Keeper of Public Records. Image: IWM (HU 129733))**



and capable of 30 knots. Wg Cdr Brie's landing and take-off in a Cierva C30A in September 1935 was the first achieved on a ship at sea, though the Spanish Navy had flown a similar model onto and away from their seaplane tender Dedalo while the ship was anchored in Valencia harbour the previous year. The Royal Navy never operated the autogyro, and the RAF gave theirs up in 1945 when they were sold to civilian owners.

HMS Furious operated throughout World War 2 as both an aircraft ferry, supplying fighters at vital stages of the war in the Mediterranean as well as acting as a conventional strike carrier on occasions, including raids on Norway and Finland, and the raids on the German battleship Tirpitz in 1944. But by this time the ship was showing her age, and she was placed in reserve on 15 September 1944. After being used for blast tests, she was sold for scrap in 1948 and broken up six years later. Rounding the story off, Reggie Brie returned to the RAF during World War 2, working on developments in autogyro and helicopter technology in close liaison with the Americans, in 1944 becoming the first pilot to land a prototype two-seat Sikorsky R-4 (the world's first mass-produced helicopter) on a ship's flight deck. Post-war he had leading roles at both BEA Helicopters and Wetland Helicopters, and died in his 90s in 1989.

### 10 September 1971

'Broad-beamed' Leander-class frigate HMS Ariadne was launched at Yarrow's, Scotstoun, on 10 September 1971 – the last of the 26 frigates of the class to be completed, and the last steam-powered surface warship built for the Royal Navy. Displacing 3,000 tons, the ship was completed in 1973 and her first tasking was fishery protection patrols in the Second Cod War with Iceland. The following year she was part of a task group which undertook a nine-month deployment to Australia via the Far East, returning via South Africa. Other tasks in the following years included the Beira Patrol, Belize Guardship, West Indies Guardship, NATO Standing Force duties, the Dartmouth Training Squadron, and in 1990 she steamed 32,000 miles with HM Ships Bristol and Minerva on the global Endeavour '90 deployment. She was decommissioned in May 1992 and sold to Chile, in whose navy she served as General Baquedano for more than six years. She was sunk as a target in 2004. Of course, technically-speaking there are still steamships serving in the Royal Navy fleet today, as all nuclear submarines are driven by steam – the nuclear reactors are essentially high-tech kettles which drive steam turbines.



**Artist's impression of a diver from HMS X24 cutting through anti-submarine nets using a pneumatic cutter. See 11 September. Image from the Imperial War Museum collection: IWM (Art.IWM ART LD 5508)**

### 11 September 1944

Midget submarine X24 laid two charges under a German floating dock at Laksevåg, Bergen, in Norway which broke its back on 11 September 1944 during Operation Heckle. The 30-ton boat, one of a class of 20, was designed to be towed to the operation zone by a standard submarine, often an S- or T-class, after which her crew of four would take over from the passage crew and carry out the operation. Heckle was a repeat of an earlier attack, Op Guidance, which was also carried out by X24. She had been towed to the coast of Norway by HMS Sceptre, escorted by HMS Alecto, arriving on 15 April and making her way into the busy harbour at Bergen, where her crew dropped both two-ton explosive charges carried attached to the submarine's flanks. Unfortunately, because of wrong intelligence and incorrect charts, the charges were dropped beneath a large collier moored alongside the dock, which was sunk, but the dock received only minor damage. The Germans believed the ship was sunk by saboteurs, and did not suspect a submarine attack, making it easier to plan a repeat attempt - the dock was regarded as a vital target as it was not only used for the maintenance of U-boats but was also believed capable of dealing with vessels as large as battleships, including Tirpitz. So four months later X24, with the same CO as in April but a different crew, set off again with Sceptre and Alecto. The passage took three days in foul weather, and this time the midget submarine

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made her attack in daylight, requiring her to once again, at periscope depth, dodge through the numerous ships, ferries and small boats that thronged the harbour. This time the charges were dropped in the correct spot and the blast sank the floating dock in two pieces as well as two small vessels, while X24 again escaped undetected and was towed back to Shetland, reaching harbour on the morning of 13 September. X24 was hulked at the end of the war but survived (the only one of her class to do so), and is now on display at the Royal Navy Submarine Museum at Gosport.

### **12 September 2008**

Veteran assault ship HMS Intrepid left Portsmouth Harbour on the evening of 12 September 2008 on her way to the breakers yard. The ship was one of a pair of Fearless-class Landing Platform Docks (LPDs), the first vessels built as amphibious assault ships for the Royal Navy with the specific purpose of transporting, landing and supporting troops – normally Royal Marines – and acting as a floating HQ. Intrepid was built on Clydebank by John Brown and launched on 25 June 1964, the last ship built for the Royal Navy by that yard. One of the first tasks of the newly-commissioned 12,300-ton ship was

to help cover the British withdrawal from Aden in 1967, while the following year saw her on patrol in the Gulf to discourage the Iranians from occupying the Greater and Lesser Tunbs islands, close to the strategically-vital Strait of Hormuz. Having become the first Royal Navy vessel equipped with satellite communications equipment in 1969, the following November she spent a period as the command and control ship for relief operations in East Pakistan (now Bangladesh) and West Bengal in India in the wake of the devastating Bhola cyclone, the worst such storm ever recorded and responsible for at least 300,000 deaths. Intrepid went into reserve in the latter part of the 1970s, being reactivated in 1979 when Fearless went into refit. In 1981 it was announced that Intrepid and her sister Fearless were to be decommissioned, but the decision was reversed the following year, and on the outbreak of the Falklands Conflict the ship was rapidly brought back into service and played a key role in the South Atlantic, landing troops at San Carlos Water in May 1982. She also accommodated a number of Argentine prisoners of war, and the formal surrender by Argentina was signed aboard the assault ship. Refitted in 1984-5, she served with the Dartmouth Training Squadron

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**HMS Intrepid in the early 1980s. See 12 September. Image from the Imperial War Museum collection (© Crown copyright reproduced under delegated authority from The Keeper of Public Records. IWM (FKD 585))**



**HMS Firedrake. See 14 September. Image from the Imperial War Museum collection (Image: © IWM (FL 10040))**

for five years while also providing sea training for Marine Engineer Artificer Apprentices from HMS Sultan. HMS Fearless finished another major refit in late 1990 but Intrepid's material state was too poor to permit a similar programme for her, so she was laid up in Portsmouth Harbour and used to supply Fearless with spares. The LPD was formally decommissioned in 1999 and she left Portsmouth late on 12 September 2008 bound for Liverpool and a recycling process which would meet international environmental standards.

### **13 September 1747**

HMS Dover captured the French Renommée off Ushant on 13 September 1747 – a crucial action, as the French ship provided much food for thought for British naval architects. French naval shipbuilding, as with many rival powers, was heavily influenced by foreign and military policy, and in the case of France resources tended to be put towards the army rather than navy, as the greatest threat came from the land rather than the sea. The British took a different view, and with an empire to support as well as the homeland to protect, a strong navy was vital. However, there were bursts of well-funded activity from the French that proved inspirational to their naval architects, resulting in major steps forward in design and build in stark contrast to the rather ordinary and sometimes poorly-built vessels that were produced when the navy was starved of resources. Ironically, in the mid-18th Century, French officials were touring European shipyards (including English ones) looking for inspiration, and what they saw was reported back, resulting in the building of La Renommée, a radically different

frigate of 30 guns that was lower and leaner than anything else at the time, with a foremast further forward than usual and a reduced, angled tumblehome. When she was launched at Brest in December 1744 she was immediately put to the test and managed a speed of 15 knots in high winds, which meant she could outrun practically anything else on the high seas. Having picked the brains of their rivals, the French now had a prize of significant value on their hands as her reputation spread. The 930-ton ship had a busy schedule, crossing and recrossing the Atlantic capturing ships, supporting military ventures and scouting for the French fleet, occasionally getting into a spot which sheer speed normally allowed her to escape. Her career with the French ended on 13 September 1747 (some reports put the date as 27 September) when, having taken a battering from the 26-gun British ship HMS Amazon (herself a captured modern French frigate) off Ushant, she was engaged by the 44-gun HMS Dover and forced to capitulate after an engagement lasting almost three hours. The damaged ship was taken back to Plymouth where she was examined and repaired, then put back into service as HMS Renown. Her value as a warship was proven by the number of refits and rebuilds she underwent, though she was more heavily armed and lost some of her speed along the way. Her best qualities (she was by no means superior all round – she apparently rolled quite markedly and was a wet ship) were influential in Admiralty thinking on the design of new classes of frigates including Sir Robert Seppings' 19th Century Leda class (a development of the more heavily-armed French Hebe-class, itself influenced by La Renommée). After a service

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life of more than 25 years she deemed unfit for further deployment and broken up in May 1771. For a more detailed history of La Renommée, see David Stockman's booklet 'La Renommée: Story of a French Frigate' (on Scribd at [www.scribd.com/document/735809640/La-Renommee-Booklet-Story-of-a-French-Frigate](http://www.scribd.com/document/735809640/La-Renommee-Booklet-Story-of-a-French-Frigate)), and from which some of this information was drawn).

#### **14 September 1939**

HM Ships Faulknor, Firedrake and Foxhound sank U-39 off the Hebrides on 14 September 1939 – the first U-boat to be sunk in World War 2. Not surprisingly U-39 was on her first war patrol, and had already been attacked once before she was sunk. She also came very close to making a devastating contribution to the German war effort when she almost sank aircraft carrier HMS Ark Royal. The submarine, which displaced 1,135 tons when submerged and was commissioned at the end of 1938, had left Wilhelmshaven on 19 August 1939 as part of the 6th U-boat Flotilla as Germany prepared for war. Initially operating in the North Sea, she circumnavigated the British Isles before being attacked with depth charges by an unknown vessel on 10 September, which she escaped by diving to more than 100 metres. Four days later she launched two torpedoes at Ark Royal off Rockall, north of Ireland, but as the big ship took evasive action both torpedoes exploded short of their target. Destroyers Faulknor, Firedrake and Foxhound were straight onto the enemy submarine with depth charges, and the U-boat was quickly forced to the surface. The three warships, all F-class destroyers built in the 1930s, picked up her crew of 44 between them and watched the submarine sink for a final time. The three British warships had widely differing careers. Faulknor, the Yarrow-built flotilla leader, was known as 'the hardest worked destroyer in the Fleet', winning 11 Battle Honours and taking part in campaigns in Norway, the Mediterranean, the Arctic, the Atlantic, Malta Convoys and the invasions of Sicily, Italy and Normandy before being scrapped in 1946; Firedrake, from the Parsons yard on Wallsend, was sunk in the Atlantic in December 1942 on convoy duty with the loss of more than 100 of her ship's company, while Foxhound, which took part in the hunt for Bismarck in 1941, was transferred to the Royal Canadian Navy in early 1944 as HMCS Qu'Appelle, seeing action in the Atlantic before ferrying Canadian troops home at the end of the war and acting as a training ship. She was sold for scrap in 1947.

#### **15 September 1967**

The first operational front-line hovercraft ordered by the Royal Navy was commissioned on 15 September 1967 at HMS Daedalus at Lee-on-the-Solent, near Gosport, starting a long-term commitment to what would eventually become known in military circles as an LCAC (Landing Craft (Air Cushion)). Many inventors, scientists and engineers had dabble with air-cushion vehicles

over the decades, with Swedes, Britons, Russians, Austrians, Finns and Americans all establishing certain elements of the principle from as far back as 1716. However, none of the proposed 'surface gliders', 'glidemobiles', 'Levacars' – a Ford initiative – or 'aeromobiles' cracked the all-terrain question. The first practical hovercraft was the brainchild of Sir Christopher Cockerell, who struggled for years, spending large amounts of his own money, to prove his theory that a craft lifted above a surface by air had almost no drag and therefore the potential for much higher speeds than conventional craft. Cockerell's breakthrough was the use of a heavy-duty flexible skirt to create a ring of high-pressure airflow which trapped the air within the ring, thereby needing far less power to lift the machine (further pioneering development of the skirt was advanced by Royal Navy officer Latimer Needham). Despite his successes there was little interest from commercial firms, and the military – which couldn't decide if it was a boat (for the Navy), a plane (for the RAF) or neither (for the Army) – insisted the work was kept secret. It remained hidden from public view until developments in Europe threatened to catch up with Cockerell's work, at which point a full-sized prototype – the SR-N1 (Saunders-Roe Nautical 1) – was ordered. Unveiled on 11 June 1959, the SR-N1 could carry four men at almost 30mph, and within weeks, on 25 July, it had made a successful Channel crossing from Calais to Dover, piloted by test pilot and former Royal Navy aviator Cdr Peter 'Sheepy' Lamb. As hovercraft development gathered pace in the UK and overseas, the military began to take more interest, and in 1962 set up the InterService Hovercraft Trials Unit (IHTU) at HMS Daedalus in Lee-on-the-Solent, where the various marks of SR-N1 were trialled as well as SR-N2s, SR-N3s, SR-N5s and SR-N6s. The Royal Navy established their own Hovercraft Trial Unit (Far East) in Singapore in August 1964 using two craft that were later used in the Indonesia-Malaysia Confrontation. Incidentally, Saunders-Roe SR-N5 hovercraft were licensed or used by the American military, and the Bell-built SK-5 proved effective as patrol craft during the Vietnam War. The first fully Royal Naval hovercraft, SRN 027 (a converted civilian SR-N6 given the Naval designation XV859) was part of Naval Party 8902, which had been formed in June 1967 the same year. A week after commissioning, the hovercraft was on an auxiliary leaving Portsmouth for the Falklands, where it proved its worth in ideal conditions (for a hovercraft) – boggy, rocky ground, shallow waters and hundreds of islands with many beaches but few sheltered harbours or landing stages. Its first operational flight in the South Atlantic under the guidance of Cdr Vernon Philips was from Port Stanley to Green Patch on Berkeley Sound, to the north-west of Stanley, on 2 November, and the following year the hovercraft made a 600-mile circumnavigation of the Falklands. It wasn't all smooth running – at the end of 1971, while on a test run, a large wave smashed the craft's windscreen, requiring an emergency beaching and overnight running repairs in cold, foul conditions before the

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machine could be flown carefully back to base. However, it proved more useful than a hovercraft and was well-received by the islands' garrison. Hovercraft are still very much a part of the Royal Navy today, with Royal Marines of 539 Assault Squadron, part of 3 Commando Brigade, operating LCACs in the shape of the Griffon 2000TD.

#### **16 September 1939**

Cruiser minelayer HMS Adventure was withdrawn on completion of the first phase of minelaying of the Channel mine barrage, stretching from the Goodwin Sands to Dunkirk. Adventure was deemed too difficult to manoeuvre in the confines of Dover Harbour, so later phases of the operation were completed by three other ships in November.

#### **17 September 1942**

Minesweeping trawler HMT Waterfly was bombed and sunk by German aircraft off Dungeness on 17 September 1942. The 390-ton ship was built at Beverley in Yorkshire in 1931 as the Walpole, and commissioned into the Royal Navy in September 1939 under the name Waterfly as a destroyer in the Fleet already had the name Walpole. She was initially tasked to sweep for

mines and patrol in the Scapa Flow area but was later moved to the Dover Patrol. It was during this period that she met her end, though the exact circumstances are not clear; some reports indicate she was sweeping in the Channel when she was attacked by German aircraft, and a bomb struck a magazine which caused a violent explosion, sinking the ship. It is believed only one of her crew of 16 survived.

#### **18 September 1951**

Amphion-class submarines HMS Acheron and Auriga visited London for ten days to mark the 50th anniversary of the RN Submarine Service. Acheron was launched at Chatham on 25 March 1947 and commissioned just over a year later; she displaced around 1,600 tons and was capable of little over 18 knots when surfaced, 8 knots submerged. The diesel-electric boat had a place in the Queen's Coronation Fleet Review of 1953 at Spithead, and at one point was the subject of a maritime search after she failed to report in February 1956 – it turned out the vessel was fine but her radio communications had been disrupted by a major geomagnetic storm. Acheron was broken up in 1972. Sister boat Auriga was also at the Coronation review, and was scrapped three years after Acheron. The visit to London

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**An experimental armoured SR-N5 hovercraft approaches HMS Ajax at sea off Singapore. The craft was carrying the Commander Far East Fleet, Vice Admiral Sir Frank Twiss, to embark for a patrol in the frigate, and delivering mail. See 15 September. Image from the Imperial War Museum collection (Image: © IWM (A 34926))**



in 1951 was (and still remains) a rarity; the two boats had berths in Shadwell Basin in East London and the visit – which proved particularly popular with children, who were allowed to explore the submarines – tied in with the Festival of Britain, which took place across the UK over the summer and early autumn of 1951.

### **19 September 1777**

HMS Alert captured the American Lexington 45 miles south-west of Ushant. The action proved the value of a brave, determined crew as the ten-gun Royal Navy sloop took on a more heavily-armed opponent during the American War of Independence. Alert was launched as a cutter in Dover in 1777 and converted to a sloop later that year. On 19 September that same year Alert spotted and engaged with the American 16-gun brigantine USS Lexington, originally built as the Wild Duck but purchased by the Thirteen Colonies in 1776. Lexington had sailed for France in February 1777 and in company with two other ships captured or sank a number of ships off the Irish coast. She spent the summer in the Brittany fishing port of Morlaix, trapped by British warships, but under diplomatic pressure the French ordered the American ship out of port on 12 September. Lexington sailed the following morning but was hampered by light winds. On the morning of 19 September Alert attacked Lexington, and after two

hours fighting the British ship had suffered damage to her rigging, allowing Lexington to slip away. But the British sailors were able to make running repairs and Alert caught back up with Lexington, which by this time was very low on ammunition. Alert resumed firing at the American ship; after around 90 minutes Lexington struck her colours having lost seven sailors killed and 11 injured, while two British sailors were killed and three wounded. Alert's Royal Navy career was brief; she was captured in the Channel by the French 32-gun frigate Junon in July 1778, and foundered the following year off the American coast.

### **20 September 1941**

Gibraltar Harbour was successfully attacked by Italian submarine Scire on 20 September 1941. The 860-ton Adua-class boat was completed a year before the war at La Spezia. Early in the war Scire underwent conversion to deploy human torpedoes or 'chariots', and set out with the new weapon to attack warships at Gibraltar. She arrived at the Strait of Gibraltar on 29 September 1940 but was ordered back to base at La Spezia as the Royal Navy's Force H had left the Rock for operations in the Atlantic. A second attempt met with no success – three chariots were used, but the nearest the Italians came to success was one of the trio getting stuck 100 metres from battleship HMS Barham. The plan was dusted off again a year later when

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**The officers and ratings of HM Trawler Waterfly on board their ship in October 1941. Less than a year later the ship had been sunk and many of the men pictured, including her Commanding Officer A/T Lt Cdr Ritchie Hawes, died in the sinking. See 17 September. Image from the Imperial War Museum collection (Image: © IWM (A 5885))**



A Sea Fury flying from HMS Unicorn in December 1950 off Korea. See 22 September. Image from the Imperial War Museum collection (Image: © IWM (A 31809))



Scire slipped into the Bay of Gibraltar and launched the chariots again on 20 September 1941, this time with significant success. One tanker, the 2,450-ton Fiona Shell, was sunk and two more – 17,000-ton RFA Denbyshire and 10,900-ton MS Durham were both damaged. Scire had an even more notable foray against the Royal Navy at the end of the year when she launched chariots off Alexandria; they got into the harbour and sank battleships HMS Queen Elizabeth and Valiant in shallow water, also damaging destroyer HMS Jervis and tanker MS Sagona. Her last action was an attempt to launch chariots in Haifa Bay off what is now Israel on 10 August 1942 during which she was attacked by armed trawler HMT Islay – depth charges brought the boat briefly to the surface before it sank in 32 metres of water.

### 21 September 1811

Boats from Royal Navy warships captured two Danish privateers in Wingo Sound/Vinga Sand off Gothenburg during the so-called 'Gunboat War' which saw the Danes harassing British shipping in the Baltic to little effect. This activity was the result of the British attempt to stamp out Danish convoys, which had been used by rival powers as a flag of convenience and to cover illegal activities. The Danes (and Prussia) joined Russia and Sweden in a 'League of Armed Neutrality' in 1800 which prompted the British to send a powerful fleet (numbering more than 50 ships, from first rates to fireships) under Admiral Sir Hyde Parker and Vice Admiral Horatio Nelson. The fleet arrived in

Copenhagen in April 1801 and just about destroyed the Danish fleet, helping to demolish the League at the same time. The status quo was not maintained for long. By 1807 French military ambitions led to Britain demanding Denmark hand over its fleet to avoid it being operated under the Tricolore; when the Danes refused the British burned Copenhagen, killing thousands of citizens, forcing the Danes to surrender their ships. With their fleet gone and Copenhagen smouldering, the Danes resorted to a form of guerilla warfare, suing privateers and pirates to attack British merchant ships in the Baltic whenever possible, though the Scandinavians paid a heavy price in terms of lost shipping and never seriously disrupted maritime trade.

### 22 September 1951

HMS Unicorn crossed the 38th Parallel on the west coast of the Korean peninsula and shelled North Korean positions at Choppeki Point (Changsan-got) with her 4in guns – the first and so far only time that a British aircraft carrier has carried out shore bombardment using its own main armament. Something of an all-rounder, making her a thoroughly useful ship, Unicorn was conceived before World War 2 when planners at the Admiralty realised that the concept of a depot ship, as used with submarines and destroyers, could also prove effective with aircraft carriers. The vision was for a ship that could handle the entire range of Royal Navy aircraft both as a conventional aircraft carrier (which also opened the possibility of it acting as an aircraft ferry) and as a full-service repair and

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maintenance facility. She was the first of her kind anywhere in the world, and proved so valuable that two more light aircraft carriers – Pioneer and Perseus – were converted to carry out similar roles while still under construction. Displacing more than 20,000 tons at deep load, Unicorn was fitted with catapult and arrestor gear, two hangars and two lifts; she also had a self-propelled lighter to transfer unserviceable aircraft from ship-to-ship or ashore. Unicorn had a ship's company of some 1,200 men, and was capable of handling around 35 operational aircraft at any one time. She was launched at Harland and Wolff's Belfast yard on 20 November 1941, and her first tasking once commissioned showed her unique capabilities – she escorted Convoy MKF 15 to Gibraltar in May 1943 carrying a ferry load of RAF Bristol Beaufighters, but protecting the flotilla with her own flights of Supermarine Seafire fighters and Fairey Swordfish torpedo bombers. She was part of carrier Force V which was a vital element of Operation Avalanche, the Allied landings at Salerno, flying dozens of operational missions, but the Seafires had problems landing in light winds on all the carriers; when she returned to the UK in September she carried a full load of damaged fighters for repair. At that point she was fully configured for her repair role, which had been held in abeyance when she was completed, and she steamed for the Far East as part of the reinforcement group for the Far East Fleet at Trincomalee, delivering aircraft to RNAS Cochin in India en route. While on station Unicorn was also used for training purposes, allowing pilots to carry out deck landing practice. One of her ferry runs as part of the newly-formed British Pacific Fleet in early 1945 saw her take more than 80 aircraft and 120 engines to Australia. Although mainly involved with preparing aircraft in the latter months of the war, she still repair or service more than 100 warplanes between March and May 1945. She was preparing for operations off Japan when the Emperor surrendered, and she spent the next few months transporting men, aircraft and equipment to Australia. She left the region in December 1945 and on arrival in Plymouth was decommissioned and placed in reserve. But

she was back in the Far East three years later, supporting carrier HMS Triumph, and when the Korean War broke out in June 1950 she was in Singapore; the Admiralty immediately tasked her as a replenishment carrier, carrying various aircraft to Royal Navy and Commonwealth ships operating off the Korean peninsula. It was during this period, on 22 September 1951, that she claimed her place in Royal Navy annals by bombarding North Korean coastwatchers at Choepki Point. After a refit in Singapore in late 1951 she resumed her ferry duties and acted on occasion as a reserve flight deck for HMS Ocean, allowing damaged aircraft to land without disrupting strike operations. She also found time on one ferry run to steam full speed to the assistance of merchantman SS Inchkilda, which was under attack from pirates, driving off the brigands by circling the freighter with all her guns brought to bear. Unicorn sailed for home on 15 October 1953, returning to reserve in Plymouth at the end of the year. Plans to upgrade her to handle modern, heavier jets were abandoned because of the cost, so she lay in reserve, designated a ferry carrier, until she was sold for scrap in June 1959, being broken up at Dalmeir and Troon in Scotland the following year.

### **23 September 1846**

Veteran warship HMS Ajax completed her conversion at Blackwall in London on 23 September 1846. She was originally launched at the Perry yard in Blackwall on 2 May 1809 as a 74-gun third rate – a traditional example of the Royal Navy's 'wooden wall' ships of the line. She saw action in the Mediterranean and Channel in 1810-14, but had a low profile in the following decades. In the mid 1840s she was picked for conversion to a screw-driven blockship, and when the process finished in September 1846 she was the first of her kind, having had her copper removed, along with ballast and some of her hull. For the next seven years she undertook coastal patrols as a guardship off Queenstown, now Cobh in the Republic of Ireland. She played a role in the Crimean War of 1853-56, including shore bombardment, before resuming coastal patrol duties off Ireland, this time in the Kingstown area (now Dun Laoghaire). In February

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**HMS Calypso in 1917. See 24 September. Image from the Imperial War Museum collection (Image: © IWM (FL 5363))**





1861 she was prominent in the rescue of many ships caught in a violent storm, during which her master, Capt John Boyd, and five crew were lost; 15 of their shipmates were decorated for their bravery. Ajax ran aground in high winds in December 1863 and was refloated, but her time was up – in February the following year her retirement from patrol was announced, and she was broken up that same year.

#### 24 September 1940

Light cruiser HMS Calypso intercepted the German merchant ship Minden on 24 September 1939 some 330 miles north-west of Cape Wrath. The German crew scuttled their ship before Calypso could capture it. The Caledon-class light cruiser was launched at Hawthorn Leslie's yard on Tyneside on 24 January 1917 and saw service in the Great War, taking a direct hit on her bridge during the Second Battle of Heligoland Bight on 17 November 1917 which killed the entire bridge team including her commanding officer. The ship sealed her place in history in 1922 when she was sent to rescue the Greek royal family after King Constantine was forced to abdicate. Prince Andrew of Greece and Denmark, Constantine's brother, was forced to flee with his family with very few possessions; they were evacuated by Calypso to Brindisi in Italy from where they took the train on to Paris. Amongst the royal refugees, sleeping in a cot made from an orange box, was the future Prince Philip, Duke of Edinburgh. In the opening stages of World War 2 Calypso was on Northern Patrol duties with the 7th Cruiser Squadron, blocking the North Sea between Iceland and Scotland. It was during just such a patrol that she spotted the Minden, which was en route from Rio de Janeiro to Germany and believed to be carrying a valuable cargo, including up to four tons of gold. A month later Calypso was able to capture German merchant ship Konsul Hendrik Fisser off Iceland, and she later took part in the search for German warships Scharnhorst and Gneisenau after they sank armed merchant cruiser HMS Rawalpindi in November 1939. At the start of 1940 Calypso was dispatched to the Alexandria in the Mediterranean, which sealed her fate. Italy declared war on Britain on 10 June, and two days later Calypso became the first Royal Navy warship to be sunk by the Italian

navy in the war when submarine Alpino Bagnolini hit her with a torpedo off Crete while the cruiser was on an anti-shipping patrol. The sinking resulted in the death of 39 sailors; their shipmates were rescued by the destroyer HMS Dainty and returned to Alexandria.

#### 25 September 1945

U-1407, an experimental German Type XVIIIB U-boat, scuttled at Cuxhaven on 5 May 1945, was raised and commissioned into the Royal Navy under the name Meteorite. The boat, built by Blohm und Voss at Hamburg and commissioned on 13 March 1945, was powered by volatile high-test peroxide (HTP) fuel. She was one of three such 420-ton boats completed by the Germans by the end of the war; she never got any further than training and all three were scuttled by their crews (against the orders of their superiors) at the end of the war. At the Potsdam Conference of July 1945 one submarine – U-1406 was allocated to the United States, while the UK claimed U-1407; both were salvaged at that point. U-1407 was taken to Barrow-in-Furness where she was refitted by Vickers using captured German machinery under the supervision of Prof Hellmuth Walter, the pioneering German engineer who designed her propulsion system. She was commissioned into the Royal Navy on 25 September 1945, first as HMS N 25 then as HMS Meteorite. The following year saw a programme of trials guided by Prof Walter and his original team, and while the Admiralty were excited by what they saw, the crews were not so enamoured, regarding the boats as capricious, volatile and difficult to control – she was officially described as “75 per cent safe.” Meteorite was capable of 25 knots submerged, and her fuel offered the possibility of air-independent propulsion as an alternative to nuclear power. Two larger experimental submarines were built – HMS Explorer and HMS Excalibur, which were to be followed by a class of a dozen operational boats. But the nicknames of the two new boats (Exploder and Excruciator) hints at the crews' view of them, and with the United States developing a nuclear reactor that could be used in a submarine, the Royal Navy's dalliance with HTP came to an end. Long before that Meteorite had served her purpose –

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**HMS Chamois. See 26 September. Image from the Imperial War Museum collection (Image: © IWM (Q 38460))**

she was decommissioned in September 1949 and broken up at Barrow soon after.

#### **26 September 1904**

Destroyer HMS Chamois sank herself when she lost a propeller blade in the Gulf of Patras to the west of Greece on 26 September 1904. The thrashing propeller shaft broke the A-bracket and the screw opened up plating in her hull, causing her to founder. Chamois, a three-funnel 30-knotter, was launched at the Palmers yard at Jarrow on the Tyne on 9 November 1896 and entered service a year later. She served with the Channel Fleet but the early opens were not good – she needed repairs for a bent shaft in early 1900. She then transferred to the Mediterranean, and it was in that region that she met her bizarre fate. She was conducting full-power engine trials in the Gulf of Patras, two miles off the coast of Greece when she lost a propeller blade, which unbalanced the rapidly-spinning shaft. The violent vibration caused the A-bracket to tear loose and further damage was caused by the broken propeller, as a result of which she sank by the stern in more than 50 metres of water. All sailors were rescued, but two sustained injuries, and one of them died the following day.

#### **27 September 1941**

The Royal Navy's Navigation School, housed at the Old Naval Academy in Portsmouth Dockyard since New Year 1906, completed its move to Southwick House on Portsdown Hill, where it was commissioned as HMS Dryad. The Old Naval Academy had suffered serious damage during air raids in March 1941.

#### **28 September 1941**

HMS Hyacinth sank Italian submarine Fisalia off Jaffa in the eastern Mediterranean on 28 September 1941. The Flower-class corvette, which proved to be one of the deadliest of her class, was launched at Harland and Wolff in Belfast on 19 August 1940 and commissioned less than two months later. Under the White Ensign she spent

most of the war in the eastern Mediterranean, patrolling the coastline of Palestine and escorting coastal convoys as part of the 10th Corvette Group operating out of Alexandria, as well as taking part in Malta convoys. On 28 September 1941 she spotted the somewhat unfortunate Italian submarine Fisalia – unfortunate because although she had been bombed and depth charged on a number of occasions, sustaining damage, she never hit an enemy ship. On this occasion she was up against a deadly opponent, and Hyacinth pressed home a depth-charge attack late in the evening having found the boat on ASDIC. Hyacinth first reported the encounter as having left the submarine "slightly damaged", but that was later revised when intelligence reports indicated the submarine had sunk with all 46 men on board going down with their boat. Less than a year later, while on escort duties, Hyacinth attacked and captured the Italian submarine Perla, which was subsequently repaired and put back into service by the Greeks as the Matrosos. On 12 September 1943 Hyacinth, in company with Australian minesweeper Wollongong, sank U-617 after the submarine had been damaged by air attack and driven aground – all her crew survived. Later that same year Hyacinth was transferred to the Royal Hellenic Navy and took on the name Apostolis, serving the remainder of the war under the Greek ensign. She was returned to the Royal Navy in 1952 and scrapped the same year.

#### **29 September 1897**

Torpedo boat destroyers HMS Thrasher and HMS Lynx went ashore at Dodman Point, near Mevagissey on the south coast of Cornwall, on 29 September 1897. Thrasher was a Quail-class four-funnel 30-knot destroyer of 420 tons, later reclassified as a B-class ship, built by Laird at Birkenhead on the Mersey and launched on 5 November 1895. Shortly after commissioning, Thrasher took part in the Diamond Jubilee fleet review in June 1897, and two months later she was involved in a collision with cruiser HMS Phaeton in the Channel, killing one of her 63 sailors. Worse

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was to follow later that year when she and Ferret-class destroyer HMS Lynx went aground in thick fog off Dodman Point. The shock of the grounding damaged Thrasher's steam main which ruptured, killing four stokers. Both ships were refloated, but the damage sustained by Thrasher reduced her speed. In early 1902 the ship moved to Malta where she took up the role of tender to the battleship HMS Formidable, and within four months she was in trouble again, colliding with destroyer HMS Coquette and damaging her stern. It was a while before more bad luck befell the ship; in early 1913 she was involved in the search for the missing submarine HMS A7, which had sunk in Whitsand Bay, and during the search her commanding officer caught a chill which was reported to have been the cause of his death. She finished her career in a blaze of glory – as part of the wartime Seventh Flotilla, operating in the North Sea, she spotted German minelaying submarine UC-39 attacking a freighter off Flamborough Head in Yorkshire on 8 February 1917. Thrasher depth-charged the diving U-boat which was forced back to the surface, and the Royal Navy ship continued her attack with gunfire until the U-boat surrendered. 17 Germans and two British prisoners were rescued – seven Germans had died in the attack – but an attempt to tow the boat into port was unsuccessful, and the submarine sank in deep water. Thrasher saw out the war on the Nore Patrol, and was sold for scrap in November 1919.

### **30 September 1940**

Monitor HMS Erebus, along with escort destroyers HMS Garth and HMS Vesper, bombarded Calais in Operation M W on 30 September 1940. Erebus was a World War 1 veteran, having been launched at Harland and Wolff's Govan yard on the Clyde on 19 June 1916, and had one purpose in life – to sit close to the shore and pound targets some 20 miles inland with her twin 15in guns in a single

turret (originally a spare for battlecruiser HMS Furious). The 8,450-ton warship proved capable in her trials (the previous Marshal Ney class had turned out to be a major disappointment) and saw service before the Armistice, pounding German naval forces in Ostend and Zeebrugge. In 1919 she was part of the Royal Navy force in the White Sea and Baltic Sea supporting the White Russians in the Russian Civil War, then served as a training platform until a major refit in 1938-9. At the start of World War 2 she served in home waters, which is why she found herself targeting Calais and Dunkirk in late September and early October 1940 as part of efforts to disrupt any potential German invasion. In 1942 she was earmarked to provide anti-air defences at Trincomalee in Ceylon (now Sri Lanka), where she suffered some damage in air raids in April that year. She was present for the Madagascar landings in September 1942 but naval gunfire support was not required. She returned to the UK briefly at the end of the year, then deployed to the Mediterranean to support the Allied landings in Sicily and the Italian mainland itself over the summer of 1943. Returning to the UK for repairs and a minor refit, Erebus was then deployed as part of the bombardment force for the D-Day landings, taking up position off Utah beach on 6 June to support American troops going ashore by striking at gun emplacements at Barfleur and La Pernelle before spending the next two months ranging along the coast, including off Caen and Le Havre, providing gunfire support wherever required. At one point a gun barrel needed replacing as a shell exploded prematurely. In October 1944 she supported the British assault on Walcheren on the Dutch coast, which turned out to be her last meaningful contribution to the war. After VJ Day she was reduced to reserve status, then put up for disposal; she was broken up in January 1947.

**HMS Erebus as seen from the battleship HMS Rodney in 1940. See 30 September. Image from the Imperial War Museum Collection: © IWM (A 197)**





## 2024 -25

<b>21 Sept</b>	4 Area meeting, Redruth and Camborne
<b>12 Oct</b>	World Uckers Championships, Royal Maritime Hotel, Portsmouth
<b>25-27 Oct</b>	Scottish Area 4th Quarter Meeting and Trafalgar Night celebration
<b>Autumn (tbc)</b>	D-Day Memorials Cycle Event in Normandy
<b>10 Nov</b>	Remembrance Ceremony at the Cenotaph, London
<b>18 Jan 2025</b>	4 Area AGM, Dorchester
<b>28 Mar 2025</b>	CONA meeting, Portsmouth
<b>3 May 2025</b>	Army v Navy rugby match, Twickenham
<b>15-18 May 2025</b>	Londonderry Battle of the Atlantic 80th Anniversary Commemoration
<b>17 May 2025</b>	4 Area meeting, St Austell
<b>20-22 June 2025</b>	RNA75 Annual Conference 2025, Portsmouth
<b>22 Oct 2025</b>	Fisherman's Friends Concert, Portsmouth

Please check the **RNA website** and the RN **Shipmates.co.uk** website for a list of further reunions



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UK  
FINANCE

**Rosyth and West Fife Branch** are hosting the RNA Scottish Area 4th Quarterly Meeting 2024 and the Trafalgar Night over the weekend of Friday 25 to Sunday 27 October.

The venue will be the City Hotel, Dunfermline. Shown below are details of the room rates at the hotel, should anyone wish to get booked for what's sure to be a fabulous weekend. Please note, the City Hotel does not have a lift. There is a car park behind the Hotel (cost c. £4 per day). Numbers will be restricted to the capacity of the hotel, particularly for the Trafalgar Night Dinner, and names will be on a strict first-come, first-served basis. Please confirm to the Area Vice-Chairman, Mark Firth

(email [markfirth3@sky.com](mailto:markfirth3@sky.com)) once you've booked and/or if you plan to attend and perhaps make other accommodation arrangements) so that Mark can keep a track of attendees.

The plan for the weekend is:

- Friday evening – meet and greet
- Saturday afternoon – Area Meeting, 12:30 for 13:00 to 15:00 (approx)
- Saturday evening – Trafalgar Night Dinner (price now confirmed as £25 per head – grant funding received to be able to subsidise the cost.)
- Sunday morning – Church Service, Dunfermline Abbey



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## Room Rates 2024

- Rates increase by £5 per night on Fridays and £10 per night on Saturdays
- All rates increase by £10 per night from 1<sup>st</sup> June to 1<sup>st</sup> October
- The below rates are our base rates. For up-to-date pricing, please telephone our Reservations Team on 01383 722538 or visit our website at [www.thecityhotel.com](http://www.thecityhotel.com)

Room Type	Floor	Total Rooms	Single Occ.	Double Occ.
Single Standard	Second	6	£48.00	N/A
Double Standard	Second	1	£61.50	£79.00
Family Standard (Double & Two Single Beds)	Second	1	N/A	£125.00 (up to 4 persons)
Double Business	First	3	£67.50	£85.00
King Business	First	3	£77.50	£95.00
Super King Business	First	1	£87.50	£105.00
Single Executive	First	3	£65.00	N/A
Single/Double Exec (Single Room with Double Bed)	First	2	£75.00	£90.00
Double Executive	First	2	£77.50	£95.00
Twin/King Executive	First	1	N/A	£110.00
King Executive	First	4	£87.50	£105.00
Super King Executive	First	3	£102.50	£120.00
Triple Executive (Super King Bed & Sofa Bed)	First	1	N/A	£120.00 (uo to 3 persons)
Deluxe Super King Executive	First	1	£117.50	£135.00



# ROYAL NAVAL ASSOCIATION



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# How to take part

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## HMNB Portsmouth

The Chaplaincy  
Cochrane Building  
Tel: 023 9272 3000 Mil: 9380 23000

## RM Poole

The Chaplaincy  
Tel: 01202 202179

## HMS Sultan

The Chaplaincy  
Tel: 023 9354 2015 Mil: 9384 32015

## HNMB Clyde

The Chaplaincy, HMS Neptune  
Tel: 079 7764 2005

## HMNB Clyde

Chaplaincy Hub  
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## HMS Caledonia

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Tel: 07801 465286

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Norton Manor, Taunton  
Tel: 079 7764 1903 Mil: 9378 04471

## RNAS Yeovilton

The Chaplaincy  
Tel: 01935 455257 Mil: 9351 05257

## CTCRM Lympstone

The Chaplaincy  
Tel: 01392 41462 Mil: 9378 54262

## RNAS Culdrose

The Chaplaincy  
Tel: 079 7765 1888 Mil: 9378 12790

## BRNC

The Chaplaincy  
Tel: 01803 677055 Mil: 9374 97055

## HMNB Devonport

The Chaplaincy, HMS Drake  
Tel: 01752 557649 Mil: 9375 67649

## RM Stonehouse

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## RM Condor

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## HMS Collingwood

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## RM Bickleigh

The Chaplaincy  
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## Northwood HQ

Chaplaincy  
Tel: 01923 957872 Mil: 9360 57872

## RMB Chivenor

The Chaplaincy  
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## DSL, Worthy Down

The Chaplaincy  
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