



SEMAPHORE CIRCULAR



STRENGTH OF ASSOCIATION

At the end of last month the RNA hosted the annual Conference of Naval Associations (CONA) meeting in Portsmouth Historic Dockyard.

The conference brought together 45 associations to strengthen links, encourage cooperation, support each other and hear what help is available.

There are over a hundred Naval associations of varying sizes, and CONA helps provides a strong collective platform.

Fortunately for us on the communications side of the RNA, Scottish Area secretary **S/M Karen Elliot** was one of those attending, and in her usual dependable and meticulous fashion she made a detailed note of proceedings, which forms the basis of the following report. We are indebted to you once again, Karen – and to S/M Nigel Huxtable, our favourite photographer, who provided these images. The Conference was held in the Princess Royal Gallery of the National Museum of the Royal Navy in Portsmouth

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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 2 May, and the deadline for material is 1000 on Thursday 1 May. A Semaphore Shorts will be published on 25 April.

Historic Dockyard.

Almost 50 Associations were represented, and a dozen organisations set up information stalls, including the Naval Children's Charity, which had recently confirmed that the Princess Royal had agreed to be their Patron.

RNA National President Vice Admiral Duncan Potts opened the meeting, welcoming all, thanking them for attending, and saying that it was great to see so many Associations represented – although he noted that there was another 85 or so Naval Associations not able to attend.

Admiral Potts said he believed that there was definitely an opportunity for more collaboration, and stated that between all the Associations, we have a fantastic reach and connection opportunity.

He said that the RNA has more than doubled in size since 2021, and now has more than 23,000 members.

The Admiral said that in terms of CONA governance, he was happy to remain as Chair, with Bill Oliphant as General Secretary and Malcolm Little as Secretary. Duncan asked the delegates if there were any other volunteers, but there was unanimous agreement that all three should remain in their current positions.

Admiral Potts then invited guest speaker **Rear Admiral Jude Terry** (pictured above right), Director of People & Training and Naval Secretary, to provide an update.

Admiral Terry said that she'd been in her current post for just over three years now, adding that she loves her job and feels very privileged to be in it.

She stated that veterans are an integral part of the Naval Family, and that the Royal Navy is as busy today as it's ever been – we have fewer platforms, but that just means we need to be cleverer!

The Admiral said that there are currently 36,000-plus Royal Navy personnel covering many areas, including the Continuous At Sea Deterrent (CASD – the British nuclear capability), the High North, the Caribbean (where the hurricane season is about to begin), the Falklands, home waters, Gibraltar, the Indian Ocean and Pacific and Op Kipion (the Gulf region).

Admiral Terry said that it has been difficult to recruit, but the RN is now growing.

She also stated that 'welcome home' celebrations are now arranged for the Boats.

Other aspects of the serving Navy that Admiral Terry touched on included the current Defence Strategic Review, the Type 26 and Type 31 frigates currently in build,



the Dreadnought boats in build to replace the Vanguard nuclear missile force, the Navy's interest in unmanned vessels, and the need to combine crewed and uncrewed kit, and embrace new technology.

She agreed that it's all very difficult in the political and money space, but the Royal Navy needs to carry on – its existence is crucial, and it must remain a modern force.

Her current priorities are:

- To reduce outflow and increase inflow – last month, for example, more people joined than left the Royal Navy;
- To increase professional excellence through behaviours, leadership and a 'one Navy' mindset

Admiral Terry said that Sea Cadets are now under her remit also, since 2023, linking Sea Cadets, the RN and veterans – the RNA;

She said the data still shows that most people serve four to six years, but now leave with a recognised qualification and often stay within the industry;

Engineering training is now not only undertaken at HMS Sultan in Gosport, but also at Glasgow College – this is working well.

Efforts are being made to reduce the time from entering the recruitment process to actually joining up the RN, Royal Marines and RFA – one of the challenges is in gaining access to electronic medical records.

The Admiral said that there are four RN/RM preparation centres around the UK - HMS Caledonia (Rosyth), HMS Cambria (Cardiff), HMS Sultan (Gosport) and RM Lympstone (Exmouth), where candidates are fitted for their kit, their medical is undertaken and so on.

She told delegates that 75 per cent of RN personnel have their own home and generally do not stay in a base port area.

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The RN is encouraging the use of units to encourage and facilitate collaboration within the Naval Family, and beyond.

The Admiral reported that around 15 per cent of recruits are female, 10 per cent or so of personnel in service are female, and some 30 per cent of Officers are female.

She also reported that there has been a lot of work and effort put into the 'Leave Well' programme, including:

- Service Leaver events
- Restorative receptions
- Invictus Games support

Admiral Terry also spoke of the Office of Veterans Affairs now being part of the MOD, and she also touched on Op Valour, connecting Service personnel to volunteers, when needed.

RNA General Secretary/Chief Executive **Bill Oliphant** gave a brief update in relation to the Association:

Bill said he has been in post for six years now and it's been "a fascinating journey". He said that the RNA was officially formed in 1950 - there were some Branches prior to this, but were termed the 'Old Comrades'.

He went on to explain that for about 30 years the RNA was losing around 1,000 members per year, and by 2021 had reached an all-time low of under 10,000, but now has 23,300 members.

He said the RNA had to consider why it had to change, and the reasons were to be more accessible, relevant, supportive and attractive.

Bill said the reasons for the increase in membership numbers included:

- Excellent work and collaboration of Branches and Areas;
- Having a central database, tied in with investment in communications and improved engagement;
- Huge support from RNRMC;
- The Covid pandemic allowed time to stand back and reflect and assess – how do we achieve comradeship? Through communication, meeting up, the not-so-good times and what we do then. Thankfully the improving database was available to be able to engage with members using technology and Zoom - communication is critical for sharing information and listening to members;
- The shift from annual subscriptions to a donation-based income model;
- The introduction of sports and comradeship



groups (SCGs) as part of the Thriving Together initiative;

- HMS Raleigh and BRNC Dartmouth recruitment events;
- An emphasis on the '7 Cs' and Wellbeing and Welfare elements;
- Coming to an understanding we had an ageing membership, and therefore needed to engage with younger members and look at ways to attract them;
- Forming links with the smaller Associations (such as Fearless 82), and set them up on the Association database as a 'branch' for administrative purposes – the PT Branch is on board and hoping that they can assist with the Thriving Together project.

The General Secretary said there are 230 Branches within the RNA, spread across 13 Areas.

Looking to the future, Bill said the Association is looking for RNA Branches to be supportive of RN families within their patch, very much in the comradeship, wellbeing, connection aspects of the Association's roles.

We are not taking our eye off the "hidden, lost and lonely", and will continue to reach out and support them.

He spoke more of Thriving Together, the activity-based initiative which has already organised a wide range of

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events, including a chainsaw experience, walking & waterfall experience in Wales, bushcraft and axe throwing, a Mount Snowdon walk, a Normandy D-Day battlefield tour, an introduction to surfing, a women-only walking and waterfall weekend, and an introduction to dry stone walling.

Bill explained to delegates that the components of 7Cs were companionship, connection, commemoration, compassion, care, celebration and community, all contributing to the comradeship offered by the RNA.

He spoke of the RNA Communications team at Central Office which runs the external RNA communications channels and social media (Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, YouTube, LinkedIn) – these are open groups to promote the RNA and key to promoting Wellbeing.

Turning to the CONA side of things, Bill ran through some challenges that are common to most or all associations, including:

- Governance and leadership;
- Safeguarding, welfare & wellbeing information, delivery and signposting;
- Culture and member age profiles, including falling membership;
- Data, funding, resources and scalability;
- Wider representation and championing or advocacy.

Ongoing CONA actions and decisions included:

- Building on the 'stronger together' theme – encouraging shared 7Cs, and comradeship events. He mentioned the Naval Associations Biennial Parade on 14 September in London, and said it would be great to have all represented;
- Developing the benefits of closer CONA collaboration,

such as learning, discounts, insurance, database, administration, use of minibuses, the Yearbook, Standards support, promotion, representation and regular RN/Defence/RNRM updates and advocacy at Chief Executive level;

- Individual Associations being welcomed into an upgraded RNA website;
- Future meetings, briefings, surveys and communications.

Bill said he felt there was potential for shared training in such areas as disclosures and safeguarding.

He finished by mentioning the RNA's 75th anniversary charity fundraising concert featuring Fisherman's Friends, the Royal Marines Band and RNA Choirs on 22 October at Portsmouth Guildhall, and warned delegates that there were not many discounted tickets remaining to be sold, so suggested they get in quickly if they were interested in attending.

Rear Admiral Potts then invited Ian Millen, Chief Executive of Veterans Outreach Support (VOS) to provide an update, including a look at the various VOS Groups across the UK supporting welfare, wellbeing and mental health (including at Edinburgh Napier University and London – the Poppy Factory).

He also spoke of the Armed Forces Covenant Fund Trust and Op Ascend, which used to be Op Prosper, in the field of employment.

Duncan then invited Debbie Dollner, Chief Executive of the RNBT, to provide an update on the RNBT, Naval Children's Charity and the RNOC:



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Find Semaphore Circular online at

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CHAIRMAN'S CHAT

Dear Shipmates,

I hope you are enjoying this fabulous early spring weather.

I was thrilled to travel to **City of Salford Branch**, with General Secretary Bill Oliphant, on behalf of the National Council to award Shipmate Steve Caulfield Life Membership.

Steve's health is not great currently and his Branch, along with many Shipmates from **Atherton** and **Bolton** gathered at the Pendleton Ex-Services Club along with Steve's family to support and witness Steve receiving his Life Membership.

S/M Steve has held a number of roles at all levels of the RNA, including Area Chairman and NCM, over 30 years – the first National Council meeting Steve attended was at the old RNA HQ in Manor St, Chelsea! Thank you for your hard work, Steve. BZ!

Right down to business – 'Church Notices'...

Firstly, Shipmates, I am very conscious that most of us attend our Branch meetings to see our mates, break bread, chat and perhaps partake of a small refreshment or two!

In my first six months as National Chairman I have managed to get out to a few branches around the Shires and, through discussion, I've come to realise that many are only vaguely aware that our Association is governed by a Royal Charter which details the rules and bye-laws to allow us to manage the RNA.

They aren't there to be an embuggerance, rather, they are there to give Branch committees the authority to run their respective Branches and to keep those committees on the right side of charity law.

Those who are familiar with them find that they provide us with guidance in nearly every circumstance! You can locate the Charter and Bye-Laws on the RNA website – About – Documents, scroll down to RNA Royal Charter. They make great bedtime reading – honest!

So, the Charter covers higher-level RNA Governance and is approved by our patron, King Charles, through the Privy Council. Amendments to the Charter can only be made through placing a Motion at Conference, and are subject to approval by the Privy Council. The 'Bye-Laws' cover the specific detail of RNA business and can be amended by the National Council.

Secondly, you are probably all aware that a very small number of our Branches and Clubs regrettably are under scrutiny due to counting irregularities and, in some cases, using RNA funds inappropriately.



Probably the most important paragraph of the whole Royal Charter is Para 3, which details the Objects of the Association, while Para 4 also gives important instruction as to the powers of the Association. Please help Central Office to help you by paying particular attention to ensuring our Annual Returns are completed correctly.

Sadly, I have to report that quite a few branches have submitted incorrect figures in their Annual Returns or they have been returned because the accounting check has been done correctly. We want to be able to demonstrate good probity to the Charity Commission so, for example, if your partner is the Branch Hon Treasurer, it's probably not appropriate for you as Chair to sign off on the report. Your support concerning this is really appreciated by Kate at Central Office, who has the unenviable task of checking Annual Returns. She is available for advice for anyone having difficulty with their figures – and I'm not talking about eat less and exercise more!

Finally, I have heard from some Shipmates that they are concerned at the increasing amount of information/data being requested from Central Office. This information is vital in three areas:

- Applications for grants to help the RNA further in new projects;
- Applications for staff supported by partners and other Charities;
- It reveals what business WE the RNA actually carry out, from 'Arm Round a Shoulder' to attending ceremonial events and everyday Branch activities.

Your cooperation with garnering this info is vital and very much appreciated by Central Office and the RNA as a whole.

Finally, I know you have been concerned for your Chairman for some time, and it has sadly happened – his beloved Saints have been relegated, but luckily he is blessed with the original football saying 'Bouncebackability' – so it is off to the Championship with no VAR!

Best wishes,

Andy



CHARLIE CELEBRATES HIS CENTURY

Charles 'Charlie' Purkins served on board the Motor Minesweeper Ship 1013 out of Lowestoft during World War 2.

At the end of the war his ship visited the Dutch port of IJmuiden. Charlie met his future wife, Yohanna, there and settled in the town, where he still lives, learning Dutch – and speaking the language with a Geordie accent!

Charlie celebrated his 100th birthday in March surrounded by his children, grandchildren, great-grandchildren and nephews and niece who travelled to IJmuiden from England.

Charlie was presented with birthday cards from the Royal Naval Patrol Service Museum in Lowestoft and the RNA, which also enclosed a tot of rum.

This was much appreciated and stirred Charlie's memory – he reminisced about the crew receiving their tot at 1000 every day.

Charlie is pictured with a photograph of the crew of Motor Minesweeper 1013, taken in 1944

HIGH HOPES FOR FUNDRAISER

If you're up for a challenge (and have a head for heights), Royal Navy & Royal Marines Charity would like to hear from you.

The charity is staging a Spinnaker Tower Abseil at Gunwharf in Portsmouth on 5 July, promising participants "a challenge that will test your nerve to the limits". It is open to people of all ages, fitness levels, and doesn't require any previous skills! You will be met with an incredible view of Portsmouth Harbour at around 100 metres above sea level.

In return there is a registration fee of £45, and an expected fundraising target of £400 per person.

For more details see <https://www.rnrmc.org.uk/2025-spinnaker-tower-abseil>

HUNDREDTH CLASS FOR RALEIGH MENTOR TERRY

One of the RNA's great ambassadors celebrated a rather special milestone last month – and his efforts were recognised by the Royal Navy.

S/M Terry Whitty, of Liskeard Branch, leads a group of RNA veterans who mentor young sailors through their first weeks on basic training at HMS Raleigh in Torpoint, Cornwall, providing morale and a friendly face outside of the chain of command – all the Veteran Mentors have trodden that same path.

Terry has just picked up his 100th class – an achievement which earned Terry a Certificate of Appreciation from Fisher Divisional Training Officer, Lt Reg Varney (pictured right).

The RNA is particularly delighted to congratulate Terry on reaching this significant milestone in the RNA's 75th anniversary year. S/M Terry said: "Next month is our 17th anniversary of mentoring in HMS Raleigh. A huge thank you to all the current mentors, but we must never forget to thank all the mentors who have all retired – without you all, this amazing mentoring programme would never have succeeded."

Recruits are picked up on the Tuesday of week one and followed throughout the ten weeks of Phase One training

"It's been an absolute honour and privilege to work with the next generation of sailors, and to work alongside such brilliant veteran mentors who all give freely of their time," said S/M Terry.

The RNA Mentoring Programme began at Raleigh in 2008, after having been run successfully with Royal Marines Commando trainees at Lympstone. The model was taken on by the RNA and developed with Royal Naval staff at Raleigh, adapted for Naval recruits.

The programme has gone through changes over the years but is now still running successfully, providing new recruits with a different perspective on their training. The mentoring is carried out by RNA volunteer veterans



who have served in the RN over the years in various branches.

Mentors bring a range of support functions, ranging from a listening ear to words of encouragement, which is outside the Chain of Command that they are starting to get to grips with.

RNA volunteers give of their time freely and build up a strong relationship with the divisions that they are attached to, reinforced by mentors attending a number of evolutions that the recruits undertake.

This culminates ten weeks later when they see the recruits that they have been working with march with confidence onto the parade ground for their Passing Out Parade in front of their very proud family and friends.

VE80 AT RAMSAY MUSEUM

The Admiral Ramsay Museum, in the Scottish Borders, is holding a special 80th anniversary commemoration of VE Day on the afternoon of Sunday 11 May.

This special event will include a visit to the museum, a treasure hunt and cream teas, as well as a minute's silence to remember the fallen.

Admiral Bertram Ramsay was the mastermind behind the near-miraculous evacuation of some 340,000 troops from Dunkirk in 1940 (Operation Dynamo) and his supreme planning and logistical skills were a huge factor in the success of the Normandy Landings, when Ramsay was Naval Commander-in-Chief of the Allied Naval Expeditionary Force.

Her died in a plane crash near Paris in January 1945. The museum is in a converted garden store in the grounds of the Ramsay family home, Bughtrig House, to the east of the village of Leitholm, near Coldstream. Tickets are £10 adults, £5 children, and must be booked in advance.

For more details see the advertisement at the back of this Circular here.

ONE DOWN, FOUR TO GO IN RNA'S 75TH ANNIVERSARY PROGRAMME

The first of our 'big five' events is done and dusted – and the next is coming up fast.

The RNA is marking our 75th anniversary with a programme of five major national events, the first of which was the highly-successful gathering of Naval associations, charities and support groups under the umbrella of CONA (the Conference of Naval Associations) in Portsmouth at the end of March – you may have already seen our report at the start of this Circular. Next on the list is the Army v Navy rugby match at Twickenham, for which the RNA is the official charity on the day.

The match, on Saturday 3 May – the start of the Bank Holiday weekend – sees the Navy take on the Army with a point to prove after losing 43-42 at the death last year. Tickets are still available from the Twickenham website: <https://tinyurl.com/mvvp24uz>

Our third event is the National Conference in Portsmouth (20-22 June), and the deadline for Conference



weekend combined entertainment tickets are only until 4 May. For further details and to buy tickets see the 'Shop' section of the RNA website [here](#).

The fourth event is the Naval Associations Biennial Parade in London, on 14 September – more details in due course.

Finally, tickets are selling fast for the RNA Charity Fundraising Concert for 22 October are going like hot cakes! Of course they are – and who doesn't want to see the new RNA choir, the Band of HM Royal Marines Collingwood and the Fisherman's Friends collaborate for the first time? RNA members' £5 discounted tickets are almost sold out – the link is [here](#). If you prefer a wider selection of seating, there is still a selection of full price tickets on sale [here](#).



CUTTING-EDGE TRAINING FOR SEA CADETS



Loughborough Sea Cadets (TS Venomous) have launched a cutting-edge ship simulator to provide cadets with advanced maritime training, reinforcing their skills before taking to the water. The project, spearheaded by CO Sub Lt (SCC) Paul Browning RNR, integrates one of the world's most advanced water and ship physics models to ensure the most accurate and immersive training experience available.

The simulator enables cadets to refine their navigation, seamanship, and command skills in a controlled, highly realistic environment, preparing cadets for real-life challenges at sea. "This state-of-the-art simulator is a game-changer for our cadets, allowing them to develop vital maritime skills before stepping onto a boat," said Paul. "Not only does it improve their safety and technical proficiency, but it also enhances leadership and command abilities, setting them up for success in whatever career they choose."

The development of the simulator was made possible thanks to generous grants from, Loughborough University, and Charnwood Borough Council, and supported by VSTEP Nautis Home.



NEW CEO AT SSAFA

Air Marshal Steve Shell CB OBE MA has joined SSAFA, the Armed Forces charity as its new CEO after 37 years of distinguished service with the RAF. He succeeds Sir Andrew Gregory, who stepped down as SSAFA Controller at the end of February after more than eight years in the role.

Steve was commissioned into the RAF in 1988 as a pilot and went on to fly Chinook helicopters, including during the first Gulf War and in Iraq and Afghanistan. He also had a posting to the Pentagon in Washington DC. SSAFA is the UK's oldest tri-Service military charity, supporting serving personnel, veterans and their families in times of need.

For more information see <https://www.ssafa.org.uk>

CHINA FLEET CLUB IS IDEAL FOR HOLIDAYS

Shipmates, as your RNA representative on the beneficiary committee at the China Fleet Country Club (Saltash), I appreciate that most RNA members are too distant to be regular users of the splendidly wide-ranging facilities at our 'family friendly' Country Club.

As Royal Naval Veterans we and our immediate families are beneficiaries and qualify for various discounts at the Club. To my mind, for those of you thinking of a West Country holiday or visit, then the Club's family accommodation with fitted kitchens are terrific value for money (you must book early for the summer), beaches are within easy reach while the

on-site swimming pool, gym, golf course, woodland fairy trail and adventure golf are seconds away. You can even have your wedding here at the Club.

Those of you who may be interested in the golfing aspects of the Club, perhaps to arrange a Branch/Area competition or simply to visit, then Ben Walters the Golf Manager would be pleased to chat to you on 01752 848668. I have been given to understand that our Army and RAF chums are green with envy because they don't have their own Country Club! Shame!! Regards aye,
Des McCarthy (Plymouth Branch)



LOOK SHARP FOR PIN BADGES

Three new limited edition pin badges are now available to buy through the RNA online shop, with all three carrying the RNA 75th anniversary logo. Costing £7.50 each (with discounts for bulk purchases) these collectible items will not hang around for long – see <https://www.rnagizzet.co.uk> for full details.



STAND EASY FOR VE80

VE80 Stand Easy Celebrate the 80th anniversary of VE Day – and support our veterans. On 8 May 1945, communities across the UK staged street parties and events to honour those who fought for our freedom. Now, for VE80, Royal Navy & Royal Marines Charity is asking you to come together once more – this time, to help their veterans Stand Easy.

Whether it's a street party, office bake sale or an informal gathering, you will be making a difference. Host a VE Day celebration and raise funds for RNRMC. RNA branches can sign up to receive a special fundraising pack and help the Stand Easy by emailing cml@rnassoc.org – see the flyer at in this Short here. Individuals and branches are asked to sign up via Central Office and send fundraising donations to the RNRMC via this link: <https://tinyurl.com/34ad6efp>

PROPERTIES AVAILABLE ON WATERSIDE ESTATE

Properties have become available at Wirral's idyllic Mariners' Park retirement estate, and accommodation is available now for retired Merchant Navy, Royal Navy and maritime professionals.

The stunning estate, located on the banks of the River Mersey, has a number of properties available to let, including two-bedroom apartments within its award winning new development.

The estate has luxury facilities, , stunning views over the Mersey and comes in much cheaper than most privately rented apartments, starting from £630 per month for one-bed properties and from £740 for 2 two-bed.

At Mariners' Park Estate there's an on site bistro, snooker room, gym, salon, beauty spa and more.

With immaculate grounds maintained by an excellent gardening team, a bowling green and lots of activities on site, Mariners Park Estate is a place to retire in luxury – with excellent levels of service and support from the staff who work there.



There is also an excellent on-site care home. To enquire, call 0151 346 8840, email welfare@nautilusint.org or see <https://tinyurl.com/3bwrejw5>

ROBIN'S CAMPAIGN SEEKS ATLANTIC WAR VETERANS



The Wellington Trust Board of Trustees has launched 'Robin's Campaign' to trace all surviving Battle of the Atlantic veterans.

The campaign is named after 100-year-old Robin Boodle, who served in cruiser HMS Suffolk from 1940 to 1945. Robin is centre of the picture (right), with two shipmates from the cruiser.

During Robin's time on board, Suffolk formed part of three Atlantic convoys and two Arctic convoys, as well as Convoy WS30/KMF15, in which HMS Wellington also took part.

In May 1943, when Robin was 18, Suffolk was sent to Scotland to join joint military convoy WS30/KMF15 in the Clyde.

This large convoy left Scotland on 19 May, bound for Freetown, Sierra Leone – a common route. Wellington was often tasked with convoy duties to and from the UK to Freetown, or Gibraltar.

One of Robin's most vivid memories was as a 16-year old in May 1941, when he was present at the final battle with the German battleship Bismarck – sunk before it could even begin its task of attacking Atlantic convoys – and still recalls picking up and guarding survivors, later turning them over as prisoners of war:

"Some of the Germans we saw [in the water] and we went to pick them up. They weren't upset. They were grateful. They said 'Thank you, thank you.'

"We took about 40. Some were injured. There was a lot to cope with. I don't know why, but I always got the biggest guys. One of them, an officer, was quite august. He did change though, and by the time they were all transferred, he called me Robin.

"With people in the water, if you are in control, you help, no matter who they are, or their attitude."

Robin is a remarkable Royal Navy veteran. He went on to serve for over 26 years,



leaving as a Chief Petty Officer in 1966. He is a great inspiration for this campaign – the 80th anniversary of the end of the Battle of the Atlantic on VE Day, 8 May 1945.

As the sole surviving dedicated Battle of the Atlantic convoy escort in Europe, HMS Wellington will be commemorating this important anniversary.

As part of those commemorations, they are keen to find and honour all remaining Battle of the Atlantic veterans from both the Royal Navy and the Merchant Navy, and they appeal to anyone who is, or has knowledge of any, surviving Battle of the Atlantic veterans, to get in touch with the Wellington Trust.

Chairman of the Trust, Dr Dominic Tweddle (pictured below left with Robin) said: "We appreciate there can't be many surviving Battle of the Atlantic veterans, but we're keen to find them and document anything they may remember, as well as learn of their individual service histories. "We not only want to commemorate their contribution to the Battle of the Atlantic, but also to ensure visitors to the ship can learn of their contribution to the battle as part of the Wellington Story."

If you are, or know of, a surviving Battle of the Atlantic veteran, RN or Merchant Navy, please contact the Trust via email research@thewellingtontrust.org

They also welcome and encourage families of former ship's company members of HMS Wellington to get in touch as part of their wider research.

If you would like to support the Trust, please get in touch at <https://www.thewellingtontrust.org/join-the-friends-of-the-wellington/>

Wellington was a Grimsby-class sloop, laid down in September 1933 at Devonport, launched in May 1934, and entered service in January 1935. She was initially built to serve as an Imperial Patrol Sloop on the New Zealand Station.

She displaced 990 tons, had a cruising speed of 10kts and a maximum speed of 16kts.

NEW TRUSTEE FOR RNRMC

Royal Navy & Royal Marines Charity (RNRMC) is delighted to welcome Vice Admiral Peter Wilkinson CB, CVO as the newest member of their Board of Trustees.

With an impressive 35-year career in the Royal Navy, Peter brings a wealth of experience and a deep understanding of the challenges faced by the Naval community. His extensive leadership in personnel management at both Portsmouth Naval Base and MOD London further strengthens his insight into the needs of beneficiaries.

In his retirement, Peter has remained active in the field of military welfare. Previous roles include Chairman of Seafarers UK and the Forces Pension Society, as well as National President of the Royal British Legion from 2012 to 2016. Most recently, he chaired the appeal to build the Memorial to Submariners at the National Memorial Arboretum. He also continues to support the RN Football Association as a Vice President. Peter said: "I am delighted to join the Board of Trustees of Royal Navy & Royal Marines Charity.

"Having spent 35 years in the Royal Navy, 20 of it as an operational submariner, I have seen first-hand the challenges faced by our Naval community.

"In my retirement, I have remained committed to supporting our Armed Forces family and I look forward to contributing to the vital work of the charity in supporting serving personnel, veterans, and their families."

Peter's commitment to the Naval community aligns perfectly with RNRMC's mission to support serving personnel, veterans, and their families.

They look forward to working alongside him to further their charitable impact.



TRINITY COMMUNITY GETS MORE CLOUT

The Trinity associations community is growing, and its combined membership is over 300,000 – which is good news for people who have access to their services, including members of the RNA.

It gives Trinity the market clout to secure the best deal possible for veterans and develop new products that are known to be needed in the market.

This means that for the first time, UK veterans are not stuck with having to find their insurance on the mass market from providers that do not understand them or their needs.

Now they can choose tailor-made products from a trusted provider that has a proven track record of serving the Armed Forces community for 25 years.

A company that is run by veterans, for veterans.

But it is important that we, the RNA, let our members know of the offers available, so that they can enjoy the tangible benefits of membership that come with being a part of the Association.

It might help you to save money, and it will almost certainly give you a much better service.

And if members choose the RNA for one of Trinity's charitable donations, it may also provide a useful income stream for us as well.

Life Insurance with donations to the RNA:

Trinity have teamed up with life



insurance specialist LifeSearch.

Any members' purchases will qualify for a £50 donation to a charity of their choice that includes the RNA.

Car Insurance - there is a new phone based specialist.

Trinity's partner Adrian Flux can help with telephone car insurance quotes and is ready to support RNA members on 0344 728 0490.

Veterans Personal Accident All veterans qualify for a special premium rate on this product.

Trinity has a dedicated Veterans page to outline the pricing and product benefits.

Combined Services 40+ Annual Travel Insurance

RNA members can benefit from this product as they are from an eligible association.

This product is of particular interest to those in the upper age bracket as there are no medical declarations and, once in the scheme, they can remain until later years as long as the annual premium is paid, and they remain a member of the RNA.

Buildings and Contents Insurance Members can give their renewal

date for the chance to win a £250 voucher in the Trinity monthly draw and give back to the RNA on taking out a policy.

There is a dedicated Associations line for RNA members – 0345 241 1001. The team are available during office hours to help with quotes for buildings and contents, personal accident and signpost members on to Trinity's trusted partners.

SCOTLAND'S SALUTE TO WAR VETERANS

Organised by Legion Scotland and Poppyscotland, a special celebration of music titled 'Scotland's Salute: VE Day 80' will be held at Usher Hall in Edinburgh on 6 May.

The event follows on from last year's hugely successful 'Scotland Salutes: D-Day 80' concert held in June.

Performing in the concert are such favourites as the Band of HM Royal Marines Scotland, the Band of the Royal Regiment of Scotland, RBLs Dunfermline Pipe Band, Military Wives Choirs from all over Scotland, Cammy Barnes, Amy Hawthorn, Iona McDonald from the BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra, Nicholas Ralph from 'All Creatures Great and Small' with Sadie Addington and Anaïs Doppel.

The event will be narrated by Alasdair Hutton, previously the voice of the world-renowned Edinburgh Military Tattoo, with broadcaster Mark McKenzie from BFBS Scotland acting as the evening's compere.

Tickets can be purchased directly from the Usher Hall website on <https://www.usherhall.co.uk/whats-on/scotlands-salute-tribute-ve-day-80th-anniversary-concert>

Tickets cost from £19.45, including booking fee, or call 0131 228 1155.

Doors open at 1830, with the concert starting at 1930.

VE80 CONCERT

Emsworth Concert Band are staging their annual Spring Concert, which this year will feature a special VE80 anniversary tribute, on Saturday 26 April at Oaklands Catholic School, Waterloo, starting at 7.30pm.

Tickets are available through Eventbrite (<https://tinyurl.com/yfkphxsd>), from Bookends in Emsworth, or on the door.

RACE ACROSS THE UK FOR RNRMC

Royal Navy & Royal Marines Charity (RNRMC) has organised the Race Across the UK - an exciting new challenge to help support Naval families.

This exhilarating event invites participants to race in pairs from Edinburgh to Dartmouth, covering the length of the UK in just four days.

You'll need to partner with someone you trust – someone who will motivate you and help power through when the journey gets tough.

Together, you will tackle the UK's stunning and diverse landscapes, testing both your physical endurance and teamwork.

But here's the twist – there are no navigation apps, no cars, and no planes.

You will rely solely on your wits, a traditional map, and whatever you can carry on your back as you make

your way from one checkpoint to the next. This challenge offers a unique opportunity to test your limits, all while raising vital funds for an exceptional cause.

The Race will take place from 2-5 September, and there is a strict limit of 50 participating pair – 100 people in all.

There is a fundraising target of £1,500 per person, and RNRMC will give you plenty of support to reach and smash that target.

Participants must be 16+.

By signing up for Race Across the UK, you will play a significant part in improving the lives of those who serve our nation.

With spaces limited to just 50 pairs, apply now to secure your place and help the RNRMC make a difference.

For more details of what the event entails, see <https://lupine.co.uk/race/2025-rnrmc-race-across-the-uk.html>

WELFARE AND WELLBEING

MEMBERS HONOUR OUR VETERANS

First and foremost, I extend my heartfelt thanks to all Shipmates nationwide who provided invaluable feedback on the new Welfare & Wellbeing documents now available on the RNA Website, writes S/M Jon Everett, the RNA's Welfare and Wellbeing Support Coordinator.

Your insights, both positive and constructive, have been instrumental in refining the content. See <https://www.royal-naval-association.co.uk/access-support>

Honouring Our Veterans: A Heartfelt Thank You

In times of loss, the support and solidarity of our community shine brightest. I extend my deepest gratitude to all Shipmates who have supported funerals across the country. Your dedication means the world to the families of our Veterans who have crossed the bar. One touching example of the impact we make comes from a veteran's granddaughter:

"I just wanted to say thanks again for all that you have done for my Grandad's funeral. I cannot even begin to tell you how much it meant to the family to have these standard bearers and the Naval touches suggested by you. My Grandad was a super proud, honest, and hardworking man, and I know he would have been so proud to have the send-off that he did. Thank you SO much for your help."

The heartfelt words of appreciation remind us of the profound difference we make. We are witnessing an increase in requests for help and support, not only from RNA members' families but also from non-members. For those seeking guidance, a comprehensive funeral guide is available on the RNA website. This resource (see below) ensures that every Veteran receives the dignified farewell they deserve.

Jon can be contacted:

By email at wws@rnassoc.org

By phone on 023 9272 3747 (office) or 07591 829 416 (mobile).



DROP IN TO CONNECT UP

The RNA's Welfare & Wellbeing Coordinator attended the Veterans Outreach Support (VOS) Drop-In which takes place on the first Wednesday of every month from 1400 to 1700 in the Royal Maritime Hotel, Queen Street, Portsmouth.

Drop-Ins are a brilliant opportunity to collect information and connect with like-minded people for any help and support you might need.

We found a Ship's Badge-making group, the RNBT, Help4Heroes and many more (including us – Jon Everett from Central Office Welfare and Nigel Turner and Phill Kellett from the local branch - BZ chaps!). Don't hesitate to go if you had been thinking about it - it's such a supportive environment.



FUNERAL GUIDE NOW AVAILABLE

"The RNA has launched our Funeral Guide, and reminds shipmates that we offer ceremonial and administrative support for our members and all those who have served in Our Naval Forces." – Jon Everett, Welfare and Wellbeing Support Co-ordinator wws@rnassoc.org, telephone 07591 829416

Find the guide on our website: <https://www.royal-naval-association.co.uk/rna-funeral-guide>

PLENTY OF SUPPORT AS CARRIER PREPARES

The RNA was proud to attend a Families Day for aircraft carrier HMS Prince of Wales before she heads out on a major deployment to the Far East.

The event was a fantastic chance for families to discover the support available from the RNA and other charities and services working with the Royal Navy and Royal Marines, including the Royal Naval Benevolent Trust, Aggie Weston's, the Naval Families Federation, the Naval Children's Charity, and Royal Navy & Royal Marines Charity (RNRMC).

The pre-deployment event celebrated the vital role of families within the Naval community while showcasing the broad range of support available to them.

As part of the event, the RNRMC proudly launched its new 'Strengthening Families – By Your Side' booklet – a vital resource designed to support serving personnel and their families through the challenges of Naval life, particularly during periods of deployment or separation.

The booklet (right) is available in hard copy and online via the RNRMC website [here](#).

Final preparations are now under way for the multinational

deployment – Operation Highmast – led by the carrier, which will reaffirm the UK's commitment to the security of the Mediterranean and Indo-Pacific, while providing an opportunity to promote British trade and industry.

Prince of Wales is scheduled to sail from Portsmouth on 22 April, when it will join a formation of warships, supply ships, and aircraft off the coast of Cornwall, before departing for the Mediterranean where it will conduct exercises to reinforce European security.

Some 2,500 personnel from the Royal Navy and almost 600 from the RAF will be involved in the eight-month deployment, which will see the group sail through the Indian Ocean to conduct exercises and port visits with partners including the United States, India, Singapore, and Malaysia. They will be joined by around 900 personnel from the British Army for exercises during the deployment.



CONTACT ARRANGEMENTS FOR CHILDREN – A SHORT GUIDE

Navigating contact arrangements for children. A guide to resolving where your child/children live, who they live with and how often you'll see them on separation.

The breakdown of a relationship can be incredibly stressful, but perhaps even more so when children are involved. Both parties will want what is best for their children, even if they do not agree on what this looks like. This is a short guide to child arrangements, setting out what to expect and answering the three most common questions in relation to the process.

1 – Do I have to go to court?

The term 'child arrangements' covers every aspect of what needs to be agreed by parents on separation in relation to their child or children.

It means the day-to-day contact arrangements, as well as special occasions and school holidays. If you find yourself needing to make arrangements for your child with the other parent, attempt to give as much notice as possible. The Easter holidays this year are quickly approaching, so agree the trips to the farm and weekend breaks away at the earliest opportunity. Perhaps also think about May half-term, the summer school holidays and the rest of the year too if you can.

Structure and transparency will help the whole family with creating and getting used to a new routine. Child arrangements also means talking about things like religion, education and medical treatments. If parents can agree these issues, it is often helpful to record the arrangements in a parenting plan. The plan is not legally binding, but it helps manage expectations of the parties and provides routine and structure for the entire family. CAFCASS provide helpful resources online in relation to parenting plans.

If parents cannot agree the arrangements for their child/children, they can consider non-court dispute resolution (NCDR). NCDR methods include (but are not limited to):

Arbitration – A legally binding court alternative where an

Emma Jones has significant experience in dealing with legal issues arising from the breakdown of relationships involving serving or former Armed Forces personnel, their families and current or former MOD individuals.

Emma – herself a member of the RNA – has represented several personnel in the Royal Navy, from ABs to Vice Admirals. She understands the difference between civvie and military life and the impact this may well have on a relationship and/or a family.

Knights is a business and leading law firm offering premium professional services everywhere in the UK.

The team is made up of 1,100+ professionals across 26 (and growing) locations in the UK from Carlisle all the way down to Exeter.

The national family team at Knights are familiar with all aspects of family law, including contact arrangements for children, divorce and finances and pre/post-nuptial agreements.

They have a handful of individuals who specialise in the treatment of Armed Forces pensions on divorce and appreciate the complexities of these schemes.

It's important to seek specialist legal advice when considering the financial arrangements on divorce, and they are there to help.



Knights

independent arbitrator identified by the parties decides the outcome.

Mediation – A voluntary process where a neutral mediator helps parties reach an agreement.

Collaborative law – A process of several in-person or remote meetings where parties join, together with their solicitors and other professionals to resolve disputes through negotiation and mutual agreement. Keep an eye out for more information relating to NCDR in next month's Semaphore Circular. It's important that all parents consider NCDR before turning to a court application to avoid causing unnecessary hostility between the parties, and to minimise risk of being criticised by the court for not giving it a go.

It is recognised, however, that NCDR is not a one-size-fits-all approach and may not be appropriate where the parties have polarised views on what is best for their child, there are allegations of domestic abuse and/or if one party refuses engage with the process.

In these cases, court might be the last and only option.

2 – What orders can be made in children act proceedings?

If parties cannot agree between them and court intervention is required, it is likely that one party will apply for a child arrangements order (CAO).

The CAO can set out where the child/children shall live, with who and how much time they will spend with each parent.

Each CAO is unique and case-specific.

There are several stages to court proceedings, and before the first hearing dispute resolution appointment (FHDR) the parties will speak to the Children and Family Court Advisory Support Service (CAFCASS) who independently advise the court on what might be in the child/children's best interests.

It might be that the parties cannot agree on one particular issue, such as where their child/children shall go to school.

If they cannot agree and have exhausted NCDR, the court might be able to help if one party applies for a specific issue order (SIO).

The process and court intervention is the same as a CAO, but the judge has the power to consider the disputed issue and make a

Continued on page 16

decision.

The court also has the power to make a prohibited steps order (PSO) to prevent one parent from doing something, ie removing a child from the care of the other parent, school or home.

These types of orders are usually made where there are safeguarding concerns and/or if one party is making a big decision that the other does not agree with such as relocation, school change etc.

The court might make a PSO in the first instance whilst it has the opportunity to consider the issues and explore what further information is needed.

3 – What if my child does not want to spend time with the other parent?

It can be incredibly stressful if a child is reluctant to see a parent.

The court presumes that maintaining a positive relationship with both parents is vital for the wellbeing of a child, but it can be difficult to force a child to do something that they do not want to do.

If there are no concerns for the child's welfare but they do not want to have contact with the other parent, communication between parties is always encouraged. It might be that there are

underlying issues that can be addressed.

It might also be appropriate to talk to the child about their feelings (subject to the child's age and background) and reassure them that spending time with both parents is a good thing.

It might also be helpful to consider child-inclusive mediation (another form of NCDR) where both parents and the child have a safe environment to consider any issues, supported by a qualified professional and independent third party.

The parents have a voice to set out their concerns, but so does the child.

However, if there are genuine concerns regarding the time that a child spends with the other parent and/or there are issues regarding the child's safety and wellbeing then a child should not be forced to see a parent.

It is important to seek support from appropriate professionals such as schools, local authorities and a solicitor if this happens.

It can be stressful deciding the child arrangements following divorce or separation, and/or navigating the court process if an agreement cannot be reached.

It is important to seek legal advice to make the process as simple as possible.



I'm here to help navigate these issues, and for all other family law questions!

I am an Associate in the family team at Knights, but I am also the fiancée of a submariner, come from a military family and have a little girl who is almost one.

<https://www.knightsplc.com/company/our-professionals/emma-jones/>

www.linkedin.com/in/emmxjones

emma.jones@knightsplc.com

CHARITY OFFERS TIME TOGETHER

Give Us Time is a charity that was founded in 2013 to support the families of Armed Forces personnel involved in the major conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan.

It aimed to make sure these families had time together following deployments, and has since then supported more than 1,200 families to have breaks. It continues to support Armed Forces families to spend time together on donated respite breaks following separation due to deployment or married unaccompanied postings, bereavement, physical or mental injuries, financial need or other welfare issues.

Give Us Time supports serving personnel, reservists, veterans and bereaved families from all three Services.

Breaks are donated by companies and individuals who own or manage holiday properties in the UK, Europe and the United States, varying from two-night breaks to a week away.

Families can sign up on the website www.giveustime.org.uk. Once they have activated their account they can browse the breaks that are available.

All breaks are accommodation only – the organisation cannot help with the costs of travel, transport, food or entertainment.

All they ask in return is a family's feedback and pictures that they can share with donors and on



social media channels.

In 2023-24 Give Us Time supported over 300 families with breaks or days out of which 82 were Royal Navy or Royal Marines.

40 of those helped were veterans.

When asked the reason for their applying to Give Us Time, 135 stated that it was the result of the impact of extended deployments, 36 said it was for mental health reasons, almost 60 explained that they felt they needed family time together, while four said the reason was a bereavement.

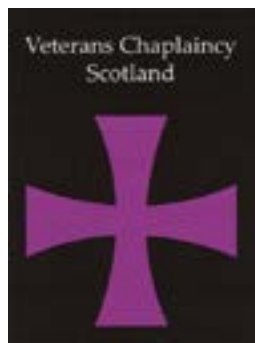
In the year 2023-24 more than £120,000 worth of accommodation was donated to Service families and veterans through Give Us Time; there were 19 break donors covering 50 locations at home and overseas, and there were also 37 days out in 27 locations in the UK.

The charity is a lean-running organisation, with just one full-time and two part-time members of staff, along with seven trustees and eight ambassadors.

CHAPLAINCY SERVICE FOR SCOTLAND'S VETERANS

Veterans Chaplaincy Scotland is a nationwide chaplaincy service for all those who have served in the military and for their families. It is a proactive service, providing pastoral care to veterans and their families, promoting hope, healing and acceptance.

The Scottish Charitable Incorporated Organisation builds on the chaplaincy already experienced by those who have served in all three Services, delivering confidential professional pastoral care to the ex-Service community across Scotland. The organisation said that for generations, Scotland has sent its warriors off to fight, and since 1796, everywhere those warriors have gone, military chaplains have gone with them. But while other in-Service support is continued after



Service, Chaplaincy is not. At Veterans Chaplaincy Scotland they believe that care for our veterans should continue after Service, and that should include access to Chaplaincy as part of the nation's military covenant. They offer an approachable, confidential, experienced and proactive Chaplaincy service, speaking the language of veterans – they've been where the veterans have been. They work with local churches

and a wide range of veterans' charities to provide the service, and by virtue of being both military and civilian they work to bridge the 'pastoral gap' between the veterans and their communities.

They are there to support veterans and their families, Service widows and widowers on life's journey, to be there in good times and bad, bringing hope, healing and acceptance to all.

The chaplains are trained in pastoral care, bereavement support, spiritual leadership, post-trauma healing, Trauma Risk Management (TRIM), Mental Health Awareness (MHFA) and moral injury support.

As they say, "We can baptise you, marry you and bury you – and a few things in between..."

For more information see www.vcscotland.org

NEW DAWN, NEW HELPLINE

Aurora New Dawn has launched its first helpline for Royal Navy, British Army, and RAF personnel and their family members who are victims and survivors of domestic abuse, sexual violence or stalking.

Coverage is available for all UK Forces personnel and their families, including those deployed abroad.

The service is independent, confidential, and FREE, with phone and WhatsApp functionality available.

The helpline number is 0333 091 2527 which is available between 0900 and 1500 Monday to Friday.

The WhatsApp function is available 0900-1500 on Tuesdays, 1700-2000 on Wednesday and Thursdays, and 1000-1400 Sundays.

EASTBOURNE EFFORTS MAKE A BIG DIFFERENCE

On Thursday 3 April Jon Everett, the RNA's Welfare and Wellbeing Support Coordinator, had the pleasure of visiting **Eastbourne Branch**.

The evening was filled with insightful conversations and meaningful updates with the Chair, S/M Mal Chumbley (pictured, right).

During his visit, Jon also had the opportunity to speak with the new Branch Welfare & Wellbeing Officer, Sandie Chumbley (also pictured). Despite being new to the role, Sandie has already demonstrated her expertise and dedication.

Her proactive approach has made a significant impact, providing much-needed support to several branch shipmates.

The visit underscored the importance of community and the collective effort to enhance the welfare and wellbeing of our members.

It was inspiring to see the commitment and passion of both Mal and Sandie, and Jon said he looks forward to witnessing the continued positive developments within the Eastbourne branch.





EDITOR: 'I DON'T HAVE A LEG TO STAND ON...'

Well, that's not quite true – but it's just the one leg for now – hence the delays to recent Semaphore Circulars. As you can see from the picture above, editor Mike Gray and his wife Carol have had a bit of bad luck recently.

Carol slipped on a step at Bern station while visiting their son in Switzerland at the end of February and ended up in hospital with a broken ankle.

Mike had to fly out at short notice to help her when their son needed to travel away for work, so the March edition was slipped a week. Three weeks on, and Carol was close to being able to be repatriated to the UK – then Mike ruptured his Achilles tendon playing pickleball, and was in plaster for three days then a boot, probably for a couple of months.

And so the April edition also slipped right by a week – but if you are reading this, at least he managed to hobble around enough to get it finished!

CENTRAL OFFICE OPEN DAY DATES

Central Office Open Days have proved popular with shipmates, giving them the chance to see how the office works and meet some of the people they normally deal with by phone or email.

Due to a busy 75th year, we are only able to squeeze in two Open Days to Central Office this year – 23 May and 11 July.

If you are interested or would like more information, please email Sara on ams@rnassoc.org

Please contact her early to avoid disappointment. Usual service will resume in 2026, as we plan to hold many more Open Days next year.

MINIBUSES ARE AN ASSET FOR ALL

The RNA has three minibuses, located in Plymouth, Manchester and Portsmouth, for use by shipmates.

The minibuses are a great asset to us all, and we are proud to offer this membership benefit. As you can appreciate, it costs a significant amount of money to keep all three minibuses on the road, and this year we have received a generous grant from the Seafarers' Charity, for which we are extremely grateful. We are also extremely grateful to our RNA volunteers who manage the minibuses regionally, including the bookings. To book a minibus, the



contact details are:

Plymouth – Les Yeoman – lesyeo3@gmail.com – 07795 231397

Manchester – David Barlow – dbarlow@hotmail.co.uk – 07747 006100

Portsmouth – Sara Field – ams@rnassoc.org – 023 92

723747

For insurance purposes, there are certain criteria for driving the minibuses and these, along with additional details, can be found on our website at www.royal-naval-association.co.uk/mini-bus-hire

OVER TO YOU, CRICKET FANS

The UK Armed Forces Inter-Services T20 tournament, involving all three Armed Forces, will culminate in a full day's activities at Lord's.

Each of the Forces' senior XIs plays two Twenty20 games in the tournament. The first of these matches will take place between the Army and RAF on Tuesday 20 May at the Utilita Bowl, Southampton, commencing at 1400;

The remaining two deciding matches will take place at the Armed Forces Cricket Day at Lord's on Thursday 22 May.

Timings may be subject to change, depending on the weather and other conditions, but the planned programme is as follows.

0900 Gates open

1000-1245 Match 1: UKAFCA vs MCC Women's Game

1245-1315 Lunch – Red Devils to land on main ground and Kwik Cricket to be played on Nursery Ground

1315-1600 IST20 Match 2: RN vs Losers of Army/RAF match

1600-1630 Tea – Military Band to play on main ground

1630-1915 IST20 Match 3 RN v Winners of Army/RAF



Ground Admission Prices: adults £20, Serving Personnel/Veterans/MoD Civil Servants £10, Over 65s £5, Under 16s £5.

Please note: Under 14s must be accompanied by an adult.

Serving Personnel/Veterans/MoD Civil Servants: please bring proof of identity with you to the match (eg ID cards, Veterans ID card).

You can buy tickets now via the Lord's website [here](https://www.lords.com). All tickets must be purchased online.

Further details about the event can be found at <https://interservicest20.co.uk>

WHERE THERE'S A WILL...

If you need to update or create a new will you can take advantage of a free service, where you can also leave a lasting legacy by helping the Royal Naval Association to continue to support Shipmates in need.

This spring we've partnered with expert estate planners, Octopus Legacy, so you can write or update your will for free – over the phone, or in person, and home visits can be arranged as well.

Call 020 4525 3605 and quote 'The Royal Naval Association' to make your appointment. Lines are open Monday to Friday, 0900-1730.

All they ask is that you consider leaving the Royal Naval Association a gift in your will.

For more information see the web page at <https://buff.ly/44BjG39>

BRIDGE TO BRIDGE TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE

The Severn Bridge and Humber Bridge are 212 miles apart – or perhaps a couple of days by cycle...

That is the 'Gear Up for Good' challenge posed by the Sailors' Children's Society (SCS) this autumn in their Bridge 2 Bridge event.

The ride, from 12-14 September, is "more than just a ride. It's about teamwork, camaraderie, and making a real difference for children and families in crisis through the work done at the Sailors' Children's Society."

Your participation in this test of endurance will help raise vital funds to support vulnerable families across the UK, It will also give you the chance to ride alongside other like-minded individuals, and network with professionals from the business community.

There is an expectation in terms of fundraising – each

rider must commit to raise a minimum of £1,500 to support the cause – and places are limited; they are reviewed and allocated on a first-come basis to those applying for a spot on the adventure.

For more details see <https://sailorschildren.org.uk/events/gear-up-for-good-cycle-212-miles/> or see the poster at the end of the Circular here.

The Sailors' Children's Society is a national charity established over 200 years ago. They offer financial and emotional support to children and families from seafaring backgrounds who are in a time of crisis. They help families with connections to a range of maritime roles, including those working for the Royal Navy, the Merchant Navy, in fishing fleets, ferries, cruise ships, and cargo ships

See <https://sailorschildren.org.uk> for more on the charity.

Ex-Military

Tired of your health affecting the **cost** of your travels?



Sign up to our 40+ travel insurance scheme to enjoy
worldwide cover with no medical declaration required.

TERMS AND CONDITIONS APPLY. ALL INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHEME AVAILABLE AT:
WWW.COMBINEDSERVICESTRAVELCOVER.ORG.UK

£1,000 WINNER ON RNA LOTTERY

We have our first £1,000 winner on the RNA Lottery!

A shipmate bagged the four-figure prize during March – so do you fancy a crack at a big money prize while helping the Association?

You could win up to £25,000 in our very own Weekly Lottery, which gives supporters the chance to win cash prizes as well as backing our rank-blind network of serving, veterans and family members of the Naval community.

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

RNA General Secretary Capt Bill Oliphant said: "Our lottery is an exciting way of fundraising 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."

Visit www.RNALottery.co.uk to sign up.

FIVE YEARS OF TOT TIME

RNA Tot Time has just celebrated its fifth anniversary – more than 350 episodes and still going strong. If you, or a family member, might enjoy some Naval dits and camaraderie please do log on - you don't need to be a member, everyone is welcome. Tot Time is on Saturdays at 1830, and is available on the Online Events section of the RNA website – [click here](#).

SLOPS STILL 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) or via the 'Shop' button at the top of the RNA website home page at www.royal-naval-association.co.uk

SPORTS AND COMRADESHIP GROUPS

Different name but same objectives... Shipmates might be interested to become involved with the popular and successful RNA Sports and Comradeship Groups (SCGs), formerly known as Special Interest Groups (SIGs). Whether you are already a part of a group or are yet to join one we recommend you get involved and see what it's all about. For more information on each group please contact the designated leaders, listed below:

American Football – Steve Phillips: rna.american.football.sig@gmail.com

Classic Cars – Mike Burnham: hon.secretary@rnarayleigh.org

Cricket – Mark Smith : Markmiff1962@gmail.com

Collectors: Insignia and Badges – Paul Banyard: rna.insignia@gmail.com

Cycling – Craig Fulton: craig@govguide.co.uk

Fishing – Gus Honeywood/Selwyn Davies/John Stephenson: rna.fishing.sig@gmail.com

Genealogy – Mike Wilkinson: mike.j.wilco@gmail.com

Golf – Colin Dinsdale: rna.golfers@gmail.com

Model Makers – Gary Daisley: RNA.Modelmakers@gmail.com

Motorhome, Camping and Caravanning – Ron Shilton: rnamcc@outlook.com

RNA Football Club – scc@rnassoc.com

Rugby Union – Steve Phillips: rna.rugby.union.sig@gmail.com

Woodcraft – Graham Warner: vicechair@rna-7area.org

If you are interested in forming a Sports and Comradeship Group please contact cml@rnassoc.org

MONDAY NIGHT FIRESIDE CHATS

Next Monday's Fireside Chat (14 April) will be a talk by Ben Rowlands on a group of volunteers (including RNA members) taking aid to Ukraine.

■ For shipmates who are unaware, there is an ongoing a 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

Date	Presenter	Subject
Mon 14 April	Ben Rowlands	UK2UKR
Mon 28 April	David Griggs	Disaster at Freshwater West
Mon 12 May	Kathryn Hearn	Aggies
Mon 19 May	Rob White	HMS Hood – recovery of the bell
Mon 2 June	Kelly White	RBLI and Lifeworks programme
Mon 9 June	Mike Milne	HMS Kelly and the Crete campaign
Mon 23 June	Emily Witcher	RN Navigator – transitioning out of the Navy
Mon 30 June	Craig Chapman	The Resurrected Pirate



REASONS TO ATTEND YOUR AGM

YOUR BEST CHANCE TO BE HEARD

If you have any concerns of branch/area life or want to propose changes to the association, then the AGM is the perfect opportunity for you to raise this with and in front of your fellow shipmates.



TAKE CONTROL OF IMPORTANT DECISIONS

Remember, the Royal Naval Association is YOU, the members who have joined collectively. Your AGM is the perfect opportunity to take part in the decision making process



REPRESENT YOUR BRANCH

Your voice and attendance matters; and the conference is the chance to take any issues from a local level to a National platform. Shipmates from all around the UK gather - ideally this is the ONE time your branch can stand up and be counted



MORE THAN A MEETING

What happens in branches under the name of the Royal Naval Association is remarkable

A number of prizes are awarded at Conference for shipmates' contribution to the Association - These are presented during Conference - the only time of the year the RNA is ALL together

COMRADESHIP

CONNECTION

Comradeship is the lifeblood of our Association - friendships are secured by getting to know each other sharing experiences and making new memories

COMMEMORATION

Tradition, respect and honour
We are all rightly proud of our Naval history and service; commemoration and ceremony is a huge part of the RNA's identity

**ONCE
NAVY
ALWAYS
NAVY**

royal-naval-association.co.uk



BRANCH NEWS



CHARD Branch

Yet another great Area 4 RNA reunion was enjoyed by 11 members of Chard Branch, with two members having attended for the first time.

The weather over the weekend was very favourable, allowing for some members to venture out into Barnstaple and further afield whilst others entertained themselves within the hotel.

Sunday saw branch and Area 4 ceremonial adviser S/M Malcolm Day oversee the standards presented on the day at the church service of St Margaret's, Northam.

The standards were presented within a packed church and made for added colour along with the brightly coloured hassocks that adorn the pews within the church.

Area 4 Reverend and Chard member Martin Kirkpatrick assisted the resident vicar in delivering an interesting and often humorous service to the congregation.

The weekend was rounded off with evening entertainment, with branches taking the opportunity of having their photos taken on the winding staircase of the hotel, as pictured above! Report by S/M Dick Moon, and images contributed by S/M Dick Moon and S/M Liz O'Brien.

See pages 25 and 26 for more from the Area 4 weekend in Bideford



MALTA Branch

Pictured left are members of Malta Branch at their recent audience with HE the President of Malta.

From left: Saviour Falzon, Charles Bugeja, Charles Galea, HE President Myriam Spiteri Debono, Paulu Briffa, Henry Vella, Emanuel Debono.

FLEET AIR ARM ASSOCIATION – Weymouth and Portland Branch

The Weymouth & Portland Branch of the Fleet Air Arm Association (FAAA) completed a successful and memorable visit to Portsmouth – a visit that was packed with history, laughter, and brilliant company.

The trip brought together 20 members (who also happen to be members of the RNA) for a two-day immersion in maritime heritage, shared stories, and enduring friendship.

This gathering exemplified the heart of their branch values: celebrating their shared Naval background, supporting each other – especially their widowed members – and reinforcing the unshakeable camaraderie that defines their association.

The historic HMS Victory, flagship of Admiral Lord Nelson, was one of the highlights of the Portsmouth visit, allowing members to walk the decks where Naval history was made.

However, the first stop was a private visit

to the HMS Sultan Helicopter Museum, generously arranged by Neil Crocker and hosted by Jim Masson.

This hidden gem of aviation history proved a highlight, evoking nostalgic memories for many of the attendees. A special guest invitation was extended to H.J. Baker Ltd, one of the trip's key supporters.

The group left Dorset in lift-shared convoys, and checked in to the Ibis Hotel in Portsmouth that afternoon, enjoying a lively social get-together that evening.

The group mustered next morning at the gates of the Historic Dockyard, where they were met by Dave MacAskill from RNA Central Office.

Then it was across the harbour to Gosport and the RN Submarine Museum, featuring HMS Alliance.

"It was incredible to see the confined spaces and conditions submariners endured," said one member, "it brought home the sacrifices made."

Priddy's Hard and Explosion Museum was next – a thrilling reminder of the scale, innovation, and firepower that defined Naval dominance.

Then on to the Powder Monkey Brewing Company, the perfect informal setting for refreshments and relaxing before returning to Portsmouth.

The final day was spent on board HMS Victory, enjoying some free time, then bidding their farewells, before the journey home began in mid-afternoon.

This trip came together thanks to the vision and effort of Vice Chairman Paul D'Arcy, who shaped the programme and drove it forward. Branch Treasurer Russ Conway managed the practicalities and financials throughout, and special thanks go to Dave MacAskill and Sarah Bewley from RNA Central Office, whose support, particularly during the demanding lead-up to the CONA Conference, demonstrated the spirit of inter-association cooperation and solidarity.

Their work through the "Thriving Together" initiative truly lived up to its name, making this visit not just logistically successful, but emotionally resonant.

From the outset, this visit wasn't just about sightseeing, it was about connection. Whether sharing lift journeys, raising a pint, or walking the decks of Victory, the true treasure of the trip was in the fellowship it rekindled.

"This trip really brought everyone together," one attendee remarked.

"It reminded us why we joined the Association in the first place."

For some, it was their first group outing since bereavement; for others, it was a chance to reconnect with their past in the company of shipmates who understand what service life meant.

These shared experiences—grounded in trust, humour, and mutual respect—define the essence of the FAAA.

As one member put it, "The camaraderie, the shared memories, and the banter—this is what keeps us going." Plans are already in motion for the next group event.



Two members of the group found out during the visit that they might have met before – half a century ago.

Shipmate Phil Norris (fifth from left in picture) shared a remarkable coincidence with Peter Foster, a fellow FAAA and Royal Naval Association (RNA) member he'd only just met on this visit.

"I was chatting to Peter, who I did not know until this trip to Pompey," said Phil.

"We got chatting and he asked where I came from, and I told him Bolton. He told me he'd been to Bolton with the Navy when he was on HMS Dido – Freedom of the Town, as she was Bolton's adopted ship.

"Well as it turned out, I was a Bolton Sea Cadet, and we sailed on the Dido from Pompey to Liverpool and marched in the freedom parade.

"So over 50 years ago he and I were on the same ship in 1973 – he was on the ship's flight, and I was a Sea Cadet."



PORTSEA and PORTSMOUTH Branch

The Branch were recently invited by the Lord and Lady Mayoress of Portsmouth, Cllr Jason Fazackerley and Cllr Helen Mitchell, both Associate Members of the Branch, for a tour of the Lord Mayor's Parlour and the City Silver in the Guildhall.

STREET Branch

Prior to the Street branch meeting on 24 March, Shipmate Bob Drage was presented with a birthday cake from his shipmates to celebrate his 98th birthday, which was just a few days later.

In this 80th Anniversary Year since the end of World War 2 in 1945, it is worth noting that Bob joined the Royal Navy on 17 July 1942, making him their very own World War 2 Armed Forces Veteran.

On completion of his training, he became a Royal Navy Artificer; however, somewhere along the way, he became a very good Chef!

The most delicious fruitcake that Bob made and brought along for his shipmates at this celebration most definitely bore testimony to that.

In the photo (right) S/M Pauline Jayes is helping Bob cut the cake with shipmates Mike Glendinning, Mike Morton, Janice Morton and Pam Hulme, herself 93, seated next to Bob. The cake was topped with two World War 2 warships, which reminded Bob of the first ships he served in.

Street shipmates attended the Area 4 Southwest Flotilla Reunion in Bideford, and agreed it was a most enjoyable weekend – the Area Team deserves a BZ for their efforts and the grateful thanks of all who attended.

One highlight was the Area Uckers Championship, made even more special by S/MS David 'Sixes' Worth and Roland 'Snake-eyes' Jones winning the tournament. They now go on to the Uckers World Championship later in the year in Portsmouth. As it was later proposed that the Branch should send supporters to the Championships, the Chairman suggested that a team of cheerleaders might be useful...



WANSBECK & DISTRICT Branch

A round-up of recent events at Wansbeck Branch demonstrates just what a difference shipmates can make to the Naval community through acts of comradeship. Members recently attended two funerals.

The first was for Brian Fawcett, aged 61, a former Royal Marine, at Lemington, where there were two Standards and a guard of honour of eight.

The second was for John Harvey, aged 54, another former Royal Marine, at Tynemouth crematorium. Again, two

Standards were paraded, and here was a guard of honour of 30 Green Berets. The branch was also represented at the birthday celebrations for a 101-year-old World War 2 RN veteran at his home in Newbiggin-by-Sea, presenting him with a card. Shipmates wished him well and hope to see him again next year. Another World War 2 veteran – this time ex-Army – was visited at his home in Cramlington. Now in his 102nd year, he is a 10th Dan in judo and still teaching! Ex-RN sailor Warwick Manders (77) was visited at his Bedlington care

home, where he now lives permanently. Former Branch Treasurer S/M Ken Walton, ex Royal Engineer, is on the list of future visits as he receives treatment on his foot in Wansbeck Hospital, while S/M George Phillips (81), former RASC, is also having treatment on a foot, this time in Freeman Hospital. A proposed visit to Maureen Dyer, an 82-year-old ex-Wren, at her care home in Newbiggin had to be postponed because of an outbreak of sickness, but Branch Secretary S/M Derek Wilkinson said another attempt would be made soon.



AREA 4

On the first weekend in March this year, Durrant House Hotel in Bideford once again hosted the hugely successful reunion of the RNA's Area 4 South West Flotilla.

A total of 15 Branches were in attendance from around the South-West, comprising a total of 154 members.

The Reunion is held as a means for everyone to get together, for charities to be nominated and raised funds to be handed over.

This year the charities nominated were

- Aggie Weston's
- Dorset and Somerset Air Ambulance
- Walking with the Wounded
- Newquay Sea Cadets

The final figure will be publicised in due course, but each year it is in the region of £2,000 or so.

The weekend started with an informal get-together on the Friday night, allowing shipmates to settle in and get reacquainted with friends, and the Gala Dinner was held on the Saturday evening.

There was a raffle and rum raffle, and again figures will be promulgated in due course.

Sunday saw a church service with Standards and a

collection for St Margaret's, which together with Gift Aid raised more than £500 this year.

Having heard that Portsmouth would again be hosting the World Uckers Tournament in 2025 it was decided to hold an Area 4 Tournament during the Reunion weekend. Unfortunately, half dropped out at the last minute, but it was still good fun.

Faye Lawton, one of the organisers of the weekend, ended up in the final with Laurie Magee, and some shipmates who had never played (or served) before (S/Ms Fiona and Gary Hawkey) ended up in the semi final.

However the overall event was won by David Worth and Roland Jones, of **Street Branch** (below left).

They were duly presented with a trophy, donated by **Frome Branch**.

The trophy celebrates the 100th birthday of member John Oakley, who joined in 1985 and still attends most meetings and socials!

BZ to all those involved.





St NEOTS and ROYSTON Branches

It was Big Eats for St Neots and Royston shipmates when they were invited to a Veterans Breakfast by the Army's Mission Ready Training Centre (MRTC) at Basingbourn Barracks, near Royston in Hertfordshire.

On arrival at the Officers' Mess, shipmates were greeted by their hosts and directed to one of the anterooms for tea, coffee and introductions.

They then moved to the dining room for the main event.

It was great to chat with their hosts and find out a little about what they get up to.

The MRTC prepares troops who are about to go on operations, so they are ready for the demands their deployment is likely to throw at them.

It's similar to the 'Portland Work Up' that Royal Navy ships did to ensure they were ready for operational deployment. Note – Work Up changed to Basic Operational Sea Training (BOST) and transferred to Plymouth in 1995.

Feeling full and satisfied, the visitors retired to the anteroom for more tea, coffee and sticky buns (for those that still had room!) Because the operations that troops are deployed on are many and various, the unit's staff are drawn from a wide variety of disciplines, and shipmates met soldiers from many different regiments – Scottish, Logistics, Royal Engineers, Infantry and the legendary Gurkhas. It was fascinating to chat to them all and get their take on today's Army.

The MRTC is planning to repeat the exercise in the summer, when they're hoping to take visitors on a tour of the barracks, so they are very much looking forward to that.



RHONDDA Branch

Shipmates from Rhondda Branch helped Gordon (Pops) White celebrate his 102nd birthday at the beginning of the month.

Gordon started work down the mines at 14 before joining the Royal Navy in November 1942. After training at HMS Raleigh he sailed for Egypt where he joined HMS Saunders and was a guard to Italian POWs who were put to work as cooks. After a few weeks, Pops joined up with 114 LCM Flotilla and, after training, they sailed up the Suez Canal to Alexandria, from where they went to Sicily for the invasion. After two weeks or so they went to Malta where Pops joined the 667th LCM flotilla.



His flotilla went to Sicily, Taranto, Messina, Naples and Anzio in the following months.

At Anzio Pops took his gear on to LCI(L) 273 where – luckily for him – he picked one of the bunks on the port side. Two days after their arrival, they were ferrying stores from ship to shore when a shell from exploded a few yards from them as they unloaded.

When the smoke and dust cleared they could see some of the soldiers who were loading a lorry were lying badly injured in a tangle of arms and legs.

A few days later, at 0400 on 17 March, Pops was woken by anti-aircraft fire. The next thing Pops saw was a flash of light and then everything went black. When he came to, he was still on his bunk and discovered his left wrist and right leg were broken. There was enough light coming into the space through shrapnel holes to see that all of the bunks on the starboard side were in a hell of a mess.

After a while, a shipmate came down and enquired how he was and upon being told about his broken limbs, he said he would fetch help and went away. Pops was sitting there on his bunk when some of the other boys started moaning and a few minutes later, he could feel the vessel going over. When the water came high enough, he slid off his bunk.



Somebody must have been using a lifebelt as a pillow because it hit him, and her placed it under my armpit. He was floating around for a while when an American voice asked if there was anyone down there. He said that they would get him out and, after making a hole large enough, two Americans hauled him out. He was taken across the harbour to a field hospital where he was operated on before being moved to a hospital ship, then an American hospital near Pompeii.

Pops said the actions of the Americans that day made all the difference. In 2004 Pops went back to the area on the 'Heroes Return' programme, 60 years after the event.

He left the Navy in June 1946.



SWANSEA Branch

Shipmates turned out in force for the Swansea Branch Standard Commissioning at Christchurch, the Garrison Church, Swansea, on Sunday 23 March.

More than 80 people attended the service, including a number of local dignitaries and civic representatives.

Amongst that number was the Deputy Mayor of Swansea and Neath.

The Plaque of HMS Arethusa was also handed over from HMS Cambria.

A buffet was served after the ceremony.

Photographs courtesy of Branch Photographer Joanne Randalls.



AREA 6

The 2025 Area 6 Annual General Meeting was hosted by **Huntingdon & District Branch** on 15 February at the Montagu Club, Huntingdon. It was well attended with more than 40 Branch Members, which included nine Branch delegates.

The Area was pleased to welcome RNA Membership Manager S/M Sara Field representing Central Office. Towards the end of the meeting, Sara delivered a presentation to shipmates to give an update on current RNA philosophy and planned events. This was followed by an Open Forum for questions and answers.

There was a change of Area Chairmanship; S/M Paul Godfrey stood down and, following a delegate vote, S/M Mike Mine is to be the new Area 6 Chairman. Existing Committee Members were re-elected with one new member being elected – S/M Shirley, Jones of **Hemel Hempstead Branch**.

S/M Keith Ridley gave notice that he was to retire as the Area National Council

Member at National Conference in June. S/M Anthony Boddrell has put his name forward as the NCM – he currently holds the position of Deputy NCM – and S/M Paul McKay in turn has volunteered to take up the position of DNCM. Following the election of Area Officers and Committee, there was the award of Area Trophies. The **President's Trophy** went to S/M Paul Godfrey for his six-year commitment to the Area as Chairman.

The **Block & Gavel** went to **St Neots Branch** for being the Most Active Branch.

The **Pembroke House Shield** also went to **St Neots Branch** or the Highest Increase in Fund Raising/Recruitment. Shipmate of the Year is Gus Gudgeon, of **First Garden City Branch**, for his outstanding representation of the Association and Area. Gus was not available to accept his award in person, so S/M Penny Jarvis received it on his behalf.

The **Area Trophy Cup**



was won by **Newbury and District Branch** for the most improved Branch.

At the end of the meeting, S/M Geoff Paterson, of **St Neots Branch**, presented S/M Sara Field, as a representative of RNA Central Office, with a £500 donation cheque. Following the AGM and Area Meeting, entertainment was provided by folk band Whirligigs, and there was a buffet and raffle.

Thanks go to **Huntingdon Branch** for hosting and to Sara for her attendance.



MONMOUTH Branch

Monmouth Branch is hosting the Band of His Majesty's Royal Marines, Commando Training Centre RM, at a special concert to be held on Saturday 26 April. The event will be at the Blake Theatre in Monmouth, starting at 1900.

It is an ambitious event for the branch to undertake, and deserves the full support of shipmates in the area as well as members of the public.

All proceeds will be donated to Royal Navy & Royal Marines Charity (RNRMC), Woody's Lodge and the Sea Cadets and Royal Marines Cadets.

The Bandies are returning to Monmouth by popular demand, and the programme for the evening promises real crowd-pleasing classics.

After the National Anthem, the show opens with the Fanfare for the First Sea Lord, followed by On

The Quarterdeck, Admiralty Mews and Clash of the Dreadnoughts.

Other musical pieces in the first half of the evening include The Viscount Nelson, Seafarers, a trombone solo entitled Mr Nice Guy, and music from the pirate film Cutthroat Island.

After the interval the audience can expect the clarinet solo Latin American Chronicles, Rule Britannia as a euphonium solo, and Of Men and the Sea.

A spectacular finale will include Band of Brothers, the hymn Eternal Father, Ceremonial Sunset and Heart of Oak, the official march of the Royal Navy, before the evening ends with Sarie Marais – the Commando March – and the Royal Marines' regimental march A Life on the Ocean Wave.

Tickets are available from the Blake Theatre website at <https://tinyurl.com/2s67s9ck>



Tyne Branch

RNA Tyne shipmates were delighted to welcome nine members of the WO/CPO Mess of HMS Somerset to their March Branch meeting while the frigate was in the River Tyne at the end of March.

A good social evening followed, enjoyed by all present.

Branch Chairman S/M Tony 'Knocker' White Snr was presented with a plaque from the ship by CPO Gareth 'Wills' Willey.

On Saturday 5 April the dedication of the first phase of South Tyneside's Veterans' Walkway was held at the North Marine Park in South Shields.

Tyne Branch shipmates and their Branch Standard were in attendance, and could be spotted in the background of the Tyne Tees evening news programme!

It is a lovely location, looking out to the mouth of the River Tyne and the North Sea.



OBITUARIES

S/M DAVE HARRIS

Dave "Chats" Harris crossed the bar on 10th October 2024, aged 78. He was born in Woking on 10 September 1946 but then moved to Birchington, where he grew up with his sister and brother, attending Birchington Primary and King Ethelbert Secondary Schools.

Being a rather mischievous lad, an incident where he was caught stealing the bellringer's rope at All Saints Church and marched home by the local bobby was about to change his life.

His father's solution was to send his wayward son to a boarding school near Upton which was also attached to TS Arethusa (formerly Peking), where Dave would learn many naval skills as a Sea Cadet which ultimately led him to join the Royal Navy.

This he did and at the age of 16, joining HMS Ganges as a Seamen Gunner (Control) and then a Gunlayer Armourer.

He would serve for 12 years with seagoing drafts on HM Ships Mohawk, Dalrymple, Centaur, Cavalier and Albion, and shore time usually spent at HMS Excellent on Whale Island (Whaley) and finally to Victory Barracks for his final discharge. During these years he met and married his wife Jackie, and together they had three children Darren, Jason and Michelle, the first of which leads to an enduring tale which Dave wrote down in his own words.

Entitled 'Chats wants to go home' or 'A saga in the harbour'...

I was Able Seaman Chats Harris GA2 on board HMS Cavalier sailing from Guz on a year's commission to the Far East. My wife was eight months pregnant with our first child when the ship sailed. On the way the ship called into Gibraltar and sailed for the Suez Canal. As we were about to enter the canal, we were informed that it was shut, and we had to retrace our steps through the Med and divert down the west coast of Africa.

We made the trip around the Cape and had to call into Port Elizabeth to refuel before going on to Simons Town. Cavalier was the first Royal Navy ship to have been there for a very long time and the reception was incredible. The local population loved us but were 'out of bounds'. Nevertheless we spent a very entertaining week and were sad to leave our memories behind.

The next job was probably the most boring imaginable – Beira Patrol, involving four weeks trying to enforce the sanctions against Rhodesia following Ian Smith's declaration of independence.

The boredom was relieved by listening to Lourenco Marques Radio, the crossing the line ceremony, upper deck uckers and chipping and painting ship. About this time I received a telegram to tell me that I was the father of a fine bouncing baby boy. I was over the moon, but a dilemma resulted – I was scheduled to be away for another ten months and there was no way of seeing him. What on earth could I do?

The time had come for the ship to be relieved, and we sailed into Mombasa. For the bored few this was like heaven,



and we were all looking forward to our runs ashore for some alternative entertainment. Now, however, was the start of my little problem.

As a boy at Sea Cadets on Arethusa and at Ganges, where I was part of the band, I learnt to play the bugle. This meant that one of my responsibilities on board ship was to be called upon to play the Alert and Carry On when entering and leaving harbour. This was done if the ship had one and unfortunately Cavalier did have one – me!

It was now that my world fell apart. I was getting ready with great anticipation for my run ashore when the order came for me to get re-dressed in my No 6 uniform to play the bugle when Jomo Kenyatta, a 'big wig' from Kenya, passed in his motor launch. I was not happy and as it was tot time my mess mates felt sorry for me and offered me sippers of their tots. I had my own and about ten sippers. After borrowing somebody's hat as I could not find my

own and getting my bugle, I staggered to the iron deck. Kenyatta duly sailed past, and I did my duty and played the Alert. By this time, with my brain still fuddled, I decided that I had had enough, and I wanted to see my new son.

Extreme measures were called for. As they did not belong to me and with great consideration, I placed the hat and bugle safely and, shouting "Margate here I come", I dived over the side and began to swim across the harbour. Maybe I was trying to work my ticket, but I was determined to get



home.

The sea boat was launched, and I was dragged from the water and taken back to the ship. Once aboard, not being deterred from my task, I dived over the side again and set off for Margate.

The sea boat was launched again, and I was retrieved once more and held more securely and transferred to cells for the duration of the stay in Mombasa.

Obviously shore leave was cancelled, as was my tot. The ship then sailed for Singapore and I was released on the grounds that even I would not be daft enough to try and swim the Indian Ocean.

To try and sort me out I had an appointment with a psychiatrist in Singapore. This bloke turned out to be more bombed out than I was and spent the whole of the interview talking about double decker buses... How this was supposed to be of help to me I do not have a clue, but I am still allowed in the outside world so I must be OK now!

I never did get home early and did not see my son until he was nine months old. I think he has forgiven me as he does talk to me.

I certainly will never forget that tot time and what effect Pussers had on me.

I am certain that the crew of the Cavalier have not forgotten."

After leaving the Royal Navy Dave started a career in insurance with CIS, retiring after 27 years.

Dave met Lesley 37 years ago, who said that theirs was a long engagement as he eventually proposed to her from his hospital bed while recovering from a tropical disease, and it took them three years to finally marry, which they had remained together for the past 21 years.

Despite facing challenges with his health Dave was keen to get the most out of life and enjoyed travel, and he and Lesley have been on many cruises to all sorts of places including some that he had visited during his Naval career.

His favourite place to visit was Turkey, which initially he wasn't sure he wanted to go to but after the first time was always keen to return.

Dave was a keen fisherman and spent many happy hours in his pursuit of the Big One (see picture below), and was Secretary of the Nayland Boat Sea Angling Society.

He was instrumental in setting up the **Birchington-on-Sea Branch** of the RNA, and after the first Chairman crossed the bar, he took up the position, enjoying the many social occasions – especially Black Tot Day!

He also attended many HMS Ganges reunions, enjoying meeting up with old shipmates and getting involved in Sod's Operas and dinner dances.

As well as his three children, Dave had four grandchildren who all knew him as Grandad Boat for his love of the sea and fishing.

He will be missed by all his family and those friends who were lucky enough to know him.



S/M ANDREW GLEAVE

D184507M RO2 (G) Andrew John Gleave died on 15 March.

Andrew died in the Royal Victoria Hospital in Blackpool. He was an active member of the Association in the area.

His family said he will be remembered in part for his courage as he battled cancer, and an amazing and enduring sense of humour.

Despite his crippling illness, Andrew always found the time and energy to support and help those in need.

He will be very sadly missed.

Oil painting 'St George and the Dragon: Zeppelin L15 in the Thames, April 1916' by Donald Maxwell. See 1 April. Painting from the Imperial War Museum collection (IWM (Art.IWM ART 888))



APRIL SWINGING THE LAMP

'Swinging the Lamp' events are drawn, by permission, from the definitive 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). 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 April 1916

German airship L15 set out from its base in the Frisian Islands on the evening of 31 March 1916 on a night bombing raid targeting London, but by the following morning it had gained an unwelcome place in the history books as the first Zeppelin to be brought down by enemy gunfire. Shortly before 10pm the aircraft was struck by gunfire from an anti-aircraft gun, probably based at Purfleet in Essex, though some reports suggest the fatal shot came from Dartford in Kent. Whichever it was, the shell pierced four of the Zeppelin's gas bags and, despite her crew lobbing everything they could overboard, the giant craft steadily lost height. As she sank lower, L15 was attacked by a Royal Flying Corps pilot in a BE 2C from 19 Squadron, based nearby at Hainault Farm, but despite dropping incendiary bombs and Ranken darts (pointed 1lb dart-style bombs developed as an RN Air Service weapon and only introduced a couple of months before this attack) on the envelope, no further damage occurred. L15 finally flopped onto the sea off Margate in Kent shortly after midnight on 1 April, near the Kentish Knock lightship. One member of the German crew drowned, but his 16 colleagues

were picked up by the armed trawler HMT Olivine and transferred to torpedo boat destroyer HMS Vulture. The crumpled wreck of L15 was taken in a lengthy tow, hampered by enemy submarine activity, underwater snags and obstacles, and the airship eventually fell apart two miles offshore and some of the wreckage that was finally hauled to dry land soon disappeared as souvenir hunters flocked to the beach.

2 April 1966

British novelist C S Forester – the creator of fictional Royal Navy her Horatio Hornblower – died in California on 2 April 1966 at the age of 66 as a result of complications after a stroke. Forester (born Cecil Louis Troughton Smith) was born in Cairo, Egypt, where his father worked as an English teacher, but moved to London with his mother at a young age when his parents separated. He started medical training at Guy's Hospital in London but never completed his studies, and instead took up writing – with a good deal of success. Forester is best known for his 12-book Horatio Hornblower series (1937-67), tracing the career of the fictional Royal Navy officer from midshipman to admiral around the time of the Napoleonic Wars, though he also hit the mark with other novels, including *The African Queen* (inspired by Royal Navy activities in German East Africa in World War 1), *The Good Shepherd* (an intense study of a convoy during the Battle of the Atlantic), and *Hunting the Bismarck*, which were all made into successful films – Humphrey Bogart winning an Oscar for Best Actor in the former. He also wrote non-fiction books, including *The Age of Fighting Sail*, a study of naval clashes between Britain and the United States in the War of 1812. Forester moved to Washington DC during World War 2 and wrote pro-

Continued on page 34

Allied propaganda material for the British Ministry of Information, who were seeking to influence American opinion. He later moved on to Fullerton in California, where he spent the rest of his life.

3 April 1941

Armed Merchant Cruiser HMS Worcestershire was torpedoed by U-74 in the Atlantic on 3 April 1941 but luck was on her side, and she managed to limp on to Liverpool. The 11,400-ton motor passenger ship Worcestershire had been built in the early 1930s by Fairfield at Govan for the Liverpool shipping line Bibby Bros, and was requisitioned by the Admiralty shortly after hostilities were declared, in September 1939. She was converted to an armed merchant cruiser and was ready to join the front line in late November the same year. The ship joined her third convoy, SC 26, on 20 March 1941 in Halifax, Nova Scotia, bound for Liverpool. The convoy consisted of 23 ships and – initially – just Worcestershire for protection; further escorts would join the formation as it reached the Western Approaches, a typical arrangement in the early months of the war. Facing the convoy was a line of U-boats which were operating at their limit, keeping them outside the cover of the Western Approaches escorts, and these U-boats were initially alerted by U-76 on 1 April of a westbound convoy of more than 50 ships (Convoy OB 305). U-76 lost contact with the formation but the following day sister boat U-74 spotted ships of SC 26 and began shadowing the convoy while calling in other submarines. By the evening of 2 April four U-boats were ready to attack, and shortly after midnight U-46 fired the first shots of a bloody encounter, sinking the 7,000-ton tanker British Reliance, though her entire crew of 50 were rescued, and damaging 4,300-ton freighter Alderpool, carrying

wheat. Alderpool was later sunk by U-73. Within three hours another three ships had been sunk, at which point convoy commodore Swabey, in SS Magician, decided the merchantmen would stand a better chance if they scattered. Soon after the tanker British Viscount (6,900 tons) was hit by a torpedo, caught fire and sank, then Worcestershire was struck, just before 0600, causing serious damage. As dawn broke Cdre Swabey started to gather a number of ships together again as a group of escort warships steamed west to meet them. Despite the approaching danger, U-boats managed to sink a further four members of the convoy, as well as a Finnish freighter sailing independently. After the six Royal Navy escorting warships were in position, no further losses were suffered by the main body of SC 26, but almost half its original strength had been destroyed and 97 sailors lost their lives. One U-boat was sunk – U-76, which was attacked by destroyer HMS Wolverine, sloop HMS Scarborough and corvette HMS Arbutus, brought to the surface by depth charges then quickly disappeared below the waves, though all but one of her crew were rescued. Worcester had evaded one torpedo before she was hit by U-74's final shot – the submarine could only watch as the big cruiser came to a halt and sat for two hours, a sitting duck, until she could get under way again. Worcestershire was escorted into Liverpool by destroyer HMS Hurricane, and an attack by U-69 was foiled by two other destroyers later in the afternoon of 3 April. Worcestershire was repaired and went on to escort a further 14 convoys of the next couple of years. She survived the war and was returned to Bibby Bros in October 1947, continuing to work until she was broken up in Japan in later 1961.

4 April 1918

Destroyer HMS Bittern was lost in a collision with

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HMS Worcestershire at Greenock, June 1943. See April 3. Image from the Imperial War Museum collection © IWM (A 17213)



freighter SS Kenilworth off Portland Bill in the Channel on 4 April 1918. The three-funnel 30-knotter was built by Barrow Shipbuilding (which was taken over by Vickers during construction) at Barrow-in-Furness, commissioning in April 1899. The 410-ton ship spent her entire service in home waters, beginning with the Chatham Division based at Harwich. In 1912, as the Admiralty marshalled their resources, she was reclassified as a C-class destroyer. On the outbreak of World War 1 she was assigned to the Devonport Flotilla, where she spent the rest of the remainder of her war. On 4 April 1918 the brand new 5,500-ton dry cargo ship SS Kenilworth, of the Dalgleish Steam Shipping Co, was making her way from Portland Bill to Start Point across Lyme Bay, and had been ordered to hug the coastline. Instead, her master steamed her straight across the bay with no lights showing, and in thick fog off Portland the ship smashed into the long, low-profile HMS Bittern, sinking her almost immediately; all 75 hands were lost.

5 April 1800

Third rate HMS Leviathan (1790) and fifth rate HMS Emerald (1795), part of a larger squadron under Rear Admiral John Duckworth, spotted a Spanish convoy on 5 April 1800 which led to a protracted operation which goes by the name of the 'Action on 7 April 1800'. The ships were part of a blockade force around Cadiz when the 13-strong, escorted by three frigates, convoy was seen. The Royal Navy squadron immediately set off to chase the Spaniards, and by 0300 on 6 April they had caught the first ship, a ten-gun merchant vessel that surrendered without a fight. Daybreak revealed that the convoy had scattered, and just one 14-gun brig could be seen; with light winds preventing Leviathan and Emerald approaching it, the two ships lowered boats and parties rowed over to take their second prize after a brief exchange of fire. Other sails were spotted on the horizon so the British squadron split up, with Leviathan and Emerald heading west into the Atlantic. By nightfall the pair could see nine Spaniards, and in the early hours of 7 April they identified two of the escorting frigates, Carmen and Florentina, which they shadowed through the night in order to be in position to attack during daylight. The Spanish ships had assumed the two vessels falling in close by overnight were part of the convoy, but realised their mistake at dawn, at which point they piled on sail in an attempt to escape. When Duckworth's command to stop was ignored the British opened fire on their opponents' rigging to disable them, at which point both surrendered. The frigates were found to be carrying cargoes of quicksilver, and one had an archbishop on board as a passenger. Emerald went on to pick up a further four merchant ships by dusk and Leviathan a brig, and the pair returned to Gibraltar the following day with their prizes. Both ships enjoyed successful careers in the Royal Navy. The 74-gun Leviathan sailed close behind Nelson's Victory at the Battle of Trafalgar in 1805 and captured Spanish ship-of-the-line San Augustin, and four years later was part of the small squadron that destroyed most of a French convoy and escorts at the Battle of Maguelone. With the end of the Napoleonic Wars Leviathan's seagoing days were over, and she spent 32 years as a prison hulk before being broken up in 1848. Emerald just missed the Battle of Cape St Vincent in February 1797 because of adverse weather as she approached the battle fleets, but she participated in a number of subsequent successful smaller squadron actions, taking a number of

further prizes in the Mediterranean, the Caribbean and the Far East. She spent the final 14 years of her life as a receiving ship in Portsmouth before being broken up in early 1836.

6 April 1909

Destroyer HMS Blackwater was sunk in collision with merchantman SS Hero off Dungeness on 6 April 1909. The 635-ton River-class warship was built by Cammell Laird at Birkenhead and launched on 25 July 1903, spending the early part of her brief service career with the East Coast Destroyer Flotilla out of Harwich. In 1906 Blackwater was serving with the 3rd Destroyer Flotilla, part of the Channel Fleet, then in April 1909 joined the 2nd Destroyer Flotilla of the Home Fleet, but she would not be of that company for long. On 6 April, while en route from Portland to the Firth of Forth to join an exercise with other ships of the flotilla, Blackwater collided with the Bristol-registered freighter SS Hero in the Channel near Dungeness. Hero's sailors claimed the steamer narrowly missed one destroyer in the fast-moving flotilla before Blackwater attempted to cross the freighter's bows, and was fatally struck on her starboard quarter, almost cutting her in half. Her crew were taken off by HMS Forward and the crippled warship was taken in tow, but sank shortly after in more than 30m of water around five miles off Dungeness. Hero limped into Dover with damaged bows. The wreck of HMS Blackwater is now an established location for recreational divers off the Kent coast

7 April 1943

Submarine HMS Tuna sank U-644 off Jan Mayen Island on 7 April 1943, by which time she had already cemented her place in the annals of the Royal Navy. Tuna was a Scotts-built T-class submarine, launched at Greenock on 10 May 1940 and running on German-built MAN diesel engines – the machinery had been delivered before the war (although spare parts were always something of an issue during her war patrols). She spent her wartime career in the Western European theatre of operations, and her most famous contribution was as a key element of Operation Frankton, better known as the Cockleshell Heroes raid on Bordeaux in December 1942. It was Tuna that sailed to the mouth of the Gironde on the French Atlantic coast and dropped off a raiding party of ten Royal Marine commandos and their five canoes (a sixth canoe was damaged on disembarking and could not take part). The commandos paddled their way 60 miles upriver to Bordeaux harbour where they successfully attacked Axis shipping, though only two Royals survived the operation. Tuna would account for four U-boats during the war, one of which was the relatively-new U-644, which was sunk on 7 April 1943. U-644 commissioned in October 1942 and only completed her training programme on 31 March 1943, exactly week before she was lost. Operating out of Kiel, U-644's first and last war patrol took her to an area between Shetland and the uninhabited Norwegian Arctic island of Jan Mayen. Unfortunately for the Germans, British intelligence had worked out where the submarine was, and Tuna was sent out to hunt the U-boat down. On 7 April made contact with U-644, which was only 500 metres away, and two torpedoes out of a salvo of five hit their target, sinking U-644 and killing all 45 men on board. Tuna survived the war, and was broken up at Briton Ferry in South Wales in the summer of 1946.

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Members of the crew of HMS Tuna at Holy Loch in August 1943. See 7 April. Image from the Imperial War Museum collection © IWM (A 18933)

8 April 1927

Destroyer HMS Veteran, steaming up the Yangtze, was fired upon by Nationalist Chinese forces at Kweishang forts, 15 miles below Chinkiang. She fired back with her main 4.7in guns and silenced the forts. Veteran, a modified W-class destroyer laid down at John Brown's yard on the Clyde in the last weeks of World War 1 and launched on 26 April 1919, was one of more than 100 foreign warships on the Yangtze at the time, representing a number of countries including the UK, the United States, Japan, the Netherlands, France, Italy and Spain – all there to protect their national interests in the 'treaty ports' on the great Chinese river. These ports were open to foreign trade, but were also strategic hubs in the ongoing struggle between warring Chinese factions, chiefly the Nationalists (Kuomintang) and Communists, though numerous lawless warlords were also active. The Nationalists' 'Northern Expedition' to unite the vast country splintered when the Nationalists and Communists split and turned on each other in March/April 1927 – the spark that ignited the Chinese civil war. Foreign interests and official buildings in ports such as Nanking came under attack, and the 'Nanking Incident' of 27 March, when consulates were targeted and a number of foreign officials and merchants were

killed by looting forces (of both sides), saw Royal Navy, US Navy and other nations' warships bombard the city to protect their citizens. Although Veteran was not present at the Nanking Incident, she was part of the heavy foreign naval presence on the Yangtze as the conflict between Chinese forces escalated, hence the attack on her on 8 April – a scenario not a million miles from that which faced HMS Amethyst two decades later. Despite her age, Veteran played an active (if truncated) role in World War 2. She began in Plymouth, patrolling the Channel and escorting merchantmen, though she was out of action for several weeks after colliding twice in a month. In April 1940 she was assigned to the Norway Campaign out of Scapa Flow, but another collision meant more repairs. A stint in the North Sea with the Home Fleet was followed by Atlantic Convoy work in the Western Approaches from September 1940, sailing out of Londonderry, until a collision with HMS Verity put her out of action in January 1941 for a couple of months. Later that year she shared in the destruction of U-207, and in 1942 she switched to convoy defence on the east coasts of the United States and Canada, but that was to prove her undoing. In September of that year, escorting Convoy RB1, she was caught in a U-boat wolfpack attack; SS

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New York was one of several ships attacked when the convoy was forced to scatter, and on 26 September Veteran came across survivors of the New York as the convoy reformed. While rescuing the shipwrecked merchant sailors Veteran was hit by two torpedoes from U-404 and rapidly sank, taking her entire ship's company of 160 and survivors of the steamer New York with her.

9 April 1940

HMS Renown fought battlecruisers Gneisenau and Scharnhorst 50 miles west of the Lofoten Islands on 9 April 1940 – the first naval big-gun action since Jutland. The Govan-built battlecruiser, a veteran of World War 1 (though she didn't see any action), was particularly active in the second global conflict, spending a considerable time with Force H based at Gibraltar as well as taking part in the Norwegian Campaign and escorting Arctic convoys. And it was during operations off Norway that Renown, a 32,700-ton fast, well-armed battlecruiser, took on the German sisters Gneisenau and Scharnhorst in April 1940. The two 38,700-ton German capital ships, sometimes described as battleships, had been carrying out raids on Allied shipping, but on this occasion came up against a foe prepared to go toe-to-toe with them. The German invasion of Norway was well under way when Renown and her escorts spotted the German ships through a snowstorm in the early hours of 9 April. In a high wind and heavy seas neither side initially had much idea of what was going on – Renown thought she was taking on a battlecruiser and heavy cruiser, while the Germans thought they were facing a Nelson-class battleship. Renown opened fire first, at just after 0400, at a range

of almost 19,000 yards but took the first hit, damaging her foremast; her destroyer escort also opened fire on the enemy. She struck Gneisenau with the 16th salvo from her main 15in guns, putting Gneisenau's fire control system out of operation. Renown turned her main guns on to Scharnhorst, but took a superficial hit to her stern which killed a sailor. At this critical point the German warship's radar failed, at which point the two raiders turned to the north east and increased speed to break off the engagement. Although Renown followed, heavy seas reduced her speed and except for a brief period when Scharnhorst was forced to slow down, no more shots were fired by either side. Renown went on to play a key role in the war; she was involved in the hunts for Bismarck after Hood was sunk, she escorted convoys and on several occasions transported top-level politicians and military commanders (including Winston Churchill) to Allied conferences. She also served with the Eastern Fleet before the end of the war. She was earmarked for scrapping in January 1948, and towed to Faslane for breaking in the summer of the same year, by which time she was the last remaining Royal Navy battlecruiser.

10 April 1795

Frigate HMS *Astraea* (32) captured the larger French frigate *Gloire* (32) 150 miles south west of the Isles of Scilly on 10 April 1795. The Isle of Wight-built fifth rate warship was launched in July 1781 and spent much of her early career off North America, taking part in the capture of the American 40-gun frigate *North Carolina* in December 1782 on the Delaware River after an 18-hour chase. In 1786 *Astraea* was once again crossing the Atlantic, this time via Madeira to the West Indies,

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**HMS Renown in April 1941. See 9 April.
Image from the IWM collection © IWM (A 3824)**



where she spent three years cruising the Caribbean visiting British, Spanish and French islands and settlements. Back in home waters, the frigate was part of a strong Royal Navy squadron (five ships of the line and three frigates) patrolling the Channel on 10 April 1795 when they spotted three French frigates through a break in the fog. *Astraea* set off in pursuit of the *Gloire*, which had a similar firepower but a ship's company of 270 compared with *Astraea's* 210. The ships pounded each other for nearly an hour, with the French suffering around 40 casualties as the British ship fired into her hull – the French policy was to aim at the masts and rigging to disable their opponents. *Gloire* finally struck and was taken as a prize; she was pressed into service with the Royal Navy under her existing name, and was sold in 1802. *Astraea* continued to prove a useful asset on both sides of the Atlantic, helping to capture a number of privateers. In December 1806 *Astraea* almost came a cropper when she went aground in bad weather in the Kattegat; her ship's company had to cut away her masts and rigging and lose her guns overboard in order to refloat her and she managed to limp into Elsinore, around 25 miles away. *Astraea* was lost on another deployment to the Caribbean when, escorting a mail ship, she ran aground on 23 March 1808 on a reef off the British Virgin Islands. All but four of her ship's company of 250 were rescued, and some equipment salvaged; a court martial later that year exonerated her captain and his fellow officers of wrongdoing, blaming the loss on unusual and unexpected currents. The wreck, complete with cannon and other artefacts, can still be seen, but conditions on the reef are so dangerous that very few people attempt to dive on it.

11 April 1940

Submarine HMS *Spearfish* torpedoed and damaged German pocket battleship *Lutzow* north of the Skaw in the Kattegat on 11 April 1940 – a notable success in her short wartime career. The 980-ton submarine was built by Cammell Laird at Birkenhead and launched in April 1936. Her war service began badly – she was badly damaged off the Danish coast on 24 September 1939 by German warships and it required a major effort, involving an aircraft carrier and battleship, to recover her and escort her back to the UK. On 11 April 1940 *Spearfish* was patrolling the Kattegat when she spotted the 'panzerschiff' (heavy cruiser or pocket battleship) *Lutzow*, which was originally built in 1929-32 under the name *Deutschland* but renamed in 1940. *Spearfish* struck *Lutzow* with a torpedo, forcing the 14,500-ton vessel out of the war for more than a year. *Spearfish* went on to sink a couple of small Danish fishing vessels, but that was the extent of her successes. On 31 July 1940 she sailed from Rosyth on patrol, but the following day was caught on the surface in the middle of the North Sea by U-34, which was on her way back to port after her final war patrol and had just a single torpedo left on board. That single torpedo was enough to sink *Spearfish*; only one of her crew of 42 survived, and he was taken prisoner by the German submarine.

12 April 1918

CMB 33A was destroyed by a German shore battery at Ostend during cancelled battleship operation at that port on 12 April 1918. Coastal Motor Boat 33A (Motor Boat No 1007) was built by Thornycroft at Hampton,

and completed in early 1918. The flimsy 11-ton craft, based on pre-war racing models, was powered by two Thornycroft V12 petrol engines, each producing 250bhp and capable of propelling her at up to 35kts. Carrying a single torpedo (as well as four machine guns) these boats would skim across the sea at high speed, launch their torpedo tail-first from a stern tube, then turn sharply out of danger while the weapon homed in on its target. On 12 April 1918 CMB 33A was operating off Ostend when she came under fire from the gun battery at Eylau, badly damaging the fragile vessel. Her crew of six abandoned the motor boat but were thought to have drowned; four bodies washed ashore on the French and Belgian coasts (as did the wreck of the boat, near Ostend) but two were never recovered. The Germans began to rebuild the boat, but the task was never completed. The motor boat was awarded the Battle Honour Belgian Coast 1918.

13 April 1899

A landing party from torpedo cruiser HMS *Porpoise* and screw corvette HMS *Royalist* repulsed a Mata'afan attack in Samoa on 13 April 1899. The 1,800-ton Archer-class ship, built by Thompson's on the Clyde and launched in May 1886, took up duties on the Australian Station ten years later, arriving via spells in Singapore and Hong Kong. The Samoan civil war of 1898-9 resulted from the death of the Samoan ruler Malietoa Laupepa in 1898 and the return from exile of a rival, Mata'afa Iosefo, who claimed the crown instead of Laupepa's son Tanumafili. Three colonial powers had a stake in the succession - Mata'afa and his rebel forces (who were elected to power by a congress of Samoan chiefs) were backed by the Germans, while the UK and United States threw their weight behind Tanumafili and his supporters. The civil war was played out across Samoa by combined colonial and Samoan forces, with the UK and USA bombarding Apia from the harbour early in the conflict. As Matafa'an forces withdrew from the capital to a stronghold along the coast an expedition was proposed by the Anglo-American group, and on 1 April 1899 a joint force of 26 marines, 88 sailors and 136 Samoans landed from HMS *Porpoise*, corvette HMS *Royalist* and cruisers HMS *Tauranga* and USS *Philadelphia* to attack forts guarding the settlement of Vailele, which had already been softened up by a bombardment from *Royalist*. This so-called Second Battle of Vailele did not go well for the attackers, who were forced to withdraw back to Apia to take stock and rethink their tactics. Further attacks by both sides were repulsed, and the war was eventually ended by tripartite treaty that split the Samoan islands between America and Germany, while German interests in the Solomon Islands to the north, as well as in the Tonga group, Togo, the Gold Coast in Africa and Zanzibar, were transferred to Britain by way of compensation. As for *Porpoise*, she left the station in 1900 and was back in Portsmouth by May 1901. She was sold in Bombay in early 1905.

14 April 1857

Fourth-rate HMS *Raleigh* (50) wrecked on Raleigh Rock, off Macao, but her commanding officer, the highly-rated Cdre Henry Keppel, managed to fire a salute to passing French warship while sinking. The 1,940-ton sailing ship, launched in 1845, spent the first four

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years of her life on station on the south-east coast of America, but by 1856 was on her way to the East Indies and China as the senior ship on the India Station under the command of Keppel, who had won a reputation for bravery and leadership in China and during the Crimean War at Sebastopol. On 14 April 1857 Raleigh was making her way from Singapore to Hong Kong when she struck a submerged rock off Macau, around 20 miles from her intended destination, at around 1300. The rock did not appear on English or French charts of the area. With her bows stoved in, the pumps were put to maximum use, but she was clearly in danger of sinking there and then, so Keppel had her run ashore on Ko-ho Island in a bid to save her, but she sank into mud to the extent that the sea was lapping at her upper deck. Just before she was run ashore she fired a distress signal, and also mounted a 21-gun salute for a French admiral on board the *Virginie* in the Macau Roads. The French and other British ships immediately went to her assistance (though the Portuguese were said to have been rather pleased at Keppel's predicament, after he had put their noses out of joint in an earlier incident when he freed a British man in Macau) but the ship could not be helped. Her crew, who escaped unharmed, were accommodated on the hulk *Alligator*, and later many of them manned the Tee-totum Fort while Raleigh's guns and masts were later recovered. Tenders for raising the ship were deemed much too high and she was eventually blown up. Keppel and the ship's master were duly court-martialed and acquitted as there was no fault on their part (though it was noted that another ship, *HMS Clio*, may also have struck the same rock some 14 years earlier). The loss of the frigate was not significant – a Hong Kong-based correspondent from *The Times* noted that "for modern naval warfare, and

especially in these seas, your old 50-gun sailing ships are useless. They are pleasant as marine residences, but for fighting you might as well arm your men with bows and arrows." (*The Times*, 1 August 1857).

15 April 1965

Prime Minister Harold Wilson presented the ship's bell of *HMS Resolute* to President Lyndon Johnson in Washington DC on 15 April 1965. While the presence of the *Resolute* Desk (also known as the Hayes Desk) in the Oval Office of the White House is widely known, the presentation of her bell to the President of the United States is seen as something of a footnote. *HMS Resolute* was a commercial ship (the *Ptarmigan*) bought by the Admiralty in 1850 and converted to an Arctic icebreaker. She was part of the flotilla that set out in 1852 to find out what had happened to the Franklin Expedition of 1845 which disappeared while searching for the fabled Northwest Passage, a sea lane in the Arctic Ocean connecting the Atlantic and Pacific. *Resolute* became trapped in ice in April 1854 and was abandoned, though later the ice melted and she drifted hundreds of miles south where she was discovered by American whalers. Tensions between Britain and the United States at the time over territorial claims in the Americas were nudging the two nations towards war, but it was suggested that the American government should buy the vessel, refurbish it and present it back to Britain as a token of goodwill. *Resolute* was duly refitted and restocked then sailed to Portsmouth in late 1856; she was presented to Queen Victoria as a gift in Cowes Harbour. *Resolute* served a further 23 years in the Royal Navy as a supply ship in home waters and broken up in 1880, by which time plans were well under way to build a desk from her timbers that could be gifted to the

Japanese warships pictured in Marseilles, possibly after the end of World War 1 as they make their way home from European waters. See 17 April. Image from the Imperial War Museum collection © IWM (Q 20335)

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President of the United States. Constructed in Chatham Dockyard, the “new writing table” was presented to President Rutherford B Hayes on 23 November 1880 and Hayes wrote his first note on it that same day. The desk has been used in the Oval Office by every president since John F Kennedy except Richard Nixon and Gerald Ford. Resolute’s bell was reunited with the timbers of the mothership on 15 April 1965 when British Prime Minister Harold Wilson presented it to Kennedy’s successor Lyndon Johnson as a symbol of the enduring links between the two countries.

16 April 1917

HMS C16 and destroyer HMS Melampus collided off Harwich on 16 April 1917, killing the entire crew of the submarine. C16’s career demonstrated the dangers faced by early submariners, as the Royal Navy (and merchant mariners) struggled to work alongside the submersibles. One of a class of 38 320-ton boats built before the Great War, C16 was launched by Vickers at Barrow-in-Furness on 19 March 1908. Within a year of commissioning C16 collided with sister submarine HMS C17 in the North Sea off Cromer in Norfolk, an incident caused by the collier SS Eddystone steaming through the submarine flotilla. Eddystone struck HMS C11, sinking her and killing 13 of her crew of 16, while C17 survived her encounter with C16. C16 went on to serve in World War 1, but eventually fell victim to yet another collision with friendly forces. On 16 April 1917 while cruising at periscope depth off Harwich the submarine was rammed by destroyer HMS Melampus and sank in 18 metres of water. One sailor attempted to escape through a torpedo tube but drowned in the process, while the rest of the crew suffocated after a hatch jammed on an external fender, trapping them in the partially-flooded boat – the details were recorded by her commanding officer, who sealed his observations in a bottle which was found near his body when the hull was raised. C16 was salvaged and recommissioned, and was finally sold for scrap in the summer of 1922.

17 April 1917

The final destroyers of the Japanese 2nd Special Squadron arrived at Malta to join Allied forces in the Mediterranean on 17 April 1917. The Japanese

had signed an alliance with Britain in 1902 to counter Russian expansion in the Far East, and renewed the treaty in 1905 when they defeated a Russian naval force in the Russo-Japanese War. At the start of World War 1 Britain asked the Japanese to neutralise the German naval presence in East Asia, which they did, but they balked at sending warships to the Mediterranean, worried that it would leave the homeland open to attack, but British persistence began to pay off early in 1916 when concessions were made, including arrangements for Japanese immigration to Australia and New Zealand, which led to the creation of the Japanese 1st Special Squadron to protect troopships between Australia/New Zealand and Aden and to provide patrols along the way. Early in 1917 the 2nd Special Squadron was approved, headed by a protected cruiser (Akashi) and consisting of two destroyer flotillas (the 10th and 11th), each consisting of four 820-ton Kaba-class warships. The main task of the squadron was to escort troopships in the Mediterranean, though they fulfilled other tasks as required, including a rescue mission on 4 May 1917 when British transport SS Transylvania was torpedoed south of Genoa; some 3,000 people were saved from the sinking liner. One destroyer that took part in the rescue, Sakaki, was torpedoed the following month off Crete, resulting in the death of 68 Japanese sailors and extensive repairs for the ship at Piraeus in Greece. A third flotilla of four Momo-class destroyers (the 15th) joined the 2nd Special Squadron in August 1917, and the Japanese force made quite an impression on their allies – the Superintendent of Malta Dockyard praised the squadron’s capabilities and professionalism. By the time of the Armistice Japanese ships had escorted almost 800 Allied ships carrying around 700,000 troops and had come into contact with German and Austro-Hungarian submarines on almost 40 occasions, though none of the U-boats had been sunk. In December 1918 the cruiser Izumo, which had replaced Akashi as flagship in June 1917, and two destroyers sailed to Scapa Flow to collect seven captured U-boats as prizes of war, and Japanese sailors took part in the Victory Parades in Paris and London in 1919. The 2nd Special Squadron then made its way back to Japan, with elements calling in at Marseilles, Genoa and Naples en

HMS Glengyle enters Grand Harbour in Malta on 8 January 1942. See 19 April. Image from the Imperial War Museum collection: © IWM (A 7270)

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route. A memorial to the sailors who died in the torpedo attack on Sakaki was dedicated in Kalkara (Capuccini) Naval Cemetery opposite Valletta in Malta.

18 April 1667

The English 44-gun frigate *Princess*, making her way from Berwick-upon-Tweed to Gothenburg, fell in with some two dozen of the Dutch Rotterdam Fleet on 18 April 1667. The ship had been built at Lydney in Gloucestershire and launched in the summer of 1660 as a 44-gun fourth rate, with her armament increased by eight guns in 1676. When Capt Henry Dawes found himself amidst the Dutch warships near the Dogger Bank he had a fight on his hands, but he refused to be beaten, with *Princess* escaping serious damage and defeating three attempts to board her as she fought a series of engagements from dawn to dusk. The frigate, a veteran of the Battles of Lowestoft, Texel, Solebay and the Four Days Battle, was finally ordered to be broken up in November 1680.

19 April 1941

Troop landing ship *HMS Glengyle* was at the heart of the commando raid on Bardia in Libya on 19-20 April 1941, an operation with limited immediate military value but which proved most effective in strategic terms and as a morale-booster. *Glengyle* was a converted 9,900-ton freighter built as one of a quartet of fast passenger/freight liners for service between the UK and the Far East – and the Admiralty quickly spotted their potential as war clouds loomed. *Glengyle* was taken over by the Royal Navy shortly after her launch in Dundee on 18 July 1939 and converted, initially to a fast supply ship, and within a year to an infantry landing ship capable of landing a force of almost 700 men along with a dozen landing craft assault (LCAs) and an LCM, which could ferry tanks ashore, along with all necessary supplies. In early 1941 *Glengyle* became part of Layforce, an ad hoc commando group of around 2,000 Army troops set up to disrupt Axis activity in the Mediterranean and North Africa. Their first action was the raid on the Libyan seaport of Bardia, close to the Egyptian border. Allied forces in North Africa had suffered a rapid setback with the arrival of Erwin Rommel and the German Afrika Korps, and the British were forced back to the Egyptian border and came under siege at Tobruk. The

Bardia raid was intended to cut Axis communications and destroy as much equipment and infrastructure as possible. *Glengyle* was escorted to the area by cruiser *HMS Coventry* and Australian destroyers *HMA Ships Stuart*, *Waterhen* and *Voyager*. Things went awry from the beginning – one assault craft could not be deployed and guiding lights were not in place on the beach as the beach party, in submarine *HMS Triumph*, had been delayed by a friendly fire attack. The main attacking force landed late on the wrong beaches, though as they were unopposed they managed to reach most of their objectives – those that existed, as some of the intelligence on targets proved completely wrong, with it being in the wrong place or not there at all. A supply dump and Italian coastal battery were destroyed, and most of the commandos then returned safely to *Glengyle* – one officer died (friendly fire again) and 70 commandos were captured as they went to the wrong evacuation point. Despite limited success on the night, the raid had the wider strategic advantage of forcing the Germans to shift almost an entire armoured brigade from the front line at Sollum to protect the rear of the Axis thrust. Layforce did not fare so well, as they became frequently employed as standard infantry (for which they were not trained nor equipped); they lost 600 men in the Battle of Crete in May 1941 and a further 120 in fighting in Lebanon. Much depleted, the force lost its raison d'être and was disbanded in July the same year. *Glengyle*, by way of contrast, had a highly successful war. She was involved in assaults and evacuations throughout the Mediterranean and beyond, including Greece and Crete, and was part of a number of Malta convoys. She took part in the disastrous Dieppe Raid on 19 August 1942 before joining the Torch landings in North Africa in late 1942 then the landings in Sicily and Salerno the following year, and Anzio in 1944. She finished the war transporting men and equipment to the Far East. After repatriating Australian troops and British prisoners of war, she returned to her original owners, the Glen Line, in the summer of 1946 and was converted back for civilian service, resuming her intended role in March 1948. She spent a few months in Blue Funnel Line colours in 1971, but was broken up later that year in Taiwan.

20 April 1917

The steel-hulled paddle steamer *Neptune* was built by on the Clyde by Napier, Shanks & Bell Yoker, for the Glasgow and South Western Railway Company and launched in 1892. The 380-ton ship was requisitioned by the Admiralty on 7 December 1915, renamed *HMS Nepaulin* and converted for minesweeping duties. In 1916 she was based at Dover. On 20 April 1917 she hit a mine laid by the German submarine *UB-12* in the North Sea off the Dyck Light Vessel near Dunkirk and sank with the loss of 19 men.

21 April 1943

Submarine *HMS Splendid*'s hot streak came to

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The crew of *HMS Splendid* pictured on their submarine in Algiers in February 1943. Just a few weeks later around one in five of these sailors died when the boat was attacked off Naples. See 21 April. Image from the Imperial War Museum collection: © (A16011)



an abrupt end on 21 April 1943 when she was attacked by German destroyer Hermes. The Chatham-built S-boat, launched on 19 January 1942, got off to a slow start – an initial patrol through the Bay of Biscay to Gibraltar proved fruitless, and her first war patrol in the Mediterranean was cut short by problems with her diving planes, though she sank two Italian vessels on her second outing. Things then started to pick up; she sank an Italian destroyer when attacking Italian convoys, then started sinking vessels on a regular basis while running out of Algiers, including two tankers and two large freighters to the north of Sicily. She was the most successful British boat in terms of tonnage of shipping sink between November 1942 and May 1943, but by the end of that period her war was over. On 18 April 1943 the 1,010-ton submarine left Malta for a patrol off Naples, but three days in her periscope was spotted by the German heavy destroyer Hermes, a former Greek warship which happened to be the largest German warship in the Mediterranean at the time. Hermes

dropped more than 40 depth charges in three attacking runs, and despite Splendid diving to 150 metres in attempting to escape, she sprang several leaks as a result of the buffeting and was forced to the surface. The destroyer opened fire on Splendid, killing 18 of her crew of 48 and blinding her commanding officer, Lt Ian McGeoch, in one eye. The submarine was scuttled and the remaining crew taken prisoner and held in Italy, although Lt McGeoch was not one to hang about – he made two attempts to escape, the second time proving successful, and had a shard of metal removed from his eye in Switzerland on his way back to England through France and Spain.

22 April 1916

Battlecruisers HMAS Australia and HMS New Zealand collided in fog in the North Sea on 22 April 1916, setting off a chain of events that saw the former warship limp from port to port in search of a chance to undertake repairs. The two Indefatigable-class sisters were intended to be at the heart of fledgling Dominion naval forces, with the option of bringing them under Royal Navy control in the event of war – which is what happened. Launched on 25 October 1911, Australia sailed to her home country with a ship's company of more than 800 evenly split between Royal Navy and Royal Australian Navy personnel. The first part of the Great War was spent hunting for the Germans' East Asia Squadron, though her very presence caused the formation to be withdrawn (it was later destroyed), and she saw nothing by way of action. She was then brought to Europe via South America and the Falklands (for repairs to a propeller) to patrol the North Sea. On the afternoon of 22 April 1916 three squadrons of battlecruisers were patrolling off Denmark when a heavy fog formed, and the order came through for the ships to zigzag in case of submarine attacks. With delays in the signal reaching all the ships, Australia swung to starboard and was struck by New Zealand, which ripped a considerable length of plating from her flank. As New Zealand turned away, her propeller caused further damage to her sister ship; in turn New Zealand temporarily lost control and swung back into Australia, which crumpled the ill-starred ship's bows. It was not just the Antipodean sisters that came to grief in that particular fog bank – battleship HMS Neptune hit a merchantman and three destroyers HM Ships Garland, Ardent and Ambuscade) also managed to collide with each other. New Zealand was able to make her way back to Rosyth with the rest of the squadron, but Australia was running at a reduced speed and did not arrive back until the following afternoon – by which time both dry docks were occupied, one of them by New Zealand. So Australia set off almost immediately for Newcastle, but as she approached the floating dock on the Tyne she was caught by a gust of the strong winds and her tugs could not keep the battlecruiser from hitting the edge of the dock, damaging her port rudder and breaking both of her port propellers. With Australia's spare propeller in Rosyth having been claimed by New Zealand for her own repairs, Australia was allocated spares from two other warships (Indefatigable and Invincible) – but the repairs could not

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HMAS Australia with the 2nd Battlecruiser Squadron. See 22 April. Image from the Imperial War Museum collection: © IWM (Q 18724)



now be carried out at Newcastle, so on 1 May the ship sailed once more and headed south (unwittingly sailing through a minefield), stopping overnight off the Humber and at Deal before arriving in Devonport on 6 May. Her repairs were completed by 31 May and she arrived back in Rosyth on 9 June, having missed the Battle of Jutland. She continued to patrol and exercise with no sight of the enemy, and again collided with another ship on 12 December 1916, this time battlecruiser HMS Repulse, requiring a further three weeks of repairs. ON 30 December that year she fired on an enemy U-bot (she missed), which was the only time she engaged the enemy while in the Northern hemisphere. 11 of her ship's company volunteered for the Zeebrugge Raid on St George's Day (mainly to escape the boredom of their life with the 2nd Battlecruiser Squadron), and all 11 survived, bringing back a Distinguished Service Cross, three Distinguished Service Medals and three Mentioned in Dispatches between them. Australia had a prominent position in the Grand Fleet which sailed out to escort the German High Seas Fleet into Scapa Flow. After more tedious patrols and guardship duties, the battlecruiser departed for home on 22 April 1919, arriving in Fremantle on 26 May after more than four years away. A tight schedule of port visits meant the ship was only in Fremantle for three days, prompting a mutiny amongst her ship's company, who had been worn down by boredom, missing the chance of action at Jutland, suffering under a notable strict discipline regime, poor food and a sense that the Royal Navy contingent were being favoured for promotion. Five of the ringleaders were jailed and others were confined to cells for 90 days, but a public outcry resulted in the men being freed on 20 December in an act of clemency. With the Germans no longer posing a threat in the region, Australia's significance greatly diminished and she went into reserve, and she fell victim to the 1922 Washington Naval Treaty, which limited the size of the navies of the five naval giants of the time – the UK (including her dominions), the United States, France, Italy and Japan. By now obsolete, and with ammunition for her main guns no longer being manufactured, she was stripped of useful material and escorted out of Sydney on 12 April 1924, with numerous Australian and British warships on hand, as well as pleasure steamers with paying guests. The old battlecruiser was scuttled 30 miles offshore in 270 metres of water, taking 20 minutes to sink. By way of contrast, New Zealand - which had been launched on 1 July 1911, around three months before her sister - not only saw plenty of action, but also largely avoided any battle damage and suffered no casualties, despite being present at the battles of Heligoland Bight, Dogger Bank and Jutland. She helped sink two enemy cruisers, and was hit by a German shell just once, contributing to her reputation as a lucky ship (reinforced by the habit of the Commanding Officer wearing a Maori warrior's skirt in battle). After the war New Zealand undertook a world tour; in 1920 she was placed in reserve, and like her sister fell victim to the Washington Naval Treaty, being scrapped in 1923-4.

23 April 1915

Poet Rupert Brooke died on 23 April at the age of 27 on a French hospital ship at Skyros in Greece. Brooke is perhaps most famous for his war poems, including *The Soldier* ("If I should die, think only this of me: That



War poet Sub Lt Rupert Brooke RNVR. See 23 April. Image from the Imperial War Museum collection: © IWM (Q 71073)

there's some corner of a foreign field That is for ever England.."). Born in Rugby in 1887, where his father was a master at Rugby School, Brooke studied classics at Cambridge and was a rising star in the world of literature when he suffered mental health problems in 1912. He travelled widely across the United States and Canada, then on into the Pacific, to recuperate. At the outbreak of war, Brooke joined the Royal Navy and was commissioned into the RNVR as a sub-lieutenant, being assigned to the Royal Naval Division (an infantry formation of sailors and Royal Marines who were not at that time needed for sea duty). He took part in the Siege of Antwerp in October 1914, but he broke into wider public awareness the following year with the publication of two of his war sonnets (*The Dead* and *The Soldier*) in the *Times Literary Supplement*; his most noted poetry collection (*1914 & Other Poems*) was published in May that year. Brooke sailed with the British Mediterranean Expeditionary Force in February 1915 but was struck by severe gastroenteritis while stationed in Egypt, then developed sepsis from an infected mosquito bite. His health failing, Brooke ended up in the French hospital ship *Duguay-Trouin* in a bay off the Aegean island of Skyros while the Royal Naval Division was en route to Gallipoli. Despite the best efforts of surgeons, Brooke died in the afternoon of 23 April 1915 of septicaemia; with the expeditionary force set to leave, he was hurriedly buried the same evening in an olive grove on the island.

24 April 1918

24 April 1918 marked the last wartime deployment into the North Sea by the Royal Navy's Grand Fleet 'in full fighting array'. Admiral Sir David Beatty sailed with almost 200 warships and auxiliaries, including more

Continued on page 44

than 30 battleships, four battlecruisers, 24 light cruisers and 85 destroyers, to counter a reported sortie by the German High Sea Fleet. Established in August 1914 as the main battle fleet of the Royal Navy, comprising the First Fleet and part of the Second Fleet of the former Home Fleet, the Grand Fleet was based at Scapa Flow in the Orkney Islands, moving later to Rosyth on the Forth. The actual composition of the Grand Fleet varied as ships joined and left or were required to undertake repairs or refits, and the Fleet itself was subdivided into various specialist formations, including the Battle Cruiser Force, battle squadrons, cruiser squadrons, a flotilla of seaplane carriers, destroyer and minesweeper flotillas. On 23 April 1918 the remains of the German High Sea Fleet put to sea after months of purely defensive activity, hoping to attack a large Allied North Sea convoy and its escort. Poor intelligence and missed opportunities by British submarines allowed the German fleet to slip into the North Sea, and when the British finally worked out that the enemy was at sea the Grand Fleet was activated on 24 April, and sailed from Rosyth in thick fog in just three hours. Fortunately for them, things were not going well for the Germans, who already had to contend with poor coal and the loss of sharpness that came from long periods of inactivity. The old battlecruiser Moltke had a major mechanical failure that caused some flooding and reduced her to a crawl. The Grand Fleet set out after the German formation but stood no chance of catching them. The only act of aggression came from submarine HMS E42, which spotted smoke on the horizon late in the afternoon of 25 April. The submarine managed to get into a position to attack, and fired four torpedoes from more than a mile, one of which hit poor old Moltke, increasing the flooding. The ship limped on to a safe anchorage, but was not ready for action again until the last weeks of the war. E42 escaped without damage. The Grand Fleet returned to port without having fired a shot in anger, and was formally disbanded in April 1919, with much of its assets being moved to the new Atlantic Fleet.

Image: ©

25 April 1916

Submarine HMS E22 was torpedoed and sunk by UB-18

off Yarmouth on 25 April 1916. The E-boat, displacing 820 tons, had been built by Vickers at Barrow-in-Furness; she was launched on 27 August 1915 and commissioned on 8 November the same year. On 24 April 1916, as part of the Harwich-based 8th Submarine Flotilla, the submarine was involved in seaplane trials off East Anglia; the plan was to carry two Sopwith Schneider scouting seaplanes on her casing, allowing them to float free as the boat submerged in calm water, then take off and attack Zeppelins, landing back at Felixstowe. The experiment was to go no further, and in any case E22 would not have had a role to play, as the very next day while on patrol she was sighted by the prolific German submarine UB-18 off Great Yarmouth and sunk by a torpedo with the loss of 31 of her crew. Two men survived – a lookout and an artificer working on the boat's air whistle, both of whom were thrown clear as the boat sank rapidly. The pair were taken prisoner by the U-boat, which sank almost 130 vessels on 31 war patrols before she was rammed by armed trawler HMT Ben Lawers, which was escorting a coal convoy to France, and sank with all hands on 9 December 1917.

26 April 1916

HMV Helga, an armed steam yacht, bombarded Irish rebels in Dublin on 26 April 1916 - and seven years later she was purchased by the new Irish government. The vessel started life in the Liffey Dockyard as Helga II, a government-owned 320-ton fishery research and protection cruiser in 1908, and was taken over by the Admiralty in March 1915 when she became His Majesty's Yacht Helga, officially described as an armed auxiliary patrol yacht, and was set to work on anti-submarine patrols and escort duties in the Irish Sea. On 26 April 1916 she was sent to the Dublin area to help British forces counter the Easter Rising; she used her two 12pdr quickfire naval guns to shell Liberty Hall and other sites from the River Liffey. She also rescued almost 100 survivors from the sinking of RMS Leinster, which was torpedoed with the loss of more than 500 lives in October 1918. After the war, in the spring of 1919, she returned to her former role, and was also used to transport members of the police force around the

Battleships of the Grand Fleet at sea during World War 1. See 24 April. Image from the Imperial War Museum collection: © IWM (Q 68724)

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coast when the IRA made movement by land difficult. The yacht was handed over to the new Irish Free State in August 1923 and renamed Muirchu, though she was handed straight back to the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries in her former role until the outbreak of World War 2, when she switched to the Irish Marine and Coastwatching Service. Muirchu was later sold into private hands, and sank off County Wexford on 8 May 1947, though her crew were safely evacuated and no lives were lost.

27 April 1908

Destroyer HMS Gala sunk in collision with scout cruiser HMS Attentive off Harwich on 27 April 1908. The 670-ton River-class ship was built at Yarrow's Thames shipyard in Poplar and launched on 7 January 1905, commissioning at Chatham on 28 June the same year. As part of the East Coast Destroyer Flotilla, Gala sailed from Harwich as part of a 17-ship gunnery and night manoeuvre exercise on the afternoon of 27 April 1908. At just before midnight, with ships having masked their lights for the exercise, Gala collided with the 2,700-ton scout cruiser HMS Attentive, cutting the destroyer in two and killing one sailor. Attentive then also rammed and holed destroyer HMS Ribble, which managed to steam into Sheerness for repairs. An attempt to tow the two parts of Gala to the shallows to salvage the ship failed and she sank in deep water. Attentive rather failed to live up to her name – in August the previous year she collided with another destroyer, HMS Quail, badly damaging the smaller ship's bows. However, she served with honour during World War 1, mainly on convoy escort duties and patrols, though she also played an important role in the daring Zeebrugge Raid of 23 April 1918, recovering the crew of a blockship. Attentive was scrapped in April 1920.

28 April 1814

18-gun brig-sloop HMS Epervier was captured by 22-gun American heavy sloop-of-war USS Peacock in

a short, sharp encounter 12 miles off Cape Canaveral, Florida, on 28 April 1814. Epervier had been built at Rochester in 1812. Early that morning, Peacock – which had delivered supplies to Georgia, evading the British blockade – was cruising around the Bahamas looking for British merchant ships when she spotted sails on the horizon. The sails belonged to a small convoy out of Port Royal Jamaica, heading for Halifax, Nova Scotia, via Havana in Cuba. The convoy was being escorted by HMS Epervier. As Peacock moved in the convoy scattered and Epervier manoeuvred to engage Peacock, which had a slight advantage in terms of guns, weight of broadside and manpower. After initial exchanges aimed at sails and rigging, Peacock delivered steady fire into Epervier's hull, badly damaging the British ship. An attempt to board Peacock was considered, but Epervier eventually surrendered after a 45-minute duel which killed eight Britons and injured 15 – around a fifth of her crew. The Americans took her as a prize, repairing some of the rigging and reducing the flooding in her hull. Both victor and vanquished evaded a pair of Royal Navy frigates the following day and made it into Savannah, Georgia in early May. Epervier was repaired and put back into service as the USS Epervier. At the subsequent court martial, it was found that HMS Epervier's crew fell well below normal Royal Navy standards, and many of them were invalids who were pressed into service from hospital. The brig's commanding officer had expressed doubts about his men some months earlier, suspecting them of plotting to mutiny and escape to the United States. Many of her guns were also found to be unsatisfactory, and a lack of gunnery exercises meant that faults were not revealed until the heat of battle, by which time it was too late. USS Epervier served several months under American colours in the Mediterranean, and on 14 July 1815 passed Gibraltar and out into the Atlantic carrying a copy of treaty and some symbolic spoils of war such as flags and standards. She and her crew of 134 were never seen again, and the ship

HM Attentive. See 27 April. Image from the Imperial War Museum collection: © IWM (Q75427)

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is thought to have been overwhelmed by a hurricane which swept through the Atlantic in mid-August.

29 April 1941

U-class submarine HMS Usk had a very short life, being born and dying within World War 2. Built by Vickers Armstrong at Barrow-in-Furness, the 730-ton boat was laid down on 6 November 1939 and launched on 7 June 1940, commissioning little over four months later. After a handful of patrols in the Channel, Usk departed Portsmouth in late December 1940 for Gibraltar to join the Mediterranean Fleet. On 19 April she set out on patrol from Malta, where she had been undergoing repairs after an air raid, heading to an area to the north west of Sicily. She changed her position to the vicinity of Tunisia because of a flurry of anti-submarine operations in the original area, but her subsequent movements are not known. She was reported overdue on 3 May, but is thought to have been sunk with all 32 hands on or around 29 April 1941, probably striking a mine off Cape Bon.

30 April 1968

The Royal Navy's McDonnell Douglas Phantom trials unit, 700P Naval Air Squadron, commissioned in Yeovilton on 30 April 1968 with three F4K (the American

designation for the British variant) aircraft that had arrived from the USA the day before. 700P served as the Navy's Intensive Flying Trials Unit, and spent some nine months putting the American jets – designated the FG1 in the Royal Navy – through their paces, including trials in the Channel with aircraft. Carrier HMS Hermes, before the first operational conversion unit, 767 NAS, was commissioned in January 1969, followed by the first operational Phantom unit, 892 NAS, which commissioned two months later. The Phantoms, of which 52 were ordered for the Fleet Air Arm primarily as air defence interceptors (a variant of the aircraft also served with the RAF), arrived at a time when fixed-wing aviation in the Royal Navy was being run down, and consequently the type only served for ten years, being withdrawn by the Navy in November 1978, when HMS Ark Royal, the only ship capable of operating the aircraft, was withdrawn from service. The FAA's planes were handed over to the RAF, which continued to operate the jets until the early 1990s. Much of the technology and equipment in the British versions of the Phantom (including Rolls-Royce Spey turbofans, which were more powerful than the American General Electric turbojets) was carried out by domestic firms in this country.

A Royal Navy FG1 Phantom of 700 Naval Air Squadron, overflies aircraft carrier HMS Hermes during trials in the Channel in May 1968. See 30 April. Image from the Imperial War Museum collection: Crown copyright reproduced under delegated authority from The Keeper of Public Records. Image: IWM (A 35140)



▶ LONGCAST

2025

3 May 2025	Army v Navy rugby match, Twickenham
10 May 2025	Area 5 Quarterly Meeting hosted by Romford & Hornchurch Branch
10 May 2025	Scottish Area Quarterly Meeting hosted by City of Glasgow Branch
15-18 May 2025	Londonderry Battle of the Atlantic 80th Anniversary Commemoration
17 May 2025	4 Area meeting, St Austell
20-22 June 2025	RNA75 Annual Conference 2025, Portsmouth
28 June 2025	HMS Collingwood Open Day, Fareham
9 August 2025	Area 5 Quarterly Meeting online
30 August 2025	Scottish Area Quarterly Meeting hosted by Aberdeen Branch
14 Sept 2025	Naval Associations Biennial Parade, Whitehall
22 Oct 2025	Fisherman's Friends Charity Fundraising Concert, Portsmouth
15 Nov 2025	Area 5 Quarterly Meeting hosted by RNA Stowmarket

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



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Royal Naval Association Annual General Meeting and Conference Weekend 2025

The format of this year's conference and AGM weekend is as follows:

Friday 20 June 2025

National Council gathering Approximately 40 persons	1530 -1630	Keppel's Head Hotel, Portsmouth Dress code: casual
Reception, HMS Warrior Approximate 150-200 persons	1830-2130	Portsmouth Historic Dockyard Drinks and canapes evening with music and traditional Sunset Ceremony (weather dependent) Rules apply for footwear on the ship. Dress code: lounge suits, jacket and tie Date of birth and place of birth required for security detail. This needs to be forwarded to engagement@massoc.org If these details are not completed - no entry!

Saturday 21 June 2025

Boathouse 5		Portsmouth Historic Dockyard
Annual General Meeting	0815	Coffee/tea
	0900	National Standard arrives via Riders Branch
	0915	Conference begins Dress code: RNA No 1s Tea/coffee break Lunch

Saturday 21 June 2025

Gala Dinner, Boathouse 7

1830 - 2300

Approximately 150-200 persons

Welcome drinks reception

Photographs

Live performance/entertainment

Three-course dinner with wine

Tombola draw (fundraiser)

Dress code: Black tie and miniature medals

Sunday 22 June 2025

St Ann's Church service

0930 for 1000

Approximate numbers 150-200

Church service in St Ann's Church conducted by Deputy Chaplain of the Fleet

Dedication of National Standard (nb: **not** laying up of old standard)

Service will last approximately 45 minutes to one hour

1100

Standards will gather outside of church for the congregation to follow (bimble at your own speed) to 2SL Home – RN Embassy

You are not required to march as there will not be anyone organised to take a salute

Gather in front of 2SL Home for an official RNA 75 photograph (RN photographer)

1115-1130

An even shorter walk to the rear of the garden where tea/coffee and light finger food will be served, accompanied by music

Approximately **1230** - ceremonial anniversary cake-cutting ceremony and photos

1330

Conclusion

Dress code: RNA No 1s

Weekend concluded

Delegate to Annual Conference 2025 - PORTSMOUTH

Branch secretaries should note the following before submitting their application.

No Branch shall be permitted to send a delegate to the Conference unless it has observed the regulations of the Association in regard to the return of balance sheets, the Branch Annual Report and the formation of Branches. This provision has no application to the right of, and expectation for, ships and establishments to send a delegate to the Conference. Associate members are eligible to act as a Branch Delegate at Area meetings and Conferences, provided that they have completed three years continuous membership of the Association immediately prior to election as Delegate.

Each Branch which has been in commission for at least three months by the date of a Conference shall be entitled to nominate one eligible Association Member as its Delegate to attend a Conference.

Each Branch nominating a Delegate shall send details to the Council **to arrive not less than one week before the date of Conference**. A Branch may change its nominated Delegate provided the Council is notified not less than twenty four hours before the Conference.

Branch		Area	
Name of Delegate			
Delegate's e-mail			
Number of Observers if known			
Name of Branch Hon Secretary			

NB: A Delegate will not be confirmed as such unless or until the Branch Balance Sheet for 2024 and Branch Annual Report for 2024 have been received in RNA Central Office.

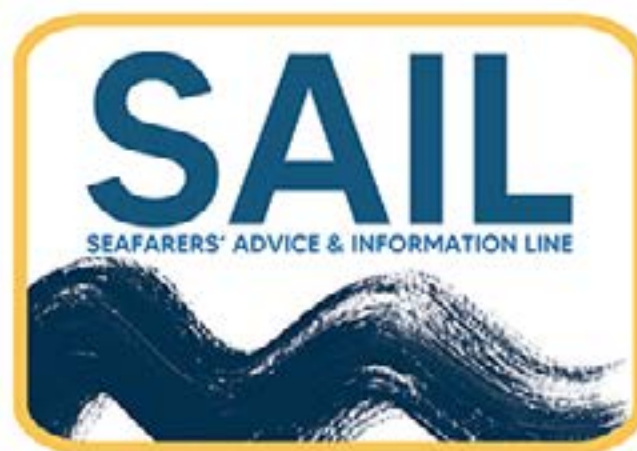
Should either not have been received in Central Office, the Delegate's Status will be deemed to be that of an Observer.

Branch Secretaries are to ensure that their nominated Delegate, receives the copies of the agenda and minutes of the previous years' AGM prior to representing their Branch at the AGM. Copies will be made available at the AGM, but sight of these prior to the day is considered essential. Branch Secretaries will be forwarded this paperwork from Central Office as soon as it is finalised.

Please forward the completed form to RNA Central Office, Lanyard House, Scott Road, HM Naval Base, Portsmouth, PO1 3LU or email to ams@rnassoc.org

To check ahead of Conference, please call Sara on 023 92 723747

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- Museum visit
- Garden visit
- Treasure hunt with prizes
- Cream Teas 3:15pm-4pm/4:15pm-5pm (2 sittings)
- Coldstream Pipe Band

Tickets must be booked in advance at:
<https://tinyurl.com/4kdn2mry>



GEAR UP FOR GOOD:

Cycle 212 Miles

FOR SAILORS' CHILDREN'S SOCIETY

Take on the Ultimate Cycling Challenge from the Severn Bridge to the Humber Bridge - 212 Miles of Impact!

Limited places are available! Join us for the ultimate cycling adventure, tackling 212 miles in just two days. This unforgettable journey will raise vital funds for the Sailors' Children's Society, supporting families and children in crisis.

Don't miss your chance to make every mile count.
Sign up now!



sailorschildren.org.uk

EVENT SPONSORS



Londonderry

15th to 18th May 2025

80th Anniversary of VE Day

and the end of the

Battle of the Atlantic



Londonderry Branch

Royal Naval Association.

Supported by the

Royal Marine Band Scotland,

invite you to join them to commemorate the
Service and Sacrifice of our predecessors

CONTACT S/m Frank Brown for more detail

frankjf22brown@gmail.com

Cc: castlecooley@hotmail.co.uk



VE Day 80: Honouring the Past, Supporting the Present.

Host a tea party, a bake sale, a workplace event, or even a small gathering at home—however you choose to celebrate, you'll be making a real impact on the lives of those who have given so much for us.



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NAVY
ALWAYS
NAVY**

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ROYAL MARINES
CHARITY**

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A SUCCESS, INCLUDING BUNTING, POSTERS, AND
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DARTMOUTH*



OPEN DAY

26 JULY 2025



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4-day residential
employment course
including real-life
interviews and
introductions to
forces-friendly
employers



28th April - 1st May

The Bridge at Helensburgh Parish Church

Colquhoun Square

Helensburgh

G84 8UP

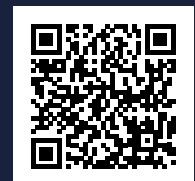
To book your place



✉ lifeworks@rbli.co.uk

☎ 0800 3196 844

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SERVING PERSONNEL**

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employment course
including real-life
interviews and
introductions to
forces-friendly
employers



28th April - 1st May

Drumfork Community Centre

To book your place



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Maritime Heritage Tours

Visit to Devon including Plymouth Armed Forces Day

Wednesday 25th June to Sunday 29th June 2025 (4 nights)

5 days
with 4 nights' hotel stay
including four
breakfasts and three
dinners
£ 449pp sharing
£569pp sole occupancy
SELF DRIVE



Plymouth Armed Forces Day will take place on Plymouth Hoe on Saturday June 28th. Armed Forces Day is a great opportunity for the public to show their support for the men and women who serve in the Armed Forces community, from those currently serving to Reservists, Veterans, and Cadets. (See Google for last year's event) with plenty of stalls and exhibits round the site too.

Day 1, Wednesday 25th June: Home to Paignton

Arrive at our hotel for check in from 1500. Afternoon at leisure.
Meet in reception at 1800 for dinner at 1900 (included)

Day 2, Thursday 26th June: Dartmouth Steam Railway & River Cruise

OPTIONAL trip on the Dartmouth Steam Railway from Paignton to Kingswear and by boat/ferry to Dartmouth.

Tour the Royal Britannia Naval College (£5) and River cruise to Totnes.
Return to Paignton by coach from Totnes at 1630 or 1730. (Combined ticket £49)
Dinner in the Hotel tonight.

Day 3, Friday 27th June: At leisure

There are several National Trust properties in the area, including Agatha Christie's 'Greenway'. Those wishing to visit Devonport Naval Heritage Centre (+ HMS COURAGEOUS if possible) may do so by car - and you may also wish to take an evening River trip to Calstock (cost £28pp) with an hour in the local pub too.

* No meal in the hotel tonight - explore in Paignton or in the pub at Calstock?

Day 4, Saturday 28th June: Plymouth

Armed Forces Day Parade and celebrations on Plymouth Hoe.
Dinner in the Hotel tonight.

Day 5, Sunday: 29th June: Plymouth/ Home

Breakfast at leisure and check out. Travel home or stay on at pro-rate rates.

The Mercure Hotel Paignton (4*)

www.mercurepaignton.com

A contemporary seaside hotel overlooking the English Riviera and Paignton Green, just a 5-minute drive from Torquay and approximately one hour from Plymouth.

- 160 modern bedrooms with TV, hairdryer, and free Wi-Fi.
- Lift serves most rooms
- Sea view Restaurant serving dinner and breakfast.

What's included:

- ✓ 4 nights' hotel stay including full English breakfast
- ✓ 3 course, 3 choice dinner on three nights.
- ✓ Accommodation in twin/double rooms for two persons.
- Sole occupancy rooms at supplement shown
- ✓ On-site parking available at £15 for 24 hours, chargeable to rooms

Payment terms:

Full payment by 27th April 2025

Optional insurance £18pp

*from price based on minimum group size of 20 persons

Booking conditions apply

For further information or to make a booking on this tour please contact Mike Critchley at Maritime Heritage Tours Ltd

Tel. 07977 534949

E mail. mikecritchley7@icloud.com

just for
groups!

The Foreign & Commonwealth Office issues essential travel advice on overseas destinations. Please have a look at www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice. Advice can change so please continue to check until you travel.

Tour details are subject to change and have been arranged in conjunction with **just for groups!**

The Old Bakery, Queens Road, Norwich NR1 3PL
01603 886740 www.justforgroups.com





SUPPORTED BY



Hampshire **VE 80** concert

Sunday 4 May

7:30pm

o2 Guildhall Southampton

Featuring

The Royal Marines Association Concert Band
Muriele French Singer
and more



Tickets available from Ticketmaster.
Or scan the QR code.





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HMS Wellington

VE DAY

Experience

80



LIVE 1940s DANCE BAND
the Glenn Miller Style Orchestra



SUMPTUOUS
AFTERNOON
TEA



Thursday 8th May 1400 – 1700

onboard HMS Wellington, Temple Stairs, London WC2R 2PN
(opposite Temple Tube station)

Dress: Smart casual or period 1940's wartime

Ticket: £80 per person

100% profits to the Wellington Trust Registered Charity No: 1109066

Advance purchase only via www.thewellingtontrust.org





HMS Wellington

FISH & CHIPS

Lunch

It's delicious!



INCLUDES
FISH AND CHIPS,
MUSHY PEAS,
BREAD AND BUTTER
CUP OF TEA

Tuck in to 1940's style
fish and chips lunch
onboard this iconic
WWII warship

Friday 9th May 1200 – 1600

onboard HMS Wellington, Temple Stairs, London WC2R 2PN
(opposite Temple Tube station)

Dress: Smart casual or period 1940's wartime

Ticket: £25 per person

100% profits to the Wellington Trust Registered Charity No: 1109066

Advance purchase only via www.thewellingtontrust.org

Explore the
Upper deck of the
only surviving
dedicated
Battle of Atlantic
convoy escort