



SEMAPHORE CIRCULAR



WARM WELCOME BACK HOME

Britain's premier Naval deployment of 2025 ended this month with the ships and aircraft of the UK Carrier Strike Group returning home.

Families and well-wishers gathered at Naval and air bases across England to greet more than 2,000 military personnel – sailors, soldiers, aviators, Royal Marines, and civilians – back from the eight-month Operation Highmast deployment that stretched as far as Australia.

The group was led by the nation's flagship, aircraft carrier

HMS Prince of Wales, which sails into Portsmouth a day ahead of schedule to avoid forecast foul weather.

She was accompanied on the final stretch by two of her escorts, destroyer HMS Dauntless and Norwegian frigate HNoMS Roald Amundsen.

A third escort, frigate HMS Richmond, sailed into Plymouth, while the force's aircraft flew off early to their respective air bases – F-35B Lightning fighters to RAF Marham in Norfolk, Merlin helicopters to RNAS Culdrose near Helston

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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.

Please note there will be no Semaphore Circular in January – the next Circular will be published on Friday 6 February, and the deadline for material is 1000 on Wednesday 4 February. Branch Notes will next be published on Friday 12 December and Friday 9 January, and Semaphore Shorts on Friday 19 December, Friday 16 January and Friday 30 January.

in Cornwall and RNAS Yeovilton in Somerset, and four Wildcat helicopters to Yeovilton.

Tanker RFA Tideforce, which supported the final month of the deployment, returned to Portland, while sister ship RFA Tidespring, which provided fuel for the force through much of the deployment, remains deployed. The deployment was also supported by Norway's HNoMS Maud during the opening weeks.

The arrivals bring to an end Operation Highmast, but marks the start of a new chapter, with the strike group having been declared fully operational and ready to assume NATO duties.

"It has been a privilege to lead the nearly 4,000 soldiers, sailors, aviators, and marines who have sailed over 40,000 nautical miles as part of the Strike Group, working with over 30 nations en route," said Cdre James Blackmore, Commander UK Carrier Strike Group.

"The Strike Group has come home stronger for NATO than it departed and I am incredibly proud of all those who have taken part in Operation Highmast."

Cdr Nick Smith led 809 Naval Air Squadron, nicknamed The Immortals, on its maiden deployment, bringing them back to Norfolk alongside their

RAF Lightning squadron 617 counterparts.

"The range and breadth of the activity the squadron have been part of is truly amazing," said Cdr Smith.

"I am incredibly proud of the Immortal Team who have done such a fantastic job in delivering everything asked of them throughout the year, but most importantly full operating capability of Carrier Strike.

"We have operated day and night, in fair weather and torrential downpours, from HMS Prince of Wales as well as the Japanese and Italian ships Kaga and Cavour"

**Images of HMS Prince of Wales returning to Portsmouth
by S/M Nigel Huxtable**



CONTACTS



Central Office Contacts	
For all contacts and general enquiries 023 9272 3747	admin@rnassoc.org
CEO/General Secretary	ceo@rnassoc.org
Executive Assistant to the CEO	ceo-ea@rnassoc.org
Governance Support Officer	gso@rnassoc.org
Secretary to Boards	dcos@rnassoc.org
Welfare and Wellbeing Support	wws@rnassoc.org
Semaphore Circular and Short	comms@rnassoc.org
Membership Manager	ams@rnassoc.org
Finance	dams@rnassoc.org
Head of Communications	hoc@rnassoc.org
RNA Communications Lead	cml@rnassoc.org
National Advisors	
National Branch Retention and Recruiting Advisor	rna.brre@outlook.com
National Welfare Advisor	geoff@royalnavalassoc.com
National Rules and Bye-Laws Advisor	governancechair@royalnavalassoc.com
National Ceremonial Advisor	nca@royalnavalassoc.com

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Snail Mail – Postal Address

RNA Central Office,
Lanyard House,
Scott Road,
HM Naval Base,
Portsmouth
Hants PO1 3LU

CHAIRMAN'S CHAT

Dear Shipmates,

Where has 2025 gone?

This month's chat features heavily some of the main objectives of the RNA that make our Association unique and special: Fun, Camaraderie, Remembrance/ Ceremonial and Signposting.

Before I commence, on behalf of the National Council and all Shipmates, I would like to pass on our sincere appreciation and thanks to RNRMC for their continued support and for recently confirming that support in the coming years. It will continue to enable the RNA to flourish with confidence and drive forward with the planned changes in key areas, including governance and welfare and wellbeing within the Naval community and more especially for the 25,000 Shipmates in our RNA Branches and Lanyard Roll.

Importantly, work has already begun on planning ways of increasing our income streams which the National Council will announce next year.

So back to our Association and what makes it special. Let's start with highlighting what a superb 75th Anniversary Year it has been, in every respect!

■ The Army v Navy at Twickers (where the Rugby gods arranged for an ecstatic victory which was witnessed by more than 600 Shipmates). Next year, we have already have more than this signed up – see the advert [here](#) to get your discounted tickets!

■ An outstanding Conference in Portsmouth (despite the NCh's motion being defeated – I know I have got to let it go...)

■ Finally, the simply stunning Fisherman's Friends charity fundraising concert at Portsmouth Guildhall starring the RNA Choir and the superb RM Band. On behalf of all RNA Shipmates may I congratulate the participants and organisers alike for their brilliance in putting together all the above events to celebrate our 75th Anniversary. Onwards to our 76th Anniversary... In terms of **Remembrance**, I was so proud and honoured to represent our Association at the Remembrance Parade in Whitehall. You may be interested to know that on the Thursday before the parade the Wreath 'Gang' all gather at Wellington Barracks for training. We were under the command of the 'National Treasure and Drill Oracle' himself, Garrison Sgt Maj (GSM)WO1 Andrew 'Vernon' Stokes – what an honour – and he 'picked me up' for being too military in my right turn. What an honour being re-re-briefed by Vern Stokes! I put it down to the



fact he is just not used to a 'Matelot's Bimble'.

Next up is **Commemoration**, where I would like to take this opportunity to thank the 'Standard Bearer Team' and 'Area 2 Platoon' for attending the ceremony to commemorate the unveiling of the Naval Division Memorial on Horse Guards 100 years ago. As ever, their bearing, drill and efforts to represent our Association were highly commendable and a credit to the RNA. BZ Shipmates! Also, take a bow all those Shipmates who proudly paraded standards and

themselves around the nation on Remembrance and Armistice Day – BZ! It's what we do!

Following that is **FUN!** Post Remembrance, I had the absolute pleasure of attending Aldershot Branch Pickle Night as the Guest of Honour. What a superb evening – shame the choir needed a few more weeks, especially S/M Mick Mills rhythm on the accompanying fruit box... (only joking !) Seriously, BZ to all the Shipmates to a man/woman for dressing up immaculately. This is exactly what the RNA is about.

Next is **Signposting**. I have the pleasure of providing 'The National Chairman's Christmas Pressie' which could make your Christmas! It could be you... If you served from 1975 and completed five years reckonable service and are not in receipt of a full MOD pension you may be entitled to a preserved pension at age 60. Please see the example below. Remember, most importantly, you need to claim this pension.

"An Other Rank joined at Age 18 on 31 December 1974, and was discharged on 31 December 1986. They had not served for 22 years, so they do not qualify for an immediate pension on discharge. However, they had met the criteria to qualify for a Preserved Pension. If they discharged in the rank of Sgt (OR6), their preserved pension was £1,687.56. When this becomes payable at age 60, it would be revalued in line with indexation. This means that its value on 31 December 2016 would be a pension of £4,363.49, and a lump sum of £13,090.47. In 2024, the annual rate of this pension would be £5,754.29."

For more information open [this link](#)

In addition, please see the [article](#) in this issue about the White Ensign Association who are our partner within the Naval charity sector specialising in advice on financial matters including pensions.

Finally, it was lovely to see the joy of the families and Ships' Companies at the safe arrival of HMS Prince of Wales and HMS Dauntless back to Portsmouth in time for Christmas – congratulations to the lads and lasses on an extremely successful deployment.

And talking of 'Christiomas' can I provide a gentle reminder to Shipmates too look out for any of our community who may be lonely or isolated, because times are hard and bereavement, in particular, can affect us at any time. Please save a tot of Christmas cheer, even if it is a 'sandy bottom' and something to eat for them.

Happy Christiomas and Seasonal Greetings!

Andy



RATHLIN ISLAND REMEMBERS

A Remembrance Service was held on Sunday 16 November 2025 on Rathlin Island, writes S/M John Pudney of Limavady Branch – Area 12 (Ireland). The solemn and deeply moving service was held in St Thomas' Parish Church on the island, drawing together veterans, serving personnel, civic leaders and island residents to honour those who made the ultimate sacrifice in Service.

Organised by the Ballycastle branch of the Royal British Legion, along with local branches representing the Royal Navy, Army and the RAF, the event reinforced Rathlin's long-standing maritime and military heritage. The service was led by Revd Patrick Barton, of Ballintoy, Dunseverick, and Rathlin Parish Churches, who delivered a heartfelt sermon reflecting on the themes of sacrifice, memory, and community. Among those attending were the Lord Lieutenant for County Antrim, David

McCorkell, Alderman Richard Stewart, Deputy Mayor of Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council, and Cllr Dawn Huggins, the Veterans' Champion on the council, both offering civic support and paying tribute alongside RNA Limavady Branch and RBL veterans. In the adjacent graveyard at St Thomas', more than ten wreaths were laid. These memorials honoured both identified and unknown Servicemen, including sailors who tragically lost

their lives at sea.

The ceremony embraced the full breadth of military service – Royal Navy, Army and RAF – and united different branches in a shared moment of reflection.

A particularly poignant moment followed as participants journeyed back towards Ballycastle aboard the Rathlin ferry.

The ferry made a stop at the spot some five miles off Rathlin Island where armoured cruiser HMS Drake was struck by a torpedo on 2 October 1917 while on convoy escort duties.

The explosion wrecked two of the cruiser's engine rooms and a boiler room, killing 18 of her ship's company. Although the warship developed a list and lost her steam-powered steering, she managed to make it to Church Bay on the island and anchored in shallow water, allowing the rest of her ship's company of around 900 to safely land ashore before she capsized. Royal Navy Officer Barry McWilliams laid a wreath in the waters nearby, a deeply symbolic gesture to commemorate the sailors lost from that ship.



SCOTTISH VETERAN AWARDS OPEN FOR NOMINATIONS

Nominations and applications are invited for the Scottish Veterans Awards 2026. Next year the awards will take place at the five-star Prestonfield House, Edinburgh, on 29 April and is sponsored by DXC Technology. The Main Organisations Sponsor for Veterans Awards CIC across the UK is Thales Group.

Please note the closing date for the Scottish Veterans Awards is **22 February**.

The Scottish Veterans Awards are open to all Armed Forces veterans, serving reservists and those organisations and companies that support their community in Scotland.

If you are or you know a veteran that's done some great things since transition to civilian life, a reservist doing great things, a business, organisation or charity that goes above and beyond to support our former military personnel through employment programmes or veterans support then feel free to apply or nominate on the following link:

<https://veteransawards.co.uk/scottish-veterans-awards/>

This year includes two new categories – the Cadet Adult instructor and the Military Charity Fundraiser of the Year Awards. In support of the ABF Scotland and the Royal Navy Royal Marines Charity!

The categories are:

- Role Model of the Year
- The Community Award
- Military Charity Fundraiser of the year
- Entrepreneur of the Year



- Health and Well-being Award
- Inspiration of the Year
- Employer of the Year
- Lifetime Achievement
- Leader of the Year Award
- Volunteer of the Year
- Veterans Business of the Year Award
- Veterans Group of the Year
- Reservist of the Year
- Cadet Adult Instructor of the Year

The overall Veterans Awards Champion will be chosen from the winners of each of the above categories and receive our one-off commissioned piece from Dan Earp Jones at Veterans Trees, handmade Award.

The certificate-giving and filming day will be held on 10 March in Edinburgh Castle, with the main black tie award ceremony taking place at the amazing Prestonfield House, Edinburgh, on the 29 April. It will be hosted by BFBS Scotland DJ and presenter Mark McKenzie. Other dates for your diaries:

- Welsh Awards application process opens – 1 March
- Welsh Veterans Awards – 8 July at the four-star Vale Resort
- English Veterans Awards application process opens – 1 June
- English Veterans Awards – 1 October at the four-star De Vere Cotswolds Waterpark. The RNA was represented at this year's English Veterans Awards by the Association's Veteran Mentors at HMS Raleigh in Cornwall. The Mentors were short-listed in the Team of the Year category – recognition for their outstanding contribution to the military community.

NEWS OF CRUISES

The Maritime Heritage Tours mini cruise from Portsmouth to Liverpool via Dublin and Belfast onboard M/V Ambition in April 2026 is selling well – they have sold 24 cabins for shipmates on this 'small' 600-cabin ship and it seems few now remain.

They also have a few rooms available on their visit to Malta on 7 January for 7, 14 or 21 days. Flights, transfers and seven days half-board with no single supplement are available from £845 in a four-star hotel.

Both holidays will be escorted by shipmate – and Naval author – Mike Critchley.

For full details and how to book see www.maritimeheritagetours.co.uk.

BRICKWOODS IMAGE PLEA

Do any RNA members have any photographs of HMS Dryad winning the Brickwoods Trophy in 1964 or 1965?

We have had a request from a wartime Naval veteran who is seeking a picture – if you can help, please contact Sarah Bewley on cml@rnassoc.org

DOUBLE WIN FOR CHINA FLEET CLUB

The China Fleet Country Club has been recognised for its outstanding quality and commitment, bringing home awards from the prestigious Cornwall Tourism Awards 2025.

The Club, situated in Saltash on the Devon/Cornwall border, was named a Bronze winner in the fiercely-competitive Regenerative Tourism Award, sponsored by the Eden Project, and secured Gold in the prestigious Business Events Venue of the Year, sponsored by ADA Cosmetics.

The ceremony, hosted by broadcaster and journalist Daphne Skinnard at Truro Cathedral, celebrated the very best of Cornwall's dynamic hospitality and tourism industry.

This double win is a validation of the Club's multi-million-pound investment strategy, designed to create a world-class destination for fitness, leisure, wellness, and business.

"This is a moment of immense pride for everyone involved with China Fleet Country Club. To win not one, but two such significant awards, underscores our unwavering commitment to sustainable growth and our community," said Dean Bennett, Managing Director of China Fleet Country Club.

"Our success tonight is a direct result of our continued, significant investment into the club's facilities, including our

solar-powered initiatives and our state-of-the-art facilities.

"We are proud to employ local people, honour our military heritage, and provide a truly exceptional experience that contributes positively to Cornwall's future."

The Regenerative Tourism Award win highlights the Club's dedication to sustainability. This includes investments in solar energy, which significantly reduces the Club's operational footprint, alongside its Gold accreditation by Green Tourism. Securing the Venue of the Year award recognises the Club's robust, non-seasonal commercial strategy. The Club's modern, adaptable event spaces provide the ideal, high-density meeting point for the affluent Plymouth/Devon commuter market, offering excellent facilities for conferences, retreats, and business function. A recent addition to the business facilities have been the launch of the new Co-Working space with a brand new area, with desks, meeting rooms and relaxation spaces.

The Club is owned by military charity the China Fleet Trust, and proudly honours its deep-rooted connection to the Armed Forces, including the employment of many ex-serving personnel and military spouses.



Pictures by S/M Nigel Huxtable

WE WILL REMEMBER THEM...

The Royal Naval Association took pride of place at this year's Cenotaph Parade in London, standing front and centre as the nation came together to remember the fallen.

This year's event held special significance as the Association is marking its 75th anniversary – celebrating 75 years of service, camaraderie, and dedication to the

Naval family.

The RNA had more than 120 members marching in its platoon, among whom were three World War 2 veterans.

Donald Coombe joined the war effort at just 16, having lied about his age after narrowly surviving the bombing of Hither Green station in South London. On D-Day, he played a vital role in readying the landing craft from the

British side, ensuring they were fit for the historic invasion.

Outside of his military duties, Donald was also a talented boxer.

His skill in the ring earned him recognition within the Royal Navy, where he helped secure the Navy Light Heavyweight title.

Betty Withers was just 14 years old when Britain declared war in 1939.

By the age of 17-and-a-half, Betty had volunteered to join the Women's Royal Naval Service (WRNS, better known as the Wrens), driven by a sense of duty and a desire to contribute.

Assigned to Hayling Island, Betty served as a cook, a role that, while behind the scenes, was vital to the morale and readiness of the troops.

Her kitchen became a place of comfort and camaraderie, where meals were more than sustenance – they were a moment of normality in extraordinary times.

One of the most poignant moments of Betty's service came on the eve of D-Day.

As Allied forces prepared for the largest seaborne invasion in history, Betty cooked the final supper for the men who would set out across the Channel the following morning, some never to return.



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Bill (William) Jones left school at 14 due to the outbreak of war.

He served as an Air Fitter/Metal Worker with the Fleet Air Arm, training with MONAB IV (Mobile Naval Air Base IV) before deploying to Australia and then Ponam Island in the Pacific.

Life on Ponam was harsh, with extreme heat, limited supplies, and dangerous wildlife, but Bill contributed to aircraft maintenance for the British Pacific Fleet during operations against Japan.

Formed in 1950, the RNA represents the largest community of Royal Naval veterans, serving personnel, and their families, with nearly 25,000 members across more than 240 branches worldwide.

United under the enduring motto "Once Navy, Always Navy," the Association continues to provide lifelong friendship and support to all who have served. Around 120 RNA Shipmates – the largest contingent in the Association's history – marched past the Cenotaph in honour of those who gave their lives in service to their country.

Leading Column A was the RNA's General Secretary/Chief Executive Officer Bill Oliphant, symbolising the unity and strength of the Naval Family through 75 years of service and remembrance.

The Association's National Chairman, Andy Christie, who served 35 years in the Royal Navy including during the Falklands War, laid a wreath on behalf of all RNA members.

"For me, Remembrance is deeply personal," said Andy.

"My family's service stretches across both World Wars and beyond.

"Marching today, I carried their memories and the shared spirit of every shipmate who stood the watch.

"This 75th anniversary year reminds us that our bonds are as strong today as they ever were."

Among the marchers were several World War 2 veterans, including S/M John 'Jack' Trowbridge, aged 99, who served aboard HMS King George V during the Arctic Convoys.



"Each year I come to remember the shipmates who never made it home," said Jack.

"The faces may change, but the spirit never does.

"Seeing younger generations marching beside us fills me with pride – it means the Navy's heart still beats strong."

As the Royal Naval Association looks back on 75 years of service and fellowship, it continues to honour the generations of men and women who have worn the Royal Navy uniform, past, present, and future.

From World War 2 veterans to today's serving sailors, the RNA remains a living testament to the resilience, camaraderie, and unbreakable bonds of the Naval family.

A grant from Royal Navy & Royal Marines Charity (RNRMC) and Greenwich Hospital helped RNA members from across the UK travel to London for the parade, ensuring shipmates of all generations could take part in this special anniversary year of remembrance.

CLOSE WATCH KEPT ON RUSSIAN SHIPS

The Royal Navy carried out two interceptions of Russian vessels in UK waters over two weeks in November, including monitoring an intelligence gathering vessel. Plymouth-based HMS Somerset shadowed Russian research ship Yantar in the North Sea (pictured below) and kept watch round-the-clock for eight days as the vessel sailed northwards towards the Faroes. Somerset worked closely with NATO allies, using a range of sensors and radars to report on every move. As Yantar lingered in UK's wider waters, its crew directed lasers at RAF P-8 pilots tracking it in a reckless and dangerous act. While tracking Yantar, Type 23 frigate Somerset and other

civilian ships in the area experienced GPS jamming, intended to be disruptive and a nuisance. Somerset's combat capabilities were not affected. HMS Somerset's Commanding Officer, Commander Matt Millyard, said: "The Royal Navy always has a ship held at notice to conduct these missions and HMS Somerset has been called upon to shadow the Yantar on two occasions this year as it entered UK waters. In the most recent operation HMS Somerset, working alongside RAF maritime patrol aircraft, maintained 24-hour surveillance of the Yantar to provide evidence of their activities." Patrol ship HMS Severn meanwhile was dispatched to monitor Russian Steregushchiy-class corvette RFN Stoikiy and tanker Yelnya off the UK coast, joining allies in a 24-hour shadowing operation

as the Russian vessels sailed through the Dover Strait and westward through the English Channel (pictured below). Portsmouth-based Severn subsequently handed over monitoring duties to a NATO ally off the coast of Brittany, continuing to observe from a distance and remaining poised to react in the event of any unexpected activity. The Russian ships passed through UK waters without incident and followed recognised maritime routes. Both operations are routine for the Royal Navy but are nonetheless essential for the continuing security of the UK. Commander Grant Dalglish, HMS Severn's Commanding Officer, said: "This tasking shows the value of our patrol ships and reinforces the Royal Navy's close liaison with our NATO allies in safeguarding the British people and protecting the internationally recognised waterways."



CARDS ON SALE NOW

The RNA's Christmas cards are on sale in our online shop – and you will need to move fast if you want to make sure they are delivered for Christmas!

There are two different packs of ten cards, each with two designs, so a total of four designs in all. One pack has five cards of robins wearing an RNA beret and five of donkeys with ban RNA Beret. The other pack has five cards with ships in harbour, and five cards with a robin on red boots wearing an RNA beret.

In all cases the words inside read 'Merry Christmas and Happy New Year'

Each pack costs £4.50, which includes postage of the pack. You can buy them at the RNA website through the SHOP button (top right of home page), or use this link.

For Royal Mail information on last posting dates for Christmas see [this link](#).

PUBLICATION SCHEDULE

There has been a slight adjustment to publication dates for Semaphore Circulars and Shorts over the next couple of months. The updated schedule is:

5 December: Semaphore Circular
12 December: Branch email
19 December: Semaphore Short
26 December: No publication
2 January 2026: No publication
9 January: Branch email
16 January: Semaphore Short
23 January: Fundraising email
30 January: Semaphore Short
6 February: Semaphore Circular

OFFICE CLOSURE DATES

Please note that RNA Central Office will shut down for the Christmas period from close of play on Friday 19 December.

The office will reopen for business again on Monday 5 January.

For guidance on any welfare issues during this period see information in our [Welfare and Wellbeing](#) section.

MALAYA AND BORNEO VETERANS PLAN FOR 2026 CENOTAPH PARADE

Membership of the National Malaya and Borneo Veterans Association (NMBVA) is steadily dwindling and in due course the Association will no longer be represented at events such as the Remembrance Parade at the Cenotaph in London.

This year out of 22 registrations for tickets, 19 people managed to attend – the other three sent messages explaining their absence (two working abroad and one incapacitated by a fall). Of the 19 people actually on parade, only 11 were official members of the NMBVA – the remaining eight were either carers or members of the RNA who held the PJM and/or the appropriate GSM.

The NMBVA had contacted the RNA when it became apparent that numbers were falling short, and knowing that the RNA contingent was oversubscribed, this resulted in five of the additional eight marchers.

Every single individual commented that they thoroughly enjoyed the day, including several who had never before taken part in the occasion. This feeling of euphoria might have been helped by the fact that it was a beautiful autumn day, very mild and with bright sunshine throughout.

All have committed to attending again next year, which is encouraging. The accompanying image shows most people smiling...

Members of the association were also shown on the televised coverage of the day, including close-up footage and



commentary as they approached the Cenotaph.

They were in the lead column so were very early in the parade. John Black, of the NMBVA, has already contacted both the RBL Cenotaph team and the BBC in advance of next year's planning to plead their case for both additional tickets and a prominent position as well as enhanced coverage during the broadcast, but only time will tell if their efforts will be successful.

As next year marks the 60th anniversary of the end of the Confrontation, John hopes that as many members as possible will make the effort to join them on Sunday 8 November.

NEW CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER AT RNRMC

The RNA has sent its heartiest congratulations to Sam Nicolson on her appointment as Chief Executive Officer of the Royal Navy and Royal Marines Charity (RNRMC).

Sam has been serving as Interim CEO, providing strong leadership through a period of strategic development supporting the Naval community. Her appointment marks the next chapter in the charity's continued mission to support sailors, marines, and their families for life.

Sam brings a wealth of experience, passion, and purpose to the role. Under her leadership, the RNRMC – the principal charity of the Royal Navy – will continue to build on its vital work, ensuring that everyone who serves or has served, and their families, are

supported through every stage of life.

Sam said: "I am so pleased that the Board has appointed me into the CEO role on a permanent basis.

"Having served the charity and our beneficiaries for 17 years now, I feel I have a good grounding in what is required for this role and what is needed to take the charity forward in these uncertain times.

"We will continue to work tirelessly for those that need us most, in partnership with the other Naval charities as well as the Royal Navy."

Chair of Trustees Dr Brian Gilvary said: "The Board is delighted to confirm Sam's appointment as Chief Executive. "During her time as Interim CEO, she has demonstrated exceptional



leadership, strategic vision, and a heartfelt commitment to the people we serve.

"We are confident she will continue to drive the charity forward with energy, empathy, and integrity."

WAR MONUMENT IS REDEDICATED

RNA members joined World War 1 enthusiasts and descendants of men who fought in a distinguished yet little-known Royal Navy fighting formation to witness the rededication of a memorial in London.

The national monument to the Royal Naval Division – sailors who fought as infantry throughout World War 1 at major battles including Antwerp, Gallipoli, the Somme and Ypres – was rededicated in Horse Guards Parade four days after Remembrance Sunday.

The event, which was attended by senior Naval officers and serving personnel, marked the 100th anniversary year of the distinctive memorial being installed in the heart of the capital.

It was also 22 years to the day that the memorial was returned to the site, having been removed in World War 2 during construction of the Admiralty Citadel.

It was rebuilt at the Royal Naval College and rededicated in 1951, and remained there for more than 50 years.

Thousands of men served in the unique division, which was originally formed using sailors who had not yet been allocated to ships at the beginning of the war in 1914.

There were initial reservations, particularly in Army circles, about the creation of such a unit, but the RN Division developed into one of the elite fighting units of the British Expeditionary Force, winning admiration throughout the war.

Over the next four years, the division was repeatedly re-formed for new tasks. Some 47,000 men of the division became casualties, accounting for more than 40 per cent of the Royal Navy's losses during the war. Of that 47,000, around 11,500 sailors and Royal Marines died while serving their country.

Despite the fact that an increasing number of Army personnel joined over the years, the division remained solidly Naval throughout: battalions were named after famous admirals – Drake, Anson, Hood and Nelson – rather than given numbers, and the men were seamen and petty officers, not privates and sergeants. Units flew the White Ensign, and sailors spoke of 'going ashore' when leaving camp.

The London memorial – designed by Sir Edwin Lutyens, the country's leading architect of the day – takes the unusual form of a fountain which, in the words of Winston Churchill (who was present at the original dedication in 1925, and was the man behind the division's creation) would give forth "not only the waters of honour, but also the waters of healing and the waters of hope".



HELP NEEDED WITH HISTORIC BOAT

A charity is working hard to save a World War 2 Motor Anti-Submarine Boat (MASB) – possibly the last surviving example which is in a condition where she could be saved.

MASB S32 is moored afloat on Salhouse Broad in Norfolk, but the charity – ASRWhaleback – intend to have her lifted out of the water within the next couple of months and taken to a safe storage where they can assess her condition and begin restoration.

During remedial work on her to ensure she retains her shape when being lifted workers discovered what they believe are the remnants of the ASDIC originally fitted.

They have contacted ARL-Teddington to ask for details, but would appreciate any information regarding the type 134C ASDIC fitted to her.

Is there anyone in the RNA who could identify components and help them to fill in quite a number of gaps they have in her operational life? Those gaps also include those who crewed her – although they have possible names and ranks, they would appreciate any help you could give in this area as well.

See the charity's website www.asrwhaleback.com for more information.

S32 is registered on the Historic Ships list.

MASBs were mainly 63ft power boats designed and built as anti-submarine craft, though many had their depth charge apparatus removed in order to serve as air-sea rescue boats in the Channel, rescuing pilots and aircrew shot down in combat.

S32 was completed by the British Power



Boat Company on 24 September 1941 and went straight to Dover in 'Spitfire Alley', with some reports stating she had a Polish crew, though no firm evidence for this has been found.

More likely she was crewed by eight Royal Navy ratings and two Royal Naval Reserve officers, and was used not in her anti-submarine role but as a Air Sea Rescue boat.

She was fitted with a Type 134 Anti-Submarine Detection Investigation Committee (ASDIC) kit, which is the

historical name for what is now known as sonar.

S32 rescued her first aviator – a Canadian fighter pilot – on 13 October 1941 in the Channel, and went on to rescue a number of other aviators. Fuller details can be found in the boat's record section on the ASRWhaleback website.

Pictured above is MASB 33, a similar vessel to MASB 32 (from the Imperial War Museum collection: Image: IWM (FL 8574))

LISBON MARU FILM SCREENING

Fang Li's film 'The Sinking of The Lisbon Maru' is being screened at the LVMH Lecture Theatre (E002), Central Saint Martins, 1 Granary Square, London N1C 4AA on Friday evening 12 December.

Details of how to apply can be found in [this link](#).

The tickets are free. If you are going to watch the film you may wish to consider making a contribution to the Lisbon Maru Memorial Association (LiMMA) at [this link](#).

If any relative of a POW on the ship wishes to join the panel, it would be appropriate if you were to join LiMMA (unless of course you are already a member). There is no cost to joining: <https://www.lisbonmaru.org.uk/page/Limma>

RAILWAY ROUTES OF REMEMBRANCE

On 11 November The Veterans Charity's annual Routes of Remembrance initiative marked a powerful step forward in its mission to carry wreaths and tributes on meaningful journeys of remembrance — this year with special significance, featuring the participation of Her Majesty The Queen.

The event began at Chippenham railway station, where Queen Camilla boarded a specially-designated early-morning service of the Great Western Railway (GWR). With communities gathered on the platform, including members of The Veterans Charity and local schoolchildren presenting wreaths of crocheted poppies, the train carried the message of remembrance through the railway network to London Paddington station.

At Paddington, the wreaths were laid on Platform 1's war memorial in a moving service. Queen Camilla, alongside veterans and railway industry personnel, observed the two-minutes' silence, attended a performance by the Military Wives Choir, and met reservists and veterans working within the rail sector.

The Queen spoke to the Trustee who created the concept in

2020, who explained how it was an idea initially to help one elderly veteran in Cornwall.

The 2025 Routes of Remembrance event placed special emphasis on the enduring link between railways and military service, recognising decades of service from wartime mobilisation to present-day veterans stepping into rail industry roles.

Whilst this year marks the 200th anniversary of the creation of the railways, it was also 170 years ago that a dedicated railway was built in Crimea to support the British Army. As part of this year's commemoration more than 250 wreaths were transported into London via GWR services from more than 60 stations across the network.

The 2025 edition of Routes of Remembrance was a reminder that remembrance is carried through more than ceremonies – it travels by rail, by road, by sea, and by the dedication of many.

This year Routes have visited South America, Antarctica, Asia and many other countries across Europe. The only continent not to have been visited, yet, is Africa and plans are well under way to complete the continents in 2026.

WAR VETERANS TO RECEIVE SUPPORT FOR OVERSEAS VISITS

World War 2 veterans will be supported by the government to travel to overseas commemorative events, ensuring those who served in that conflict can attend remembrance ceremonies whilst they are still able.

The government recognises the profound importance of enabling World War 2 veterans to pay their respects at the sites where they served and where their comrades fell.

The announcement came ahead of the publication of the government's new Veterans Strategy on 10 November, which outlines further ambitions on celebrating veterans and recognising them as a strategic national asset. Minister of State Lord Coaker announced the commitment following his attendance at several European commemorations earlier this year, where he witnessed first-hand the importance of these events for veterans. Lord Coaker said: "This year's Second World War commemorations in Europe reminded the nation of the importance of coming together to honour those who saved our country from Nazi tyranny 80

years ago.

"I have had the privilege to attend commemorations marking the Polish contribution to Operation Market Garden in Poland, the Battle of Arnhem in the Netherlands, and the liberation of Bergen-Belsen in Germany.

"These events strengthen ties with NATO allies, but also at a human level, to recognise the extraordinary courage and contribution of Allied nations in achieving peace.

"This government will support those remaining veterans of the Second World War who wish to travel to overseas commemorative events next year and beyond.

"Our upcoming Veterans Strategy will outline further ambitions on celebrating veterans and recognising them as a strategic national asset.

"While we can never repay their generation, we are committed to helping them to remember, reconnect and pay their respects in the place where so many fell for our freedom."

Minister for Veterans and People Louise Sandher-Jones said: "Having attended

the Afghanistan memorial event at the National Memorial Arboretum and felt the power of marking such anniversaries alongside those you served with, I understand how vital these occasions are for our Second World War veterans too.

"That's why this government is committed to funding travel support for Second World War veterans attending overseas remembrance events, starting next year.

"This is about ensuring that those who gave so much can return to honour the friends they lost whilst they still can.

"Our forthcoming Veterans Strategy will set out how we're putting veterans at the heart of this government's priorities – and supporting our Second World War generation to attend these commemorations is where that commitment begins."

Veteran Jack Mortimer, 102, from Leeds, who was a corporal with the Royal Army Ordnance Corps during World War Two and was part of the Allied forces that landed on Sword Beach on D-Day on 6 June 1944, welcomed the announcement.

"Going back to Normandy means everything to those of us who are still here," he said.

"It's where we lost so many good men, and it's important that we can pay our respects to the friends who never came home.

"At my age, these journeys aren't easy, but they matter more than anything.

"This support from the government will help veterans like me make that trip whilst we still can.

"We owe it to our comrades to be there, to remember them where they fell. I'm very grateful for this commitment."



CRUISE PASSENGERS PAY THEIR RESPECTS

Members of the **HMS Dido Association** recently returned from a five-night Mystery Cruise, care of Fred Olsen Cruise Lines.

On 9 November, Remembrance Sunday, they were off the coast of Germany near Hamburg. At 1100, with the approval and assistance of the Captain and crew of MS Borealis, they held a Remembrance service on the ship's quarterdeck. The ship sounded its horns for the start of the two-minute silence, and once again at the end. With a piper in attendance, and after a few words, they cast two biodegradable wreaths on to the sea. What they didn't realise was that many of the passengers on board were with them watching the ceremony. On completion, we all enjoyed a tot of rum care of Fred Olsen.



COME ALONG NOW – FOCUS!

When you have a story to tell, it helps if that story is illustrated – pictures are worth a thousand words and all that. We in the RNA communications team are lucky to have a *bona fide* ‘snapper’ ready and waiting to capture those essential images at events both grand and modest, such as the portrait he spotted amongst the crowds during the build-up to the Biennial Naval Parade in London in September (right). You can read more about the work of S/M Nigel Huxtable in our upcoming Yearbook, but for the moment he is a shining example of somebody with an eye for an image that sums up the ethos of the RNA. And we are sure there are more of you out there who can capture the essential elements that make up the work, play and comradeship of the Royal Naval Association. And if you are one of those people, we are inviting you to submit your picture(s) to the judges of the Royal

Navy’s prestigious Peregrine Trophy competition, a highly-regarded showcase for the best of the RN’s talented professional ‘photos’. One category of the Peregrines is dedicated to finding “the best single photograph taken of Royal Navy Veterans that best encapsulates the ethos of the RNA.” This category (17) is open to Naval Service veterans, Royal Navy and Royal Marines amateur photographers and Royal Navy professional photographers, and all photographs must have been taken between 16 December 2024 and 31 December 2025, not entered in the RN Photographic Competition 2024. Entries should be sent in no later than 21 February 2026, and judging will take place between 4 and 11 March. For full details of the conditions of entry and a copy of the entry form please go to the end of this Circular (see [page 47](#)).



GREENWICH HOSPITAL AWARDS GRANT TO FIGHTING WITH PRIDE

Greenwich Hospital has awarded a £248,000 grant to Fighting With Pride to support the charity’s work improving the health and wellbeing of LGBT+ veterans and families affected by the historic Armed Forces ‘gay ban’. Founded in 2020, Fighting With Pride works to ensure that LGBT+ veterans, particularly those dismissed or forced to conceal their identity before the lifting of the ban in January 2000, are recognised, supported, and not further disadvantaged. The charity also plays a key role in helping affected individuals navigate financial reparations from the fund established by the UK government. The three-year grant will help strengthen the charity’s regional network through funding towards key veterans’ community worker (VCW) posts, marketing activity, and administrative capacity. The VCW roles focus on building awareness, confidence, and community connections to encourage veterans to seek advice and support and to register for government compensation.



Where appropriate, people can also be referred to suitable specialist welfare and health services. Through its befriending and peer-support networks, the charity continues to rebuild trust, belonging, and inclusion across the Armed Forces family, ensuring that LGBT+ serving personnel and veterans feel valued, understood, and welcomed home.

Deirdre Mills, Director of Greenwich Hospital, said: “Fighting With Pride plays a unique role in addressing the long-lasting impact of the historic ban and ensuring that all who have served are treated with dignity and respect as valued members of the Armed Forces community. “We are proud to fund this work to help restore confidence, rebuild connections, and ensure that eligible Royal Navy veterans can register and receive compensation.” Peter Gibson, Chief Executive Officer, Fighting With Pride, said: “This funding from Greenwich Hospital is transformative. It allows us to reach more LGBT+ veterans, help them to rebuild their lives, and ensure those once cast out of the Armed Forces are fully welcomed home.”

HELP US ENSURE THAT NO ONE FEELS ALONE

The RNA has launched its first Christmas Appeal – and produced a powerful video to accompany the campaign.

Central Office staffer Milly Luxford met 98-year-old World War 2 veteran Donald and his grandson Ben to see what the concept of an extended Naval family means in reality, and how the efforts of the RNA can ensure that no one with a Naval story should feel alone.

The RNA is more than a charity, it is a lifelong community built on companionship, comradeship, and unity. We stand alongside our members through life's highs and lows, offering friendship, welfare signposting, and peer support. From organising events that bring shipmates together, to providing a listening ear when it's most needed, the RNA is here to support the Royal Navy family every step of the way.

In this instance Ben left his job as a scaffolder to care for his grandfather, and the RNA supports carers like Ben to have a little time away from their duties and to have some fun. One example is our Thriving Together weekends, which give a little back to those in our Naval family who need it most.

We also helped Ben and Donald to attend Remembrance ceremonies in London this year (pictured top right) and we will be there for them whenever they need us. Once Navy, always Navy. Ben said the comradeship

and that they found in the RNA has given his grandfather a new lease of life.

Our work is sustained through donations and grants, and this festive season we are asking for your support. Every contribution helps us continue to provide a welcoming community for those who may feel isolated, offer practical guidance and welfare support, and celebrate and preserve the legacy of Naval service through events and remembrance.

By donating this Christmas, you are helping us extend the hand of friendship to shipmates old and new, ensuring that the values of unity and compassion remain at the heart of our Association.

Together, we can make sure that everyone with a Naval story has a place to belong.

See <https://www.justgiving.com/campaign/rnachristmasappeal>, where you will also find a link to Milly's superb video.



PRIMARK PARTNERS WITH SSAFA

Primark Plymouth is honouring a former colleague and Royal Navy veteran by partnering with the Plymouth branch of SSAFA, the Armed Forces charity, to support veterans, serving personnel and their families this Christmas.

As part of a wider Christmas initiative from the High Street retailer, the partnership will see Plymouth Primark donating specially selected gift packs of clothes and festive essentials to people who need them.

The store will provide up to £500 worth of goods, alongside in-store donations and collection boxes.

Running throughout the build up to Christmas until 20 December, SSAFA is encouraging Primark Plymouth customers to get involved in the partnership by buying items and donating them via the dedicated donation box at the store's main entrance. Every contribution aids SSAFA in its vital mission ensuring that no one battles alone this festive season.

Tony Roberts, Team Manager for Primark Plymouth said: "This month, we lost a well-loved member of the Primark Plymouth family, Mark Whitaker. He worked as a member of the Primark team for 18 years as a security guard, before retiring.

"Before joining Primark, Mark served in the Royal Navy from 1975 to 1987 working on the HMS Apollo as a Gunner, responsible for operating the Sea Cat anti-aircraft missile system.

"He was a proud patriotic man who waited in line in London to honour the life of Queen Elizabeth II. At Primark Plymouth, we want to honour Mark's life by supporting fellow veterans in the local area."

WILL YOU OR WON'T YOU?

You don't write a will for yourself – you write it for your loved ones.

If you need to update or create a new will click [here](#) for our free service through Octopus Legacy.

Simply answer a few questions and choose how you'd like to write your will, online by phone, or home.

This is a membership perk of belonging to the RNA.

You do not have to leave us anything, but if you wanted to it would be great to help shipmates down the line.

You can even stipulate what we spend it on, such as Welfare, or leave something to your local branch.

It's your free will – use it or lose it.

POWERLIFTERS COMPETE IN TRANSATLANTIC CONTEST

Royal Navy & Royal Marines Charity (RNRMC) is proud to celebrate the success of the inaugural International Powerlifting Federation (IPF) Hands Across the Sea event, held at Devonport Naval Base on 22 November.

The groundbreaking competition brought together 30 of the strongest UK Armed Forces powerlifters and 30 elite American military powerlifters for a transatlantic showdown in pursuit of the title Strongest Force.

Both serving personnel and veterans took part, showcasing not only extraordinary athletic achievement but also deep camaraderie, shared values, and the unbreakable bond between allied forces.

Athletes and spectators alike demonstrated immense pride in the spirit of cooperation and resilience that defines both nations' military communities.

PO Wesley McGuinness, the driving force behind the creation of Hands Across the Sea, said: "Seeing this idea come to life has been genuinely inspiring.

"Bringing together serving personnel and veterans from both sides of the Atlantic – united through strength, competition, and mutual respect – has created something truly special. "This first event has exceeded every

expectation, and I'm incredibly proud of every athlete who stepped onto the platform. This is only the beginning."

Amy Reynolds, RNRMC South West and Wales Engagement Officer, added: "The energy and pride in the room were incredible.

"This event highlighted not just world-class strength, but also the unity and shared purpose that binds our Armed Forces communities across borders.

"The generous support shown for Royal Navy & Royal Marines Charity throughout the day was truly inspiring, and it means so much to the serving personnel, veterans, and families we exist to support.

"Being part of an initiative that brings people together so powerfully, while also championing the work of RNRMC, has been a real privilege." RNRMC was delighted to support the event, and thanks all the athletes who helped raise funds during the dinner through some fun games and a luxury raffle.

The event so powerfully reflects the dedication, determination, and spirit of the Armed Forces community.

Plans are already in hand for future editions, building on the success of this remarkable first year.

RNA GOLF TOURNAMENT BOOKED

S/M Kevin McAllister has booked Ellesmere Golf Club at Worsley, Manchester, for the next RNA golf competition.

The booking is for Friday 12 June – the start of the RNA's Conference weekend in Salford. The golf course is around 20-25 minutes away from the Cophthorne Hotel.

First tee will be at 1030.

Kevin is seeking funding to help with the costs of the tournament, which will include a round of golf, bacon baps, and tea/coffee on arrival and on completion.

If anyone has any oppo or knows of anyone who might wish to sponsor the event please

contact Kevin at kevinmac31@tiscali.co.uk

For details of the Worsley Golf Club see www.ellesmeregolfclub.co.uk/

AREA MEETINGS AND AGMS

	Next Meeting in 2025	AGM in 2026
Area 1	7 December Venue tbc	22 March Venue tbc
Area 2		February Venue tbc
Area 3		Date tbc
Area 4		17 January Bude Branch
Area 5		14 February Wymondham
Area 6		14 February Royston
Area 7		Date tbc
Area 8	tbc	17 January West Bromwich
Area 9	6 December Lincoln RNA Club	7 March Lincoln RNA Club
Area 10		31 January Venue tbc
Area 11	6 December (by Teams)	14 March Hartlepool
Area 12	13 December East Antrim	7 February Venue tbc
Scottish Area	6 December Grangemouth	tbc



QUICK QUOTE FOR TRAVEL INSURANCE

As a member of the Association, you have access to an exclusive annual travel insurance scheme from our insurance partner Trinity. You can access this via the quick quote tool below to find out the annual price. Select your age band, European or Worldwide cover and who is to be covered to get your premium. Once completed, you'll be directed to the website to sign up. It's that easy! Any questions call: 02392 419 856.

https://51bwhwzvnuu.typeform.com/to/UU6CIVe3#association_members_area=xxxxx

Trinity's benefits don't just cover travel insurance – there are also offers and discounts on Personal Accident cover, Buildings and Contents Insurance and Life Insurance.

Speak to the Trinity team on 0345 241 1001 during office hours for insurance help.

STANDARD BEARERS COMPETITION

The RNA Standard Bearers competition will be held at Whale Island in Portsmouth on Saturday 9 May, with a training session on the afternoon of Friday 8 May.

Entries from shipmates of all abilities (including novices) is encouraged. Further details will be published in due course in the Semaphore newsletters and on social media.



The RNA Football Club ran out 7-2 winners against the Havant and Waterlooville Veterans in a recent match – great result, and great to see so many old faces from both sides!

SALFORD'S MARITIME HERITAGE

Celebrating heritage, service, and a weekend to remember

Some may say Salford is far from the sea, but the city's connection to the Royal Navy runs as deep as the River Irwell and as wide as the oceans themselves.

From the moment Queen Victoria sailed into Salford aboard the Royal Yacht *Enchantress* to open the Manchester Ship Canal in 1894, Salford has carried a strong maritime identity – one that continues to shape our community today.

A Port with a Proud Past

Salford was granted city status by Royal Charter in 1926 – 100 years ago next year.

For decades, Salford Quays thrived as the third busiest port in the UK, handling vessels from across the globe.

Among the ships that once arrived here were two captured German U-boats brought to the Quays after World War 2. The city also played host to a Royal Navy Store in Worsley for the former RNAS Risley, located inside the Anti-Aircraft Operations Room now standing within the grounds of RHS Bridgewater. This facility served as an important operational hub during the war years.

War, Sacrifice, and Resilience

During both World Wars, the Salford docks were vital arteries of national supply, moving munitions, equipment, and essential cargo that kept the country functioning. But this came at a price. The 'Christmas Blitz' of 1940 brought devastation to Salford, claiming nearly 700 lives and injuring more than 2,000.

The traces of that night can still be seen today on memorial stones in Weaste Cemetery.

Salford's role in the Battle of the Atlantic was equally significant.

Ships leaving these inland waters sailed into treacherous seas, many never returning home.

Over the years, submarines, destroyers, frigates, and even HMS *Bronington* – once captained by King Charles III – have berthed here, strengthening Salford's enduring bond with the Royal Navy.

A Living Naval Legacy

That connection continues today.

The Royal Marines Reserve at Haldane Barracks, the Sea Cadets, University Royal Naval Unit Manchester, and the ship's bell of HMS *Salford* displayed at Broughton House all ensure the Navy remains present in the lifeblood of our community.

Even Barton Aerodrome has hosted Royal Navy aircraft over the years,



reminding us that Salford's Naval heritage touches land, sea, and air. Salford Rum, a brand inspired by the exotic spices once unloaded at the Quays, pays homage to the long-standing Naval tradition of the tot, adding a uniquely local flavour to the story.

A Weekend of Fellowship, Heritage, and Celebration

This special Conference weekend brings shipmates and guests together from across the country, offering a programme that blends history, remembrance, culture, and camaraderie.

■ **Friday evening (12 June):** We begin at the Central 11 bar with live entertainment, a warm welcome, guest appearances, and RNA merchandise for sale. This is also the time to book your free boat tour around the Quays, taking place on Saturday afternoon.

■ **Saturday morning and afternoon (13 June):** Delegates gather at The Lowry Theatre for the RNA National Conference, held on ground steeped in maritime history.

■ **Saturday evening:** A three-course Mess Dinner at the Imperial War Museum North provides a memorable highlight. Dining beside the Ship Canal, attendees will reflect on the Navy's legacy while enjoying the company of shipmates old and new. The evening begins with a **drinks reception beneath the Museum's suspended Harrier**, an iconic aircraft that sets a dramatic tone for the night. The evening will also feature the museum's renowned **Big Picture Show** – a powerful, immersive audio-visual experience that fills the walls of the main gallery with film, sound, and light. It provides an evocative backdrop for an evening dedicated to remembrance and fellowship.

■ **Throughout the weekend:** Boat tours around Salford Quays offer a chance to experience the waters that shaped the

city's maritime identity.

■ **Alongside the celebrations:** The UK Chinese Dragon Boat Festival will add vibrant colour and energy to the Quays. Festival organisers have even invited our shipmates to join in, so the more adventurous among us may wish to bring their armbands!

Adding further excitement, you may also spot **familiar faces from the BBC and ITV** around the Quays across the weekend, helping to share Salford's story with the wider nation.

The Council is also in discussions with Transport for Greater Manchester to provide **free transport for veterans**, ensuring that all who wish to take part can do so fully and without obstacle, connecting Manchester City Centre and Salford Quays.

A Sunday of Reflection: The Drumhead Service (14 June)

On Sunday, the weekend will conclude with a traditional **Drumhead Service** at Salford Quays—a solemn and dignified act of remembrance.

This historic Naval ceremony echoes the improvised services once held on the battlefield, where drums were stacked to form a makeshift altar.

It will offer a meaningful moment to honour those who served, those who sacrificed, and those who continue to uphold the values of the Royal Navy.

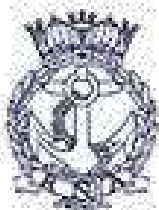
Looking to the Future

As we look ahead, 2026 will mark the centenary of Salford receiving its Royal Charter – a fitting moment to reflect on a century of civic pride and service. It is especially meaningful that the RNA gathers here during this important milestone.

Not bad for an inland city, eh?

This truly is **a weekend to remember** – a celebration of heritage, unity, and the enduring spirit of Salford.

■ **Conference documentation – see page 22**



**ROYAL NAVAL
ASSOCIATION**



A CENTURY OF CITY PRIDE

HOW TO BOOK:

01603 886 742

sales@justforgroups.com

www.justforgroups.com

RNA CONFERENCE 2026 SALFORD QUAYS

Friday 12th - Sunday 14th June 2026



City of Salford Branch RNA are delighted to be hosting the 2026 RNA conference at Salford Quays.

A 3 course gala dinner, with drink reception, and table drinks will be held on Saturday at the impressive Imperial War Museum.

Just for groups! have also secured some bedrooms at the Copthorne Hotel, Manchester Salford Quays.

Please contact the just for groups! team on 01603 886 742 to book the gala dinner - at a cost of £55 pp, and/or bed & breakfast accommodation.

Alternatively, book directly via the website: www.justforgroups.com
Group code: RNASAL2601



Copthorne Hotel Manchester Salford Quays

The Copthorne Hotel is located in Salford Quays within walking distance of Media City. The hotel hosts 166 en-suite bedrooms all fully equipped with complimentary WIFI, mini fridge, tea/coffee making facilities and a TV.

2 Nights

£119 per person sharing

£209 per person sole occupancy

3 Nights

£169 per person sharing

£294 per person sole occupancy



BAG A SEAT FOR THE ARMY VERSUS NAVY MATCH

The Inter-Services men's rugby champions will defend their title against the Army at the Allianz Stadium, Twickenham, on Saturday 2 May 2026 – and you could watch from a section of the stadium exclusively set aside for members of the RNA.

Tickets for the 2026 Army v Navy match are on sale at a special rate of £44.20, with access to a bar next to the RNA allocated seating area, when you book through the Association.

The Navy's Senior Women's team will also be in action against the Army, directly after the men's match. Use the link [here](#) buy your tickets – once you have stated your required tickets the Rugby Football Union (RFU) will contact you directly to complete the transaction. For those who have already put in an order, don't fret – the sales process was delayed by the England v All Blacks match last month.

GET YOUR GIZZETS AT ONLINE SHOP

Our lanyards and pin badges are available from our online shop. Click the SHOP link on our website, or go to: <https://www.rnagizzet.co.uk/>

UPCOMING MEETINGS

Assoc Management Committees:

Fri 27 Feb 2026 (F2F RMH)
Fri 8 May 2026 (Zoom 0900)
Fri 17 July 2026 (Zoom 0900)

Fri 16 Oct 2026 (F2F RMH)

FACs (finance):

Fri 13 Mar 2026 (Zoom 0930) Accounts ready
Fri 15 May 2026 (Zoom

0930)

Fri 24 July 2026 (Zoom 0930)

Fri 23 Oct 2026 (Zoom 0930)

National Councils:

Fri 12 Dec 2025 (0900 Zoom)

Fri 20 Mar 2026 (F2F RMH)

Fri 29 May 2026 (Zoom

0900) Pre-Conference

Fri 7 Aug 2026 (Zoom 0900)

Fri 6 Nov 2026 (F2F RMH)

Annual Report

DATE PROTECTION

The 2026 RNA Diary is now available at a price of £7 including postage. The slim dark-blue diary with integrated cover can be bought from the RNA website shop through [this link](#).



MUSIC TO OUR EARS Not only did the audience at Portsmouth Guildhall enjoy a superb charity fundraising concert in October – they also gave the Association a major financial boost. The combined talents of the Fisherman's Friends, the Royal Marines Band Collingwood and the RNA Community Choir entertained a sell-out crowd AND helped raise more than £30,000 on the evening. BZ all round!

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. 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





TRINITY

YOUR INSURANCE PARTNER

Enjoy the following member benefits:

- 1. Special Premium Rate for Veterans' Personal Accident cover
- 2. 15% discount on Travel Plus holiday insurance
- 3. 15% discount on Free Spirit travel insurance
- 4. Buildings & Contents Insurance - on purchase, choose a military charity for your donation
- 5. Life Insurance - on purchase our partner, LifeSearch will donate £50 to a military charity of choice
- 6. Eligibility for Trinity's 40+ travel insurance scheme

* From those charities listed that includes the Royal Naval Association Charity



ROYAL NAVAL ASSOCIATION



Associations Line
Speak to the Trinity team on 0345 241 1001 during office hours for insurance help.



Go to your members area
To access all of the products and discounts

Trinity Insurance Services Ltd. www.trinitytrinity.com helpline@trinitytrinity.com

10% discount on tickets for RNA members - join for free today!



ARMY • NAVY

**Discounted tickets : Free bar next to our
dedicated RNA seating : Seats on the center line**

Date:
Saturday , May 2, 2026
Venue:
Twickenham Stadium



**INTER SERVICE
CHAMPIONSHIP**

**Book via
link below**

https://forms.office.com/Pages/ResponsePage.aspx?id=9Eat3SKH5UOtXl-GbkmMUGeg-uZ75Txli2vF_0U0pVBUMDE4REIRSzVMWTREM0Q4SEc4RzA2NDQwMy4u

CONFERENCE DOCUMENTS READY FOR BUSINESS

Plans are already well advanced for the 2026 National Conference weekend programme in Salford in June 2026. And though that programme looks very attractive in its own right, there is business to be done on the morning of Saturday 13 June at the RNA Annual General Meeting.

So shipmates are invited to put some thought into what should be discussed, and who should act as delegates for Branches and representatives on the National Council.

Three documents at the end of this Circular are relevant to the AGM (click



A CENTURY OF CITY PRIDE

here to access them).

First is the delegate application form for shipmates who would like to play an active role the discussion and debate of the AGM in the Lowry Theatre.

The second is a nomination for National Council Members (NCMs) and Deputy National Council Members (DNCMs).

The opportunities for NCMs are in **Areas 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 9, 10 and 12**, while the openings for DNCMs are in **Areas 1, 2, 9, 10, 11 and 12**.

Finally there is a form for proposed motions and amendments for consideration during the AGM.

The Saturday Gala Dinner is scheduled to be held in the Imperial War Museum (North), with a drumhead service on Sunday on Salford Quays..

Are you:

Ex-forces?

Eager to travel more this year? ✓

Tired of rising insurance costs? ✓

You could make a saving by

Joining our 40+ travel insurance scheme to benefit from cover that can continue into your later years, with no upper age limit*

Get A 30 Second Quote

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



BE A WINNER WITH THE RNA LOTTERY

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.

PUTTING US ON THE MAP

The RNA now has a location on Google Maps in the shape of Central Office in Portsmouth Naval Base.

And our entry has a range of photographs available on the site which you are free to browse and download.

If this trial proves popular then more images will be added which highlight the ethos and activities of your Association and fellow shipmates.

These are all RNA Copyright images, and the vast majority was taken by our talented official photographer S/M Nigel Huxtable.

Any feedback to the Comms team please.

GET YOUR SLOPS HERE

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

Shipmates might be interested in becoming involved with the popular and successful RNA Sports and Comradeship Groups (SCGs). 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

Choir – Jon Everett: wws@rnassoc.org

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, Caravan and Camping – 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

Yachting – David Monks: david.c.monks@gmail.com

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

MONDAY NIGHT FIRESIDE CHATS

■ 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 8 Dec	Carl Dixon	Agamemnon – RM
Mon 15 Dec	Holiday break	
Mon 22 Dec	Holiday break	
Mon 29 Dec	Holiday break	
Mon 5 Jan	Richard 'Jonah' Jones	Titanic – the Searches and the Dives
Mon 12 Jan	Phil Eaglesham	Former RM Commando who became a prominent Paralympian, entrepreneur and mental health advocate
Mon 2 Feb	Author Gav Don	Submarine's Secret War Against the Axis

Royal Naval Association Lottery



Win up to £25,000

**We rely on your help to
deliver outstanding
support throughout
every stage of our
members' lives.**



**Help us continue our work
by playing the RNA lottery**

**Enter by using the QR Code
or visit RNAlottery.co.uk**



WELFARE AND WELLBEING

SUPPORTING OUR VETERANS AND FAMILIES AT CHRISTMAS

Christmas is a season of joy, reflection, and togetherness, yet for many it can also be a time of loneliness, stress, or financial strain. At the RNA our Welfare and Wellbeing team is committed to ensuring that no veteran or family member feels forgotten during the festive season.

Why Support Matters

Behind the smiles and celebrations, many of our shipmates face challenges that aren't always visible. Bereavement, the transition to civilian life, health concerns, or financial pressures can weigh heavily at this time of year.

That is why our Branch Welfare and Wellbeing Officers and volunteers are so vital, offering a listening ear, practical help, and above all, a sense of belonging.

This year, RNA volunteers have gone above and beyond, from buddy calls to isolated shipmates, to supporting

Thriving Together wellbeing weekends.

Along with support from Royal Navy & Royal Marines Charity (RNRMC) we have helped hundreds of veterans rediscover confidence, companionship, and resilience.

Where to Find Help Over the Festive Period

If you or someone you know needs support, please reach out. Here are some key organisations available throughout December and beyond:

■ **Combat Stress 24-hour Mental Health Helpline:** 0800 138 1619;

Text: 07537 173683; Website: www.combatstress.org.uk

■ **Samaritans – Free, 24/7 Emotional Support:** 116 123; Website: www.samaritans.org

Please also see the RNA Welfare grid on the next page for further support agencies.

Share these details widely – you never

know who might need them.

Looking Ahead to 2026

As we look to the year ahead, my focus will be on training and development, strengthening our collective knowledge and understanding.

By investing in skills and resources, we will ensure that every Welfare Officer and volunteer feels confident in supporting shipmates with dignity and compassion.

We will also continue to expand initiatives such as **Thriving Together**, broaden our knowledge, and build stronger links with partner organisations.

In doing so, we reaffirm our commitment to the RNA's guiding principle: Shipmates supporting Shipmates.

A Heartfelt Thank You

I want to personally thank all Branch Welfare Officers for your dedication and hard work throughout the year. Your commitment has made a real difference, and I am pleased to see a

Continued on page 25



QUESTIONS, QUESTIONS...

This isn't just a quiz... it's a chance to come together, share a laugh, and feel the spirit of Christmas as one crew. Whether you're joining with friends or logging in solo, you'll be welcomed with open arms, because no Shipmate should ever feel alone at Christmas.

Expect festive fun, light-hearted competition, and plenty of cheer. So, grab a mince pie, pour yourself something warming, and settle in for an evening that promises smiles all round. Don't miss it — let's make this Christmas sparkle together!

Our quiz will be run online, so use the link below to go onto Zoom and you'll be all set to join in.

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/85082417512?pwd=qpaYv8bpPuzhm0ONrVfdBnrVbvYzlh.1>

SUPPORT AT CHRISTMAS

Continued from page 24

noticeable increase in monthly reports – a significant step forward in keeping our community connected and supported. Thank you also to every shipmate who has contributed to welfare and wellbeing initiatives.

From organising events to supporting veterans through cost-of-living challenges, your efforts ensure that no veteran or family member feels forgotten.

What makes the RNA remarkable is not only the programmes we deliver, but the commitment of the people behind them. Every phone call, every welfare visit, and every event organised by our volunteers reflect the values of loyalty, respect, and compassion that define our community. This Christmas, we recognise both the season and the enduring bond of Shipmates.

The RNA is more than an association; it is a network of support built on shared service and trust.

As we move into 2026, we will continue to demonstrate that when shipmates stand together, no one is left behind.

Thank You all & Merry Christmas

Jon Everett

Welfare & Wellbeing Support Coordinator



BEST STANDARDS POSSIBLE

Admiral Jellicoe House is a Portsmouth-based purpose-built care home for veterans (and their dependents) of the Royal Navy.

The building is the latest addition to the Royal Naval Benevolent Trust's care facilities, offering resident-centred care and dedicated dementia support to veterans of the Royal Navy and their dependents.

Their aim is to make your stay with them as happy and as comfortable as possible and to give you a high level of care to enable you to have the best quality of life that your abilities will allow.

Residents join them at varying stages of their journey into retirement living and later life care. They have a commitment to maintaining the best standards possible to support the health and wellbeing of their community, including physical and mental wellbeing and regular activities that support and nurture a balanced lifestyle.

RNBT care has a holistic approach to assisting people to live their lives well and support people in their journey.

Admiral Jellicoe House will deliver care and support that is meaningful to each individual, with dignity, warmth and personality, by a well-trained care team. They recognise that each of their residents is on their own unique journey. They are part of that journey and are privileged to

facilitate a safe, positive space to allow the individual to continue their journey on their terms by having a meaningful life through moments of joy, providing a safe, accepting and proactive environment and helping people live their lives on their terms.

If you are interested in a placement at Admiral Jellicoe House, or would like to have a look at what RNBT has to offer, don't hesitate to get in contact – <https://rnbt.org.uk/admiral-jellicoe-house-care-home/>

LEAVE A LASTING LEGACY IN YOUR 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.

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>

WELFARE CONTACTS

Organisation	Telephone	Website
Aggie's	079 7764 1876	www.aggies.org.uk
Association of Wrens	02392 725 141	https://wrens.org.uk
COBSEO	-	www.cobseo.org.uk
Combat Stress	0800 138 1619	helpline@combatstress.org.uk
CRISIS	0300 636 1967	www.crisis.org.uk
Fighting with Pride	0203 981 3810	www.fightingwithpride.org.uk
For all Ops - GOV.UK	0808 802 1212	www.gov.uk/support-for-veterans
Help for Heroes	0300 303 9888	www.helpforheroes.org.uk
Home-Start	0116 464 5490	www.home-start.org.uk
Kids	0121 355 2707	www.kids.org.uk
Marriage Care	0800 389 3801	www.marriagecare.org.uk
Mind Solent	023 8202 7810	www.solentmind.org.uk
Naval Children's Charity	02392 639 534	www.navalchildrenscharity.org.uk
Naval Families Federation	02392 654 374	https://nff.org.uk
Officers' Association	020 7808 4175	www.officersassociation.org.uk
Op Courage	-	www.nhs.uk
PTSD Resolution	0300 302 0551	https://ptsdresolution.org/
REFUGE	0808 2000 247	https://refuge.org.uk/
Relate	-	www.relate.org.uk
Royal Navy and Royal Marines Charity	02393 871 520	www.mrmc.org.uk
Royal British Legion	0808 802 8080	www.britishlegion.org.uk
Royal Marines Charity	0800 468 1664	https://rma-trmc.org
Royal Naval Benevolent Trust	02392 690 112	www.mbt.org.uk
Royal Navy Royal Marines Widows' Association	07462 376850	https://rnmwidows.org
SAIL	0800 160 1842	https://sailine.org.uk/
Samaritans	116 123	www.samaritans.org
Seafarers UK	020 7932 0000	www.theseafarerscharity.org
SSAFA	0800 260 6780	www.ssafo.org.uk
The Poppy Factory	020 8940 3305	www.poppyfactory.org
Veterans Outreach Support	02392 731 767	https://vosuk.org/
Walking With The Wounded	0330 058 5800	https://walkingwiththewounded.org.uk
White Ensign Association	07384 575598	www.whiteensign.co.uk

CONTACT AT CHRISTMAS

Traditionally, Christmas is a time for families and friends to come together and celebrate the festive period. It can also be a difficult and challenging time for separated parents and their children. So, what can be done to help parents navigate this time?

Early conversations

Ideally, talk about the next school holiday before the end of the preceding break, for example, Christmas discussions during October half-term. Early conversations help avoid unnecessary last-minute changes or disagreements. Try to be proactive rather than reactive – consider making plans in advance, and recording the agreement in writing.

Festive period vs Christmas Day

Christmas Day is one day – the festive magic can last for weeks! It may be that one parent struggles with the idea that they will not wake up with their child(ren) on Christmas Day, but celebrating Christmas is not exclusive to the 25th. From experience, Christmas Day handovers can also be quite overwhelming – for the parents, and their children. Rather than focusing solely on Christmas Day, think about the entire period and the longer-term arrangements, such as alternating years so that the children wake up with each parent in turn.

Communication

If you have worked hard to agree the arrangements over the festive break, do your best to stick to them. Time management is even more important during Christmas and helps avoid unnecessary disagreement or conflict. Arrive on time to handovers (make sure you have agreed in advance who is responsible for drop-offs and collections, and specific times/locations) and if there are any issues, let the other parent know at the earliest opportunity.

Children's feelings

Christmas can be challenging for separated parents, and it can be equally difficult for the children too. This can be avoidable. Keep the children away from any dispute or disagreement and avoid exposure to adult issues or age-inappropriate conversation. It's important to remember that the

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 – an RNA member – has represented personnel in the Royal Navy, from ABs to Vice Admirals. She understands the difference between civvy and military life and the impact this can 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.



children's feelings and wellbeing should be the primary concern, and their happiness will depend on how the contact arrangements around the festive break are managed. This approach is not just exclusive to Christmas and should apply in all circumstances.

It is also considered by the Family Court when determining the contact arrangements if parents cannot agree. There is no one-size-fits-all for Christmas and the wider arrangements. Consider what is best for you, your children and extended family. Do not, however, ask the child(ren) where they want to spend Christmas. This places pressure on the child and brings them into adult conflict – and we've established the importance of avoiding exposure to parental dispute and inappropriate conversations.

New traditions!

If this is your first year as a separated family, think about a new Christmas tradition that can be exclusive to your new routine, such as special trips to see Santa, meals or craft activities. Christmas might look a little different now, so why not make it the best yet?

What happens if it does not work?

If arrangements break down, it is important to be proactive rather than reactive.

Keep communication calm but make a thorough note of what is disputed.

Be willing to compromise if you can.

Can this be resolved during the festive break, or are there underlying issues?

If the arrangements are pursuant to a court order, it is important to consider prompt legal advice.

Have a wonderful Christmas (to those who celebrate) and enjoy the break. Hopefully the guidance above encourages parents to ensure their Christmas is as amicable as possible and to allow contact to take place effectively.

If there are any issues, Knights are available to help throughout the festive period, so please do get in touch.

I'm here to help navigate divorce or separation, and for all other family law questions! I am an Associate in the family team at Knights and my partner is an RN veteran. I come from a military family and have a little girl who is one.

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

www.linkedin.com/in/emmxjones

emma.jones@knightsplc.com

WELFARE AND WELLBEING

AREA 7 VOLUNTEERS UNITE IN WALES TO BOOST SKILLS AND WELLBEING

RNA Area 7 held an inaugural training day and get-together for our volunteers, aimed at strengthening their ability to support our shipmates in Wales, and to look after their own wellbeing.

The event, at HMS Cambria in Cardiff, brought together RNA members, associate members, new volunteers and long-standing shipmates for a session focused on enhancing knowledge of the range of support available, completing key training and exchanging ideas for best practice.

The day included a presentation by the Veterans Welfare Group, who outlined their services during transition from Service life into the veteran community; an overview of the

RNA structure, roles and future plans from Jon Everett, RNA Welfare & Wellbeing Support Coordinator; and a presentation on looking after your own wellbeing by Jo Johnson, voluntary Area 7 Welfare and Wellbeing Officer, and Training Manager at leading UK Charity Grassroots Suicide Prevention, who co-ordinated the event.

The workshop also enabled Enhanced DBS Checks and ID Cards to be processed, plus core safeguarding training to be completed.

There was the opportunity to renew friendships, welcome new members and reinforce the sense of camaraderie that defines the RNA.

Jon Everett said: "Our volunteers are at the heart of what the RNA does

"The training day ensures they have the confidence, knowledge, and support needed to help shipmates who may be facing challenges.

"Just as importantly, strengthening the bonds that make our community so special."

Jo Johnson added: "It was fantastic to see so much experience gathered in one room today.

"Our Area 7 volunteers bring an incredible depth of knowledge, and the training day gave us the chance to enhance those skills while placing emphasis on their own wellbeing.

"Supporting veterans starts with supporting the people who give their time so generously, and today reflected that."

The RNA continues to expand its volunteer network to ensure every veteran, serving member, and family has access to companionship, support, and a welcoming community rooted in Naval values.



WELFARE AND WELLBEING

GREENWICH ENGAGES FOR RECOVERY

Greenwich Hospital has awarded a £79,000 grant to the BOWRA Foundation in support of its Engage to Recover programme, which aims to support former Royal Navy veterans and their families recovering from stroke, brain injuries and neurological conditions.

The Engage to Recover programme delivers tailored physical activity and wellbeing initiatives that get veterans working towards recovery and is inclusive of families.

The programme helps to rebuild resilience, restore confidence, and strengthen family relationships. Progress and impact are assessed through ongoing surveys, alongside attendance data and qualitative feedback collected annually.

This award builds on Greenwich Hospital's previous £47,500 grant, which

enabled the BOWRA Foundation to expand its physical activity programme led by a dedicated Veterans Activities Manager.

Founded in 2014 by Lt Col Mark Bowra, a Special Boat Service officer who suffered a life-changing stroke at age 39, BOWRA draws from Mark's own recovery journey to deliver a wide range of imaginative and inclusive activities that foster camaraderie and promote physical fitness and mental wellbeing. In addition to its activity programmes, the BOWRA Foundation distributes BOWRA Bags—innovative collections of tools and aids designed to improve dexterity, mobility, memory, communication, and independence. Deirdre Mills, Director of Greenwich Hospital, said: "At Greenwich Hospital, we believe that recovery is not just about rehabilitation – it's about restoring hope,

connection, and purpose.

"The BOWRA Foundation's Engage to Recover programme captures that spirit perfectly, empowering veterans and their families to rebuild their lives together after injury.

"We are helping to expand a programme that reflects the courage, resilience, and needs of the Royal Navy community."

Sue Mosley, Chief Executive of Bowra, said: "We want to thank Greenwich Hospital for their continued trust and support.

"This funding allows us to reach more Royal Navy veterans and families with our Engage to Recover programme, helping them overcome physical and mental challenges together.

"Our mission is to promote recovery through shared experience, resilience, and teamwork, values that lie at the very heart of the Armed Forces community."

FUNERAL GUIDE IS NOW AVAILABLE ON THE RNA WEBSITE

"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>

JOIN IN THIS CHRISTMAS

Comradeship is at the heart of the RNA, and that is certainly the case over the festive period.

This Christmas, all are welcome to join in, especially those living alone, feeling isolated, or simply wanting to reconnect. Share a tune, a memory, or just join us for friendly company – no explanations required.

The Christmas Wellbeing Wednesday starts online at 7pm on Wednesday 10 December

Use this Zoom link to join in the fun:
<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/3823963619?pwd=fxj1juicx8A1DMq2Vfos0MLNBK3qC3.1&omn=89413728495>

DON'T MISS OUT...

The Semaphore publications are an important part of the RNA's '7Cs' provision to its members, so it is important that Branches have an accurate record of members' email addresses.

Lanyard Branch members should email Sarah Bewley on cml@rnassoc.org if they are having issues with receiving the newsletters.

A festive poster for the Royal Naval Association's Christmas Wellbeing Wednesday event. The background is dark red with white snowflakes and a Christmas tree on the left. The text is in white and gold. It includes the event title, date, time, and a list of activities.

ROYAL NAVAL ASSOCIATION
Wellbeing Wednesday
THIS MONTH IT'S ALL ABOUT
CHRISTMAS

- * Share your favourite festive tunes
- * Swap cherished memories of Christmas past
- * Come along & enjoy your memories in a safe place

Let's make this season brighter. together.

WEDNESDAY 10TH DECEMBER
AT 7pm

BRANCH NEWS

TYNE Branch

Shipmates from Tyne Branch had the privilege of attending the presentation evening which marked the decommissioning of HMS Northumberland at the Bede Academy in Blyth, Northumberland.

HMS Northumberland's ship's bell and Battle Honours board were handed over to Northumberland County Council for safekeeping and likewise, the ship's nameplate to the Bede Academy CCF Unit (Blyth).

Tyne Branch shipmate George Bone was the first Master-at-Arms in HMS Northumberland, taking her out of build and serving with her from 1994 to 1997. He was delighted to be reunited during the evening with Capt Steve Bramley RN (Retd), the first Commanding Officer of Northumberland.

This Type 23 frigate was launched from Swan Hunter on the Tyne in 1992, one of the last ships built at Wallsend. Many people connected with Swan Hunter and the ship itself were present, and there was a great deal of nostalgia and emotion in the room.

Alongside a Royal Navy Regional Capability Demonstration, there was a display by the Royal Marines Band Scotland Corps of Drums, who also took part in Ceremonial Evening Colours to play Sunset alongside the



Guard of Coastal Forces Squadron and Maritime Reserves and the Ensign Party of Bede Combined Cadet Force Unit.

Capt Bramley was joined by the Lady Sponsor, Lady Anne Kerr, to present Northumberland's ship's bell and Battle

Honours board to Cllr Glen Sanderson, Leader of Northumberland County Council.

The frigate's nameplate was presented to the Bede Academy CCF Unit by the Lord Lieutenant of Northumberland, Dr Caroline Pryer, and Cdre Tristram Kirkwood, Naval Regional Commander for Wales, the West of England and the Channel Islands.

The signing of the Armed Forces Covenant by Northern Powergrid was conducted by Cdre Thomas Knowles, Naval Regional Commander for Northern England and the Isle of Man.



HELSTON Branch

Members of Helston Branch were at the Breage St. Breaca Church on Remembrance Sunday, where the service was held indoors because of the bad weather conditions. Wreaths were laid on the altar.

S/M Alec Willet couldn't unfurl the RBL standard due high winds on Tregoning Hill. Falklands veteran S/M Mick Pyers laid the wreath for SAMA 82 in Helston, while another Falkland veteran, S/M Joe Morton, laid the RBL wreath at Mullion – there were no World War 2 veterans in attendance so he was volunteered.

On Armistice Day the Branch attended the masthead service at a very windy HMS Seahawk.

The RNA wreath was laid by Branch Chairman S/M George Scott and the SAMA 82 wreath by Secretary S/M Joe Locke.

No photographs are available of the service because of the awful weather. Lunch was at the Trevena Garden Centre, where the photograph (left) was taken. The Branch Christmas lunch will be held on 12 December.



SOUTHEND Branch

Shipmates from Southend Branch took part in the city's Remembrance Sunday parade and service at the War Memorial in Cliff Gardens overlooking the Thames Estuary.

City Mayor Cllr Nigel Folkard also led the City in two minutes of silence at 11am at Victoria Circus, adjacent to the Victoria Shopping Centre, on Tuesday 11 November. In other news, the winners of the Branch 'Open' Uckers competition this year were S/M Margaret Quantrill (singles) and Brian and Christine Cox (doubles) (pictured right)

Tomorrow (6 December) sees a local derby, when Southend Branch takes on Rayleigh Branch in the eighth year of the series. All Branch members are welcome to watch and/or play – if you fancy learning to play, drop the Branch a note, or reach out on Facebook. Members are invited to join the Revd Paul Mackay at St Mary's Church, Prittwell, for their Christmas Carols Service on Saturday 20 December at 7pm (Carols by Candlelight), and on Monday 22 December at 2.30pm (Daytime Christmas Carol Service).

The Branch now has a total of 44 Full Members (including five Life Members) and 174 Associate Members, giving a total Branch membership of 218.

And the Branch Facebook page now has 1,225 followers – see <https://www.facebook.com/RoyalNavalAssociationSouthend>



CAERPHILLY Branch

Caerphilly branch Vice Chairman Steve Keable lays a wreath (left) while S/Ms Jo Johnson and Gaz Dixon were on parade (above) during Remembrance ceremonies in South Wales



HARWICH Branch

Harwich Branch members had a busy schedule over the Remembrance period. Shipmates had the honour of Lt Cdr Rebecca Reavell RN from HMS Venturer, escorted by S/M Andy and Mrs D Wells, joining them on their morning tour around three memorials.

The day started at 10am at the Merchant Navy Memorial on Harwich Quay, followed by a visit to the Minesweepers Memorial for 10.20am and finally attendance at the town's main War Memorial for 11am, where Deputy Lord Lieutenant for Essex Nigel Spencer joined them.

S/M President Bob Bliss was Parade Marshal at each of them, while Chloe Jay from the Tendring Brass Band played the Last Post and Reveille. Large crowds attended each of the ceremonies.

Shipmates are pictured (above) with Lt Cdr Rebecca Reavell at the Merchant Navy Memorial, while (pictured right) S/M Andy Wells salutes after laying a wreath.

Pictures taken by Carol Scutcher.



BRIDPORT Branch

Each year Bridport Branch members cast their vote for 'Shipmate of the Year', an honour that recognises outstanding dedication, support, and service to the branch.

This year, the award – the Trafalgar Trophy – was given to Jill Merritt, who was both deeply honoured and genuinely surprised to hear her name announced. The recognition reflects the gratitude and high regard felt by the branch members for Jill's many years of loyal support, hard work, and unfailing commitment to Bridport Branch and the wider community.

Jill has been a familiar and friendly face in Bridport since 1974, having moved to the town from Bournemouth. Her working life has always centred around people and community. She spent many years in the pub trade, first running the



London Inn and later the Royal Oak, now known as the Market House. After leaving the pub industry, Jill began working part-time at the Bridport & District Club. What started as a small role quickly became a long-term commitment – she has now been there for 34 years. During that time,

Jill has taken care of countless groups, events, and functions, becoming a reliable and well-loved presence within the club.

One of the organisations she has supported with great dedication is Bridport Branch. Jill has looked after the Association ever since they moved their meetings to the Bridport & District Club, and she has continued to give them her time, care, and attention ever since.

Jill loves her work because it keeps her active, social, and connected. She enjoys meeting people, being part of everyday life in the town, and staying busy.

Jill felt both grateful and shocked to learn she had been chosen as this year's recipient, a recognition that reflects the many years of dedication she has given to Bridport Branch.

CHARD Branch

Chard Branch Shipmate Liz O'Brien was honoured when asked to lay a wreath at last month's Armistice parade in Taunton (pictured right) – and it was a particularly poignant time for Liz, having only recently lost her husband, Chard Branch Chairman S/M Andy to illness. The couple were active members of the branch and were (and in Liz's case, still is) very supportive of all things Service-based. BZ to Liz in honouring the request of Andy on this occasion.

A few days later the Branch held a social evening made even better when the President and Acting Chairman S/M Malcolm Day called the members to order so that he could present two unsuspecting shipmates with awards for their services to the Branch.

S/M Sandy Lacey was presented with a Certificate of Appreciation (pictured below) for her long service as the branch welfare representative, her service of which has been exemplary. Sandy gave a small speech – if speechless is a speech. This was followed by S/M Mike Kirkland being asked to approach the table, and after a small speech by S/M Malcolm, Mike was awarded the honour of being made a Life Member



MERTHYR TYDFIL Branch
Merthyr Tydfil Branch Chairman S/M Gareth Booth laid Merthyr's RNA wreath at the town's Remembrance Service (above) while S/M Kayleigh Thomas paraded the Branch standard (pictured below).

for his long-time service to the Branch as the Treasurer, as well as being a very active member (pictured below). The evening then developed into one of Lamp Swinging, and all the joys a tot or two and a few beers can bring.



FALMOUTH Branch

At a large branch meeting in November shipmates gathered to thank S/M Brian Toney for over a decade of service as the Branch Standard Bearer, recognising his long and dedicated service – supported throughout by his wife Ann (Sue). The photograph (right) shows Falmouth Branch President Cdre Tony Hogg (on the right) with a whiskey globe and certificates at the branch meeting.



JERVIS BAY AND RNA BERMUDA

The RNA Branch was started in Bermuda in February 1959 with 47 members, but by 1964 that number had been reduced to only 11 people, writes *Padre the Revd Fr David Addington RNR, Chaplain to Bermuda Branch and Chaplain Emeritus and Past Chairman, Board of Management of the Bermuda Sailors' Home Inc.* Disbanded at that time, it was reinstated in August 1982.

2004 was the final curtain call for the RNA in Bermuda. The last Officers and Members decided to lay up the Standard in the chapel of the Mariners' Club of the Bermuda Sailors' Home, their natural home and *de facto* HQ.

We were entitled to a civic service in the Cathedral and a place in the Warriors Chapel there (which includes the Battle Ensign of HMS Bermuda), but the Home would gladly accept the trust and honour our Standard.

Accordingly, a full and very fitting service of Laying-up according to RNA Ceremonial was held on Sunday 3 October 2004 at 1230 hours, which included an Act of Remembrance, under the patronage of our Patron His Excellency The Governor Sir John Vereker and with an address given by Capt Alan Brooks RN (Retd).

Included were the Naval Prayer and Hymn, the Lesson from Matthew 25: 31-40 read by Lt Cdr (SCC) Derek Taylor RNR, former CO of the Bermuda Sea Cadet Corps, and concluding with The Blessing by the Chaplain and the singing of the National Anthem.

The Royal Navy Base in Bermuda was closed in 1995, so visits by RN ships had been reduced. However, HMS Richmond had recently been in (as guardship HMS Monmouth made her way home) and she had been bringing relief to the storm-torn islands of the Caribbean after Hurricanes Ivan and Jeanne.



Photograph taken on 11 November 2006 by Rev David Addington: from left, Lt Cdr (SCC) Derek Taylor RNR; Principal Customs Office Sean Pitcher JP; Quartermaster Arthur Hughes RN; (part hidden) Soldier in Tammy (believe he had been wounded at Monte Cassino); Officer of (now Royal) Bermuda Regiment; Wren Pamela Darrell nee Skillington, wartime cryptanalyst at Bletchley Park; Jim Hickey CPO, US Navy Ret'd: CPO Frank Farmer, RN Stoker at age of 17 in HMS Ulster on D-Day; Owen Darrell RN, husband of Pamela, wartime service in minesweepers; William Black, Cllr Hamilton Corporation and ex-Bermuda Police; unidentified; Keith Rossiter RN, RNA Standard Bearer who served post-war in Ton-class minesweepers; Capt Alan Brooks RN (Ret'd), commanded HMS London in mid-90s Bosnian War; Capt K G R Hallam RN (Ret'd), former Marine & Ports Director.

During its existence the RNA provided much to the civic and community life of our beloved Bermuda.

Every 11 November at 0900 we would hold a brief ceremony at Albouy's Point. A sundial memorial there commemorates the gallant action of the Armed Merchant Cruiser HMS Jervis Bay in the dark days of World War 2.

The inscription reads: "Captain Fogarty Fegen VC, RN The Officers and Ship's Company of HMS Jervis Bay Who cheerfully gave their lives in successful defence of their convoy, fighting their ship to the last against hopeless odds. November 5th, 1940". *'Be thou faithful unto death'.*

They had operated out of Bermuda. By their sacrifice they held off the German pocket battleship Admiral Scheer long enough to allow the convoy to escape, but at the loss of their ship and all but 60 of their ship's company of 200.

When RNA Bermuda could no longer hold the Parade, the Sea Cadets took on the responsibility and they continue to do this duty. It is usual for the Premier and Members of Government to attend before the Main Parade at the Cenotaph.

Of our Band of Brothers and Sisters, some had already Crossed the Bar by the time I took the photograph (above) in 2006 and nearly all have gone over since. Names of RNA Bermuda Officers taken from a list on the 2002 Trafalgar Dinner Programme were:

John Burland: Officer World War 2, Fleet Air Arm;

CPO (Wtr) Ron Barton: HMS Prince of Wales (when torpedoed);

Eric Smith: Commissioned 1941 – called up July 1939 from RNVR, anti-submarines Atlantic Convoys;

Ronnie Firth: D-Day Landing Craft Engineer;

Keith Rossiter: Post-war Ton Class Minesweeper duty;

Quartermaster Arthur Hughes: Corvettes – Gibraltar & West Coast of Africa;

CPO Frank Farmer: President Bermuda Vets. Service in the Med, Pacific and Gold Beach HMS Ulster D-Day;

Chaplain The Rev'd David J. Addington (now Ch (SCC) D Addington RNR: RNA March, Cambridgeshire UK).

My mentor and predecessor was the Ven Thomas Dyson, RNR (Retd), Chaplain serving aboard ships in the North Atlantic and Far East.



Chaplain (SCC) Fr David Addington RNR at the conclusion of the Service and Wreath-Laying, Jervis Bay Memorial, Albouy's Point, Bermuda, 11 November 2013

OBITUARY

S/M GRAHAM MEREDITH

S/M Graham Meredith crossed the bar on 22 October this year. Graham joined the Royal Navy in 1966 and served for some 24 years, leaving the Service in 1990. He ended his career as a Chief Petty Officer (MEM), and served in a number of ships, including Leander-class frigate HMS Dido, Leopard-class (Type 41) frigate HMS Lynx, County-class guided missile destroyer HMS London, Colossus-class heavy repair ship HMS Triumph, Tiger-class cruiser HMS Tiger, Centaur-class commando carrier HMS Bulwark, County-class guided missile destroyer HMS Kent, Leander-class frigates HMS Jupiter and

HMS Ariadne (pictured) and numerous small inshore craft. Graham received the Long Service and Good Conduct (LS&GC) Medal for his efforts.

He joined the Association in 1991, and having given much to the Association, including serving as Chairman of Shrewsbury Branch for five years, he was awarded life membership.

Graham will be greatly missed by all his shipmates past and present.

The image (below) is of HMS Ariadne, from the Imperial War Museum collection © Crown copyright reproduced under delegated authority from The Keeper of Public Records. Image: IWM (CT 850)



RIGHT NOW IS A GOOD TIME TO GIVE BIG...

Claire's husband Jim served as a submariner in the Royal Navy for more than 20 years.

Some five years ago Claire was just sending Jim a text when she heard a knock at her door – the knock that every Naval family fears.

She was told that Jim had died, and in an instant everything changed.

"The moment I was told that Jim had died is etched in my memory forever," said Claire. "The grief and the sudden uncertainty were overwhelming.

"On top of the emotional pain, there were decisions to make, an inquest, a funeral—everything felt too much. Nothing about our life felt safe anymore."

In the midst of that shock and disarray, Royal Navy & Royal Marines Charity (RNRMC) stepped in. Through its Death in Service Grant, automatically provided to the next of kin of any



member of the Royal Navy, Royal Marines or RFA who dies in service, the charity ensured that Claire and her children, Georgia and Fraser, received immediate financial support.

"RNRMC gave us the breathing space we desperately needed," Claire said. "It meant we could focus on our grief and on supporting the children, rather than worrying about the immediate

financial strain."

RNRMC is participating in this year's Big Give Christmas Challenge, giving supporters the chance to double the impact of their donations for one week only. The week ends at midday on 9 December.

All donations made to RNRMC through the campaign will be matched until the charity reaches its £60,000 target, helping raise vital funds for Naval families facing the devastating loss of a loved one.

By supporting the Big Give Christmas Challenge, donors will help ensure that families like Claire's never face those first unimaginable days alone.

To learn more or to donate during the campaign window, please visit: www.rnrmc.org.uk/appeal/big-give For more details of the Big Give initiative, see <https://donate.biggive.org/?noredirect=>

EMPLOYMENT AND TRAINING

EMPOWER YOURSELF!

The latest in the Forces Employment Charity's (FEC) 'Women into Employment' Series – Empowering You – takes place between 3 and 5 February 2026, both online and in-person in London, Glasgow and Knutsford.

As a military spouse, veteran or reservist, you can join this unique event and let the advisors from the FEC and Barclays help you, both virtually and in-person, to rediscover your professional identity, expand your networks, and create new career pathways!

As part of a 'Women into Employment' series of events, this three-day programme blends virtual learning with in-person connection at three prestigious Barclays campuses. Empowering You is more than a workshop.

It is a career accelerator and confidence catalyst, providing a clear pathway to meaningful employment and professional growth.

Why should you should be part of the next Empowering You event?

- **Confidence restoration:** you will leave with a stronger sense of self-

worth and clarity about the value of your military-connected experiences.

- **Career activation:** immediate actions, applications, further training, mentoring, and relationships demonstrate that the workshop drives tangible career progression.

- **Community building:** form your network as a delegate and reduce isolation and sustain motivation long after the event to build your next steps.

- **Trust in support systems:** take part in a programme that understands your unique challenges and delivers practical help.

How Empowering You works:

Day 1 (Tuesday 3 February) – briefing call for those attending in person on 4 February
10:00 – 12:00 (Online – MS Teams)

Day 2 (Wednesday 4 February) – 10:00 – 16:00 (In person at Barclays – London, Knutsford, Glasgow)

Day 3 (Thursday 5 February) – Meet employers – all participants can join this session
09:30 – 14:30 (Online – MS Teams)



So, who is eligible?
First things first, you must be a client of the FEC.
Not signed up yet? It's a quick and easy process to register with them [here](#).
You can then register for

the event itself [here](#).

For spouses and partners:

Empowering You offers proof that you have cultivated skills, adaptability, leadership, and cross-cultural communication that employers value.

For military women: it affirms your professional identity beyond uniform or supportive roles, highlighting the leadership and expertise you bring to any sector.

For young people looking to step into their first career: Empowering You offers a gateway to tailored mentoring and career resources, helping you translate experiences gained into clear professional opportunities.

For reservists: it bridges the gap between part-time military service and civilian careers, ensuring you can leverage both skill sets to progress in dual career paths.

NEW WAVE OF CAREER OPPORTUNITIES

The White Ensign Association has published the first wave of their 2026 employment events, offering a strong start to the year for Naval Service leavers, veterans and family members exploring their next steps.

The January and February programme welcomes partners to offer insight on employment pathways, including RT Consulting, Zurich, Sodexo, Signature TECHNICAir, Quilter and Balfour Beatty. The sessions cover opportunities across engineering, infrastructure, financial advice, consulting and specialist aviation roles, many returning following positive engagement in 2025.

Alongside the online employer webinar events, the WEA team will also be attending CTP Employment Fairs, offering opportunities for face-to-face conversations and practical advice.

Committed to helping the Naval community to understand their skills, explore new sectors and connect with employers who recognise their value, the WEA Employment



Services team can offer clear guidance on a wide range of pathways.

See the schedule below to register for upcoming webinars or find out more about personalised career guidance at www.whiteensign.co.uk.

White Ensign Association Upcoming 2026 Employment Events (click on the links for more details):

RT Consulting – Consulting in

the Public Sector

Thursday 15 January, 10:00–11:30

Zurich – Careers in Engineering

Tuesday 20 January, 12:00–13:30

Sodexo – Sodexo Careers for Service Leavers

Wednesday 21 January, 12:00–13:30

Signature TECHNICAir – Transition into Aviation Engineering

Tuesday 03 February, 12:00–13:30

Quilter – Becoming a Financial Adviser

Thursday 05 February, 12:00–13:30

Balfour Beatty – Building the Future: Careers in Infrastructure

Wednesday 11 February, 12:00–13:30



NETWORK OF SUPPORT CENTRES IS PART OF NEW VETERANS STRATEGY

Veterans support centres are to be rolled out across the country as the government launches its transformational Veterans Strategy. The aim of the initiative is to transform government support for our heroes and recognise their invaluable contribution across the country.

Key points in the announcement include:

- £27m in government funding going live for local bids, turbocharging the network of recognised Valour centres;
- The first Veterans Strategy in seven years will transform government support for former Service personnel and recognise their invaluable contribution across the country;
- The Strategy has been developed alongside the Strategic Defence Review and the Armed Forces Covenant, committing a new £12m fund for veteran housing.

More than 1.8 million veterans across the UK will benefit from the new network of local support centres. The new centres will help improve access to support services such as health, housing and employment, and may extend to finance, wellbeing, welfare and integration into society. The local centres will fundamentally transform how assistance is provided, offering the first coordinated national network of support centres.

They will connect to a new Valour headquarters within the Ministry of Defence, with regional centres and

field officers working in communities. On top of the £50m Valour fund, the government is also committing an additional £12m to vital homelessness services through the Reducing Veteran Homelessness programme. Op Fortitude will also be extended, putting the service that has already housed over 1,000 veterans on a sustainable footing.

These programmes will deliver three years of support services across the UK for veterans at risk of or experiencing homelessness, fulfilling the Prime Minister's pledge that homes will be there for heroes. This strategy, like the Armed Forces Covenant, applies equally across the UK, with its vision, themes and priority outcomes a shared endeavour between UK and devolved governments.

The strategy has benefited from the inputs of veterans themselves and from organisations in all parts of the UK – across the public, private and third sector – that work with veterans and the wider Armed Forces community.

As part of the government's Plan for Change, the new strategy recognises veterans as national assets, whose unique skills strengthen communities, boost the economy and enhance national security.

The strategy is built on three priorities:

- Celebrating those who have served;
- Harnessing veterans' skills, and

- Ensuring effective support for those who need it.

Defence Secretary John Healey MP said: "The first duty of government is to keep our country safe, and that is only possible through the extraordinary men and women in our Armed Forces.

"Our nation owes a duty to those who have served, and this new Strategy recognises veterans as one of our greatest assets.

"These announcements will boost support for veterans across the UK, from better healthcare to housing to jobs. Our message to veterans and the Armed Forces community is simple: we are on your side."

Minister for Veterans and People Louise Sandher-Jones MP said:

"Our new Veterans Strategy fundamentally resets how we celebrate and support the remarkable men and women who have served in our Armed Forces, whilst harnessing their invaluable talent and skills across society.

"At the core of the strategy is Valour – backed by £50 million in funding. From today, organisations can bid for the first tranche of this funding to become part of a network of support centres across the country for our heroes – ensuring easier access to the assistance they need, when and where they need it.

"This strategy has been informed by those who it seeks to benefit: veterans, and we remain committed to stand by those who have stood by us."

Valour will foster the enterprising spirit of veteran charities, better connect local and national services and ensure veterans' support is truly data driven. Valour-recognised support centres will open from spring 2026, offering veterans a single contact point for support needs.

The announcement comes after the government announced a commitment to support World War 2 veterans to travel to overseas commemorative events and expanded the eligibility for the Nuclear Test Medal.

Developed alongside the Strategic Defence Review and the Armed Forces Covenant, the new strategy forms part of the government's Plan for Change commitment to strong national security foundations.

SIR DAVID TAKES CHARGE

Vice Admiral Sir David Steel will become The Poppy Factory's next President, serving as lead ambassador for the charity in its mission to help veterans and families on the path to employment.

Sir David will formally take up the role at the start of 2026, following the retirement of Surg Rear Admiral Lionel Jarvis, who will step down after seven years' distinguished service as President and a further 11 years as a vice patron and committed supporter of the charity.

After joining the Royal Navy in 1979, Sir David enjoyed a wide-ranging career at sea, including as the Logistics Commander on board the aircraft carrier HMS Invincible, supporting operations in Kosovo and Macedonia, and air operations over Iraq.

Ashore, his qualifications as a barrister were put to good use in all his policy and personnel appointments. Sir David served as Second Sea Lord from 2012 to 2015 and as Governor of Gibraltar from 2020 to 2024.

Sir David will become the lead representative of the Poppy Factory as it celebrates 100 years since first moving to its iconic home in Richmond upon Thames.

The charity still employs a production team in Richmond, making around 90,000 Remembrance wreaths for the Royal British Legion each year, special wreaths including for the Royal Family, and organising the annual Field of Remembrance in the grounds of Westminster Abbey.



DECEMBER 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 S/M Lawrie Phillips and published by The History Press (www.thehistorypress.co.uk). It is currently available online for around £65 new (search ISBN number 978-0750982665)

On **10 December 1942** destroyer HMS Roebuck was launched at the Scotts shipyard on the Clyde, but without the usual ceremony. In fact, the 2,470-ton R-class warship was launched without any ceremony at all, and somewhat earlier than expected...

Roebuck was ordered in May 1940 but work on her was delayed until the following year, when she was laid down on 19 June 1941 – at that stage of the war repair work took priority.

Even then work on her was relatively slow, and by the end of 1942 she was still only partially completed.

On the night of 10 December a large-scale German air raid on Glasgow also hit the docks to the west of the city centre, and one near-miss explosion caused Roebuck to rattle down the slip in her unfinished state, promptly sinking in the Clyde where she remained for another three months until she was salvaged and finally completed in May 1943, three years after the initial order.

After that halting start, it was all systems go for the versatile warship, who spent her entire war far from home waters.

After sea trials joined the Fleet on 10 June 1943, sailing to Scapa Flow to work up with units of the Home Fleet.

But she had already been assigned to the 11th Destroyer Flotilla of the Eastern Fleet, and after some preparation in August she sailed for Freetown and on to the Indian Ocean, where she rendezvoused with other ships of her

flotilla which were deployed on convoy escort duties and patrols.

Over the following two years Roebuck – the 15th ship of that name in the Royal Navy – proved a real workhorse in operation after operation around the Indian Ocean and Far East.

At various times she screened major units of the Fleet, such as aircraft carriers HM Ships Victorious and Indomitable on Op Crimson (attacks on Sabang and Sumatra), carried out naval bombardments such as Op Office and Op Training (Cocos Islands), and Op Gable (Matapan), and also provided defensive screening for major ships on Op Dracula (Rangoon landings) and Op Balsam (reconnaissance in Malaysia).

In August 1945 Roebuck was earmarked for a role in the large-scale landings planned for Malaya (Op Zipper) but the Japanese surrender rendered the plans pointless, so she was instead diverted to Singapore to support the reoccupation of the territory until she sailed to Simon's Town for a refit in October.

After the war, the destroyer was converted to a Type 15 anti-submarine frigate in 1952, following on from her sisters HM Ships Relentless and Rocket.

She joined the 5th Frigate Squadron the following year when she also took part in the Fleet Review celebrating the coronation of Queen Elizabeth II.

The twilight of her career was spent mainly in the Dartmouth Training Squadron (1957-60), and after refit she joined the 17th Escort Squadron until she paid off into reserve in Plymouth in 1962.

She remained in reserve for some time before she was stripped of all useful equipment and sold to the British Iron and Steel Corporation, who had her towed to the breakers yard at Inverkeithing on 8 August 1968.

For more events and actions on dates in December see our new History section on the RNA website (<https://www.royal-naval-association.co.uk/history>) – more will be added in the coming weeks and months.

LONGCAST

2025 and 2026	
11 and 12 December	Christmas Concerts under the wings of Concorde, Fleet Air Arm Museum, See https://www.nmrn.org.uk/whats-on
17 Jan 2026	Area 4 AGM hosted by Bude Branch
17 Jan 2026	Area 8 AGM. Other meetings on 18 April, 18 July, 10 October
2 May 2026	Army v Navy rugby match, Twickenham
9 May 2026	National Standard Bearers competition, Whale Island, Portsmouth
12-14 June 2026	National Conference, Salford
8 Nov 2026	Remembrance Sunday

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



www.royal-naval-association.co.uk



A SPECIAL OFFER

A 10% discount on food, selected drinks and hotel rooms for members of the Royal Naval Association

The Royal Maritime Hotel is a stone's throw from Gunwharf Quays, the Spinnaker Tower and Portsmouth Historic Dockyard, HMS Victory, The Mary Rose Museum and HMS Warrior. Facilities include Horatio's restaurant, the Victory bar, a small swimming pool, sauna, spa pool and skittles!

Run by a charity to benefit veterans and serving military personnel





Visit royalmaritimehotel.co.uk for more information and to book

info@royalmaritimehotel.co.uk 02392 982 182 Queen Street, Portsmouth, Hampshire, PO1 3HS

MORE OFFERS	
Ship Anson pub, 10 The Hard, Portsea	10% off food and drink
Portsmouth Historic Dockyard	£20 for a day ticket 30% off annual Ultimate Explorer tickets
Royal Maritime Hotel 182 Queen Street	A 10% discount on food, selected drinks and hotel rooms
Sea Urchin's Gin Navy Strength Gin Arctic Convoy Vodka	10% to RNA from the sale of each bottle Don't forget to tick the box for RNA. P&P is free for orders over £40, otherwise it is £4.50.
China Fleet Country Club	Click on the link for offers for Serving and ex-Serving RN and RM
Trinity Insurance	For offers see https://tinyurl.com/ssy8vt5s

Delegate to Annual Conference 2026 – CITY OF SALFORD

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 2025 and Branch Annual Report for 2025 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

NOMINATION FORM
ELECTION OF MEMBERS AND DEPUTY MEMBERS OF THE NATIONAL COUNCIL 2026
(Revised RNA Bye-Law 7)

For the attention of All Branch Secretaries:

NCM in Areas 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 9, 10, 12 and DNCM in Areas 1, 2, 9, 10, 11, 12

Each Branch may nominate **one full or life member** from any Branch within its own Area, as a Candidate for election to the National Council, and **one full or life member** for election as the Deputy National Council Member **subject to the approval of the Branch to which both persons belong.**

Please note that our current governance construct means that National Council Members are automatically Trustees of the Royal Naval Association (Charity no: 266982). Nominees for NCM should therefore ensure that they are not in any way disbarred from holding a trusteeship. If unsure, please check the Charity Commission website.

Names of Nominees

NCM

DNCM

Proposed by **Branch** **Area**

Address of Nominee

NCM.....

..... **e mail**

DNCM.....

..... **e mail**

Brief history of nominees in the Association. (Continue on separate sheet if necessary)

NCM-

DNCM -

Chairman (signed)(dated).....

Secretary..... (signed)(dated).....

If the Candidate is **not** a member the proposing Branch, this section is to be completed by the Chairman and Secretary of the Candidate's **own** Branch.

Candidate's Branch

We are aware of the above nomination.

Signature of Chairman (Candidate's Branch)

Signature of Secretary (Candidate's Branch)

Candidate

I accept the nomination and promise to attend as many National Council Meetings as is possible and to sit on any Committees to which I may be elected.

Signature of Candidate Dated

The envelope containing this completed form should be marked **NOMINATIONS FOR NATIONAL COUNCIL** and must reach RNA HQ no later than **1600 on 20 February 2026.**

Alternatively, you can scan the fully signed form and email it to ams@massoc.org

PROPOSED MOTIONS AND AMENDMENTS FOR ANNUAL CONFERENCE 2026

Proposals must reach The General Secretary by **1600 20 February 2026**

Name of Proposing Branch:

Motion / amendment

Explanation of the Motion / Amendment (To be included in the notes for Conference)

Hon Secretary(signed).....(dated)

Name of Seconding Branch:

Hon Secretary(signed).....(dated)

Notes

- a. A motion is submitted in the name of a Branch. Secretaries of proposing and seconding Branches are **certifying** that the motion or amendment reflects the view of the Branch meeting (not a committee); and that voting was conducted in accordance with Rule 20.
- b. A separate form is required for each Motion or Amendment
- c. A manuscript copy is acceptable for additional Motions or Amendments if the printed form is not available.
- d. The Motion or Amendment should be as short and precise as possible avoiding ambiguity. A Motion should normally start with the word 'THAT'
- e. The explanation is to assist the scrutiny of the Standing Orders Committee in understanding the intention behind the Motion so that they may be able to consider its presentation so it can be improved and implemented as soon as possible (Conference Bye Law C4)
- f. Motions may be submitted at any time but must reach the General Secretary by **20 February 2026**.
- g. Motions of Urgency should reach the General Secretary not less than 48 hours before Conference. (In accordance with Conference Bye Law C6.) and include an explanation about the urgency.
- h. Amendments to Motions should also normally reach the General Secretary not less than 7 days before Conference. The provision for the submission of amendments during Conference is in the Conference Bye-Laws.
- i. Bye-Laws. A Motion to Conference may propose that a Bye-Law be set aside or it may ask the Council to consider making or amending a Bye-Law.
- j. The Branch Proposing a Motion **must** have it Seconded by another Branch before forwarding it to the General Secretary. (Conference Bye Law C3a)

“

Your help is genuinely the singular most important conversation I've had to date whilst in transition for leaving.

Trusted, independent guidance for **your future**

Whether you're serving, transitioning or long since left the Service, the White Ensign Association is here for you and your family.

Each year we support thousands across the Royal Navy, Royal Marines and Royal Fleet Auxiliary communities with free guidance to help navigate change and plan for your future with confidence.



Financial Wellbeing



Armed Forces Pensions



Civilian Employment



Armed Forces Compensation



Professional Services Advice



View upcoming events, and raise a case for confidential guidance at:

whiteensign.co.uk



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ROYAL NAVAL ASSOCIATION

**Veterans Can...
Pale Ale & Pilsner**



For 75 years the Royal Naval Association has supported the wider Naval Family.

Totally inclusive, we promote the seven components of comradeship (our 7Cs): Connection, Community, Companionship, Care, Compassion, Commemoration and Celebration.

Veterans Can... "connects the global Veteran community, in order to bring balance, pride & positivity." It's about doing good things & focusing on the positives our time spent in the military has on our own lives - and on societies around the world.

Sales from every can supports the Royal Naval Association and Veterans Can...

THE CRAFT BREWERY ON NAVAL SOIL

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HERE**



**ORDER
HERE**



**THE LEE ON THE SOLENT
& STUBBINGTON
ROYAL NAVAL ASSOCIATION**

PRESENT A

CHRISTMAS BAND CONCERT

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**HMS COLLINGWOOD
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FRIDAY, DECEMBER 12, 7 PM

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THE BAND OF HIS MAJESTY'S ROYAL MARINES SCOTLAND



December 2025

10 & 11 Christmas Concert

Dunfermline Abbey

13 A Christmas Spectacular

Perth Concert Hall, Perth

January 2026

16 Kaleidoscope

Carnegie Hall, Dunfermline

March 2026

08 Big Band Spectacular feat. Gordon Campbell

Carnegie Hall, Dunfermline



www.royalmarinesbands.co.uk/events

TICKETS ON SALE NOW





One Conversation Can Make The Difference

Join others in sharing your travel experiences, it will make a difference now.

Your insights and knowledge from travelling can support understanding and inform the UK Government.

The Ministry of Defence (MOD) conducts voluntary debriefs with individuals returning from countries of interest. These debriefs can provide vital information and contribute to national security.

If you have travelled to a country of interest, then our specialist debriefing team will want to speak to you and learn about your experiences and insights.

You may have picked up a valuable piece of information; please share it with the MOD.



Webpage

ROYAL NAVY PHOTOGRAPHIC COMPETITION 2025

Annex A to
RNTM 09-031/25
Dated 26 Nov 25

IMAGE FORMAT FOR SUBMISSION AND ACCEPTABLE METHODS OF DIGITAL ENHANCEMENT

1. Stills images must be submitted in the electronic format JPEG at the highest quality.
2. Digital enhancement of images is **only** allowed to clean and balance to a correct reproduction of the original conditions. Tools that are considered acceptable:
 - a. Brightness control.
 - b. Burning and dodging.
 - c. Contrast control.
 - d. Colour balance.
 - e. Levels or Curves.
 - f. Saturation.
 - g. Unsharp mask.
 - h. Converting a colour image to black and white or sepia tone.
3. Manipulation of the composite elements of images and HDR are **not permitted**.
4. Where necessary, tools may also be used to remove sensor artefacts from the image.
5. Video entries should all be shot with the understanding they will be judged and viewed in a traditional widescreen film format. Landscape video will make better use of screen area during judging, but portrait format can be entered.
6. All video entries are to be exported as 1080p 25fps in either .mp4 or .mov format.
7. Grading and aftereffects can be used on videos, but composite elements of content shouldn't be changed.
8. The Royal Navy Photographic Specialist Advisor retains the right to reject photographs or videos deemed not suitable, manipulated or over enhanced.

ROYAL NAVY PHOTOGRAPHIC COMPETITION 2025 – CONDITIONS OF ENTRY FOR ROYAL NAVAL ASSOCIATION CATEGORY

1. This category is open to Naval Service Veterans, Royal Navy and Royal Marines Amateur Photographers and Royal Navy Professional Photographers.
2. Each photographer may submit a maximum of three photographs.
3. All photographs must have been taken between 16 Dec 24 – 31 Dec 25 not entered in the RNPC24.
4. Photographs should encapsulate the ethos of the RNA.
5. A completed application form found in this annex must accompany each entry.
6. Photographs that are personal copyright are **only** accepted for entry on the understanding that they may be reproduced free of charge. Photographs submitted may be used in public relations, marketing literature, official publications and online. Photographs submitted to the competition **will not be returned** and may be used in public relations, marketing literature, official publications and online.
7. Consent should be gained by the photographer of any image depicting members of the public if possible.
8. Image format for submission and acceptable methods of digital enhancement can be found at Annex A.
9. Images should be submitted by email as a JPEG at the highest quality, along with the entry form to the following email addresses:
 - a. rnphotographiccomp@gmail.com – Place RNA RNPC25 Entry in the subject field.
 - b. cml@rnassoc.org - Place RNA RNPC25 Entry in the subject field.
10. Entries should be sent no later than 21 Feb 26.
11. Online judging will take place on 4-11 Mar 26.
12. An RNTM listing winners will be issued on completion of judging. Winners will be notified if not currently serving.

ROYAL NAVY PHOTOGRAPHIC COMPETITION 2025 ENTRY FORM – PROFESSIONAL, AMATEUR AND VETERAN ROYAL NAVAL ASSOCIATION ENTRY FORM

NAME		RANK/RATE/TITLE		SERVICE NO*	
* if applicable					
SHIP/UNIT/ADDRESS				EMAIL	

Select Category and Class:




Veteran	Category 17a	<input type="checkbox"/>	Amateur	Category 17b	<input type="checkbox"/>	Professional	Category 17c	<input type="checkbox"/>
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Maximum of three images may be submitted in your selected category. Full file names (for professionals) and images to be entered here. Veterans and amateurs are to use the following file naming convention:

20240615-Category17b-MrJamesJohn-001

20240615-Category17b-MrJamesJohn-002

20240820-Category17b-MrJamesJohn-003

Professional photographers are to have full file info as per BR870. RN Amateurs and member of the public, either under or over 18 fill out a line about the photograph.

Concise Description of Photograph – (Who, What, Where, Why, When)
Examples below.

Image 1. Standard Bearers at the Armed Forces Week Flag raising Plymouth Guildhall on 24 Jun 24.

Image 2. A veteran from D-Day speak at a DD80 event at Arromanches, in France today on 6 Jun 24.

Image 3. Veteran Vera Brett lights the beacon to commemorate DDay80 in Portsmouth on 6 Jun 24.

Please check as appropriate:

☐ I certify that this photograph was taken by me between 16 Dec 24 – 31 Dec 25 and has not been manipulated outside of the stated rules. This image was not entered into the RNPC24 and consent for any member of the public in the image has been gained.

Signature: Date:



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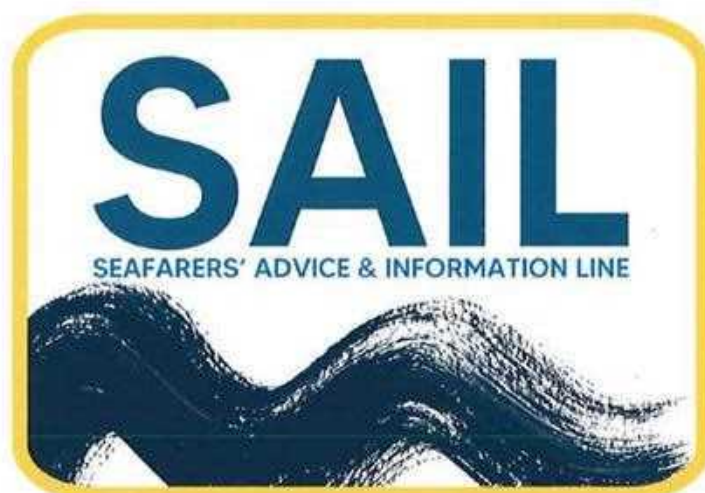


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