

# SEMAPHORE CIRCULAR



## HELP PRESERVE NAVAL MEMORIAL

The Royal Naval Association is launching an appeal to raise £75,000 to preserve the stunning Naval Service Memorial (NSM) at the National Memorial Arboretum (NMA) at Alrewas.

The NSM – pictured above and on page 3 by S/M Nigel Huxtable – was unveiled 12 years ago, and stands as a powerful tribute to the service and sacrifice of the Royal Navy, Royal Marines, and associated Services.

It now requires a combination of essential repair work and long-term maintenance planning to ensure its continued preservation. Part of this is to ensure the unique and stunning glass panes seals are updated to withstand the wear and tear of the Staffordshire weather.

One of the Memorial's glass panes has developed water ingress at its upper edge. To prevent further

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

**The next Semaphore Circular will be published on Friday 3 April, and the deadline for material is 1000 on Wednesday 1 April. Branch Notes will next be published on Friday 13 March and Semaphore Short on Friday 20 March, with a members' email on 27 March.**

# NAVAL MEMORIAL APPEAL

Continued from front page

deterioration, and to protect the structure as a whole, remedial work is required to repair the affected pane and to install protective seals across all panes.

These seals were not available when the Memorial was constructed in 2014, but are now standard practice on all newly-installed memorials. Alongside this work, appropriate arrangements for the ongoing maintenance and upkeep of the Memorial are essential to ensure it remains in a fitting condition for all who visit, both now and in the future.

RNA National Chairman Andy Christie said: "The Naval Service Memorial is more than stone and glass – it is a place of reflection, remembrance, and pride for all who have served, and for their families.

"We have a responsibility to ensure it remains in the condition it deserves. This is about protecting our shared Naval heritage and ensuring future generations can stand here and remember those who served before them."

We believe many people might be unaware of these challenges, or may simply have forgotten just how remarkable the Naval Service Memorial is.

We strongly encourage all those with an interest in Naval history, service, and remembrance to visit the National Memorial Arboretum near Burton-on-Trent, to see the Memorial for themselves.

The RNA now calls on the wider Naval family and the public to support this vital appeal.

Any contribution, large or small, will help ensure the Naval Service Memorial remains a fitting and dignified place of remembrance for all future visitors.

All donations are gratefully received – follow this link: [\*\*Naval Service Memorial at the National Memorial Arboretum - JustGiving\*\*](#)



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**Find Semaphore Circular online at**

**[www.royal-naval-association.co.uk/news](http://www.royal-naval-association.co.uk/news)**

or navigate to

RNA Website / About / News / Semaphore Circular

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# FROM THE GENERAL SECRETARY

## Ahoy Shipmates!

The RNA is a strictly apolitical organisation, not given to criticising politicians of any hue, but for the second month running I feel obliged to set the record straight.

Earlier this year I, along with many others, spoke up on behalf of those courageous British Servicemen and women – many of them from the Royal Navy and Royal Marines – who fought shoulder-to-shoulder with their American and NATO allies during operations in Afghanistan, despite suggestions from some quarters that NATO troops were not particularly familiar with the front line.

On this occasion I feel I should correct a mistake that has arisen from the conflict in the Middle East, when American Secretary of Defense Pete Hegseth said that the sinking of an Iranian warship in the Indian Ocean was “the first sinking of an enemy ship by a torpedo since World War II”. Sorry Pete, but Pakistani submarine Hangor sank Indian frigate Khukri in 1971 during the Indo-Pakistan War.

The second occasion was, of course, when HMS Conqueror sank cruiser General Belgrano during the Falklands Conflict in 1982 – but please don’t think for a moment that I am indulging in triumphalism, or some macabre black-catting. More than 500 lives were lost in those two incidents, and while the Royal Navy celebrates tactical success, we always respect and honour the sacrifice of seafarers, whatever the colours under which they fight.

Mention of Conqueror prompts me to remind shipmates that next year will be the 45th anniversary of the campaign, which the Association will, of course, wholeheartedly support. Perhaps SECDEF would like to join in an appropriate Fireside Chat?

Before we move on from the strife in the Middle East, I would just add that I have sent notes of support to both of our Branches in the region – Riyadh in Saudi Arabia and Doha in Qatar.

You will have seen from our front page story that we have launched an appeal to carry out some repairs and secure the future maintenance programme for our stunning Naval Service Memorial at the National Memorial Arboretum in Staffordshire.

I would urge shipmates to support this worthy cause. It is an outstanding monument, with eye-catching colours, and its symbolism – a sailor figure with bowed head, glass panels representing the seas of the world, a shadow cast in the shape of a warship – means it is both pleasing to the eye and honours those who have served their country in the Naval Service. Help us keep it in pristine condition for future generations to reflect on its message as well as admire its beauty.

Which reminds me – the RNA is honoured to offer free Life Membership to all World War 2 Naval Service veterans – life membership brings some extra perks over and above those enjoyed by other shipmates. If you are a World War 2 Naval veteran, or know someone, then please get in touch with Sara at [ams@rnassoc.org](mailto:ams@rnassoc.org)

Having started with a brickbat, let’s move on with some bouquets, metaphorically speaking.

First to our former National Treasurer S/M Ian Irvin,



**It was, as always, a pleasure to welcome young recruits from HMS Sultan to Central Office, where we laid on a dockyard tour and talked to them about Naval history – their history, as they are now part of the Naval family.**

who has been shortlisted in the Volunteer of the Year category of the Scottish Veterans Awards – BZ Ian, and good luck in the final round of judging. **See page 6.**

Next, a clutch of BZs from our Governance Support Officer Kate Aldous here in Central Office. Kate reports that two months before the deadline of 30 April, over 25 per cent of all Branches and Areas have already submitted their end-of-year returns. Well done, all of you!

Another BZ goes to our Comms Team for the Yearbook – plenty of members seem very pleased with their efforts, and I had a lovely note on House of Commons paper from Portsmouth South MP Stephen Morgan. Unfortunately, after all that good news, I have to finish my report on a desperately sad note.

I regret to report that our National Standard Bearer, S/M Steve Champion, lost his battle against cancer this week. Steve was a man of extraordinary dedication, and his tenure as our National Standard Bearer was marked by a commitment that went far beyond mere duty. He carried the Standard not just as a piece of ceremonial regalia, but as a symbol of the collective pride and history of every Shipmate in our Association. He represented us with impeccable poise and dignity during some of the most historic moments of our age. Seeing him represent the Association at the State Funeral of Her Late Majesty Queen Elizabeth II and subsequently at His Majesty King Charles III’s Coronation was a source of immense pride for us all. Steve often remarked that it was an “absolute honour” to serve in this capacity, but the honour was truly ours to have him as our representative at the heart of the nation’s most significant ceremonies. He will be greatly missed, and our sympathies are with his wife Julia and his family. **See page 37.**

Fair winds and following seas,

*Bill*

# RNA STALWART VOLUNTEER MAKES SCOTTISH VETERANS SHORTLIST...

Congratulations to Shipmate Ian Irvin, who has been shortlisted as a finalist for the Scottish Veteran's Awards Volunteer of the Year (sponsored by Serica Energy).

We are proud and grateful that he is part of our organisation, and has been for some years – including some very senior positions.

So what makes Ian – pictured below at Lanyard House in a rare moment of relaxation – a contender for the Volunteer of the Year title?

Well, he has been an RNA shipmate for some 16 years – not the longest-serving member, by any means, but he has packed in plenty of effort in that time. A former Boy Sailor in the Royal Navy before taking up a career as Chartered Accountant on Civvy Street, Ian cut his teeth on various roles at the City of Edinburgh Branch, starting as Branch



Standard Bearer, Branch Delegate and Vice Chair.

He then took on additional responsibilities at Scottish Area level – Treasurer and National Council Member – before taking on the top financial job in the association,

National Treasurer, in 2019.

The skills employed by Ian in his 'day job' proved incredibly valuable to the RNA at a time of great upheaval; shortly after Ian took on the top job the world was beset by the Covid pandemic, when the RNA's welfare and wellbeing provision was reset to cope with an increasing workload. He was also in post when the Association switched from subscriptions to donations, a massive financial undertaking which required cool heads, sound advice and bags of experience, which Ian provided unstintingly. All this RNA work was

undertaken voluntarily, and all the while Ian was handling significant (including multi-million pound) financial and business transactions around the world, including Vietnam, India, New Zealand, Australia, Hong Kong and the United States.

Overlapping with his time as National Treasurer, Ian was also Chairman of the castle Community Bank in Edinburgh, where from 2019-22 he oversaw its growth from a balance sheet of £1m to £75m, making it the fastest-growing UK Credit Union and allowing it to support the 'financially excluded' – those traditionally excluded from mainstream financial institutions.

He is also a Church Ordained Elder, and he also puts in a shift for other charities such as Dunbar RBL (treasurer) and RNRMC (a member of the Investment Committee).

Although he stepped down as National Treasurer of the RNA last year, he is still involved in the Association at various levels – and long may that be the case.

Organisations and charities such as the RNA rely on the goodwill of volunteers, and Ian sets a very high bar.

Ian's record will now undergo scrutiny by a panel of experts, and the winners of the various categories will be announced at the Scottish Veterans Awards ceremony, to be held at Prestonfield House, Edinburgh, on the 29 April.

It will be hosted by BFBS Scotland DJ and presenter Mark McKenzie.

We wish Ian the very best of luck in the judging process – and whatever the outcome, he is a winner in our eyes, and the RNA is all the stronger because of it.



## ... NOW FOR THE WELSH AND ENGLISH!

Ian Irvin is a terrific example of the kind of person that we know exists throughout the RNA. And although he held a high-profile position and helped drive the Association forward during volatile times, the Veterans Awards are not there just to acknowledge those in senior roles. The various Veterans Awards were created to highlight the amazing work done by veterans in business, in sports and in the wider community, whatever the level. There are numerous categories, such as Military Charity Fundraiser of the Year, Role Model of the Year, Inspiration of the Year, Volunteer of the Year and Lifetime Achievement. The Welsh and English Veterans' Awards 2026 are just getting under way or opening soon, so if you know of a shipmate who might deserve such recognition, check the details on the Welsh website [here](#) and the English version [here](#).

The relevant dates for your diaries are:

- **Welsh Veterans Awards** application process is now open
- **Welsh Veterans Awards** – Ceremony to be held on 8 July at the four-star Vale Resort
- **English Veterans Awards** application process opens on 1 June
- **English Veterans Awards** – Ceremony to be held on 1 October at the four-star De Vere Cotswolds Waterpark. The RNA was represented at last 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.

# WELFARE STUDY WILL SHAPE FUTURE SUPPORT

The first long-term study of the welfare needs of the Royal Navy and Royal Marines community will help shape support out to 2040.

Commissioned by **Greenwich Hospital** and undertaken by RAND Europe, the **Meeting the Needs of the Royal Navy and Royal Marines Community** report, provides the most granular analysis to date of how the size, demographics and support needs of the RN & RM community are evolving, and what this means for the future of Naval welfare. The research finds that serving RN & RM numbers are projected to remain stable at 32,000–35,000 through to 2040. However, the research highlights changes in lived experience with separation due to deployments, operational unpredictability and the growing prevalence of ‘weekending’ emerging as the greatest sources of strain on families.

The findings highlight a clear need for increased investment in prevention, early intervention, family-centred support, and more flexible services as patterns of need and global uncertainty continue to change.

Partners report higher levels of loneliness and poor mental wellbeing, especially when living away from bases. Families with younger children and those with additional needs particularly feel the strain during deployments, with significant challenges around childcare.

The transition to civilian life can be difficult for some, with heightened risks around mental health, employment and financial security. The former serving RN & RM population is expected to decline by a third by 2040, becoming increasingly intergenerational, as younger Service leavers combine with an ageing cohort.

The research notes that while resilience and self-reliance remain strengths of the RN & RM community, these qualities can also delay help-seeking, with support often accessed only in crisis.

The findings stress the need for early intervention to prevent pressures from escalating, particularly in the areas of mental health, financial security, employment and family relationships, emphasising the interconnectedness of many of these challenges.

In response, Greenwich is collaborating with **RNRMC** to develop a sustainable funding strategy through to 2040.

Together with Naval charitable partners, this unprecedented and detailed understanding of the RN community is enabling the sector to

## Meeting the Needs of the Royal Navy and Royal Marines Community

Linda Slapakova, Catherine Galley,  
Tristan Kreetz, Sean Flanagan



address the report's recommendations and enhance support delivery. By integrating the findings with financial modelling undertaken by EY, Greenwich Hospital will establish a robust, long-term funding profile for the sector. Deirdre Mills, Director of Greenwich Hospital, said: "This research allows us to move beyond headline numbers to understand the true lived experience of the RN and RM community. "Alongside financial modelling, it provides a firm foundation for Greenwich Hospital and its partners to deliver relevant, responsive and sustainable support now and into the future."

## GREENWICH HOSPITAL OFFERS BURSARY SCHEME

Greenwich Hospital believes learning and development are essential to the long-term success of Royal Navy personnel, both during service and after.

Education goes beyond qualifications; it underpins confident decision-making, resilient leadership, and the ability to thrive in complex, evolving environments.

Greenwich proudly supports the Royal Navy's commitment to lifelong development by investing in the academic ambitions of its people.

By enabling access to higher education, they help to strengthen operational capability today and equip personnel with the knowledge, skills, and recognised qualifications to support their careers and ease their transition into civilian life.

Their bursaries empower individuals to take charge of their professional growth, broaden their horizons, and unlock opportunities beyond the classroom.

Now is the time to invest in your future.

Every year, Greenwich Hospital funds 12 bursaries for full degree courses (BA, MA and equivalent), and four bursaries

for Higher Education (HE) courses, with funding available (up to £2,000 per year, maximum £6,000 per individual)

Options include full-time degrees of up to three years and part-time degrees of up to six years.

This bursary complements existing routes to qualification, including the Enhanced Learning Credits (ELC) scheme, helping you maximise the financial support available for your studies.

New applicants should contact their L&D Hub to schedule an interview to discuss their intended course of study, have their eligibility checked, and begin forming a long-term study plan.

Portsmouth: NAVYPEOPLE-TMGLDOPORLearnDev@mod.gov.uk

Devonport: NAVYPEOPLE-TMGLDODEVHelp@mod.gov.uk

Yeovilton: NAVYPEOPLE-TMGLDOYEOHelp-TRG@mod.gov.uk

Faslane: NAVYPEOPLE-TMGLDOFASHelp@mod.gov.uk

CTCRM: NAVYPEOPLE-TMGLDOCTCHelp@mod.gov.uk

The deadline is 31 March.



# RIGHT AT THE ART OF SALFORD

In the February Semaphore Circular we took a look at the Imperial War Museum North, an eye-catching building in Salford Quays where delegates to the RNA Annual Conference and their guests will enjoy a gala dinner on the Saturday evening.

Part of that day will be taken up by the essential business of the Conference – the RNA’s Annual General Meeting, which will take place in another iconic building.

The Lowry is a multi-purpose arts centre which boasts two main theatres, a drama studio and art galleries.

Amongst the most important art works displayed are those by the man whose name the complex bears – LS Lowry, who was born close to Salford and whose most famous works feature scenes of mills and workers from the city.

These distinctive paintings, of urban landscapes populated by what are



often described as ‘matchstick men, are only a part of his life’s work, as he was also intrigued by the sea and painted many simple seascapes, featuring only sea and sky.

Lowry, who died in 1976 at the age of 88, once described himself as “a simple man, and I use simple materials.” He told how he had only ever used five colours in his paintings – ivory black, vermilion, prussian blue, yellow ochre and flake white, preferring oils as it was a medium he could “work into over a period of time.”

His outlook was as down-to-earth as his art – Lowry, a shy and somewhat eccentric man with a dry sense of

humour, is quoted as saying “You don’t need brains to be a painter, just feelings” and that he was “not an artist. I am a man who paints.”

As well as admiring the skill and vision of Lowry the painter (entry to all galleries is free but tickets for time slots must be booked in advance – [use this link](#)), delegates and guests to the Conference might be persuaded to take in a show at Lowry the arts centre.

On Saturday 13 June, those not at the Gala Dinner could instead enjoy the final night of a new musical, The Ballad of Johnny & June, in the Lyric theatre, taking you into the highs and lows of the story of Johnny Cash and June Carter. And across both Saturday 13 and Sunday 14 June the Quays theatre is staging Baile Sonoro as part of the Lowry Flamenco Festival, featuring acclaimed dancer and choreographer Olga Pericot.

<https://thelowry.com>

## TRANSPORT OFFER FOR CONFERENCE WEEKEND

Shipmates are reminded that when attending the National Conference in Salford this summer they can make use of free transport on buses and trams over the conference weekend – provided they can show proof of membership.

All operators will be notified that they can accept the following forms of RNA membership card ID as valid authority

to travel:

- **Full member**
- **Associate member**
- **Life member**
- **Honorary Member**
- **Certificate of Appreciation**

The offer is valid from Friday 12 June to Sunday 14 June inclusive.

For clarity, anyone who cannot present a valid ID will be treated as a standard

passenger and required to pay on bus or hold a valid Metrolink ticket/paid contactless fare. Passengers who are unable to present valid ID when requested will be liable for a penalty fare for travelling without a valid ticket.

If you can’t lay your hands on your membership card, contact Central Office for a replacement – email your details to [admin@rnassoc.org](mailto:admin@rnassoc.org).



**ROYAL NAVAL  
ASSOCIATION**



**HOW TO BOOK:**  
**01603 886 742**  
**sales@justforgroups.com**  
**www.justforgroups.com**

# **RNA CONFERENCE 2026 SALFORD QUAYS**

## **Friday 12th – Sunday 14th June 2026**



**Gala Dinner  
only  
£55pp**



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

A three-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 £55pp, and/or bed & breakfast accommodation.

Alternatively, book directly via the website:

[www.justforgroups.com](http://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**





# LINKING UP IN LINCOLNSHIRE

Tot time and lunch will be part of Daily Orders when the next RNAMCC (Royal Naval Association Motorhome, Caravan and Camping) Sports and Comradeship Group meets up in Lincolnshire. Save the date of 13 to 16 March, when for three nights, attendees will have a general meet-up to have the opportunity to meet other new members, meet up with some old – and even older –

members and discuss what's ahead for the season. Hanworth Country Park ([www.hanworthcountrypark.co.uk](http://www.hanworthcountrypark.co.uk)) is the venue and will host 54 members in 29 camping units of all varieties. It gives everyone the chance to set their plans and vans (and tents) for the forthcoming season, including the Big Meet Mk V with its Caribbean/Hawaiian

theme. They also get to meet the awesome Admin team responsible for pulling it all together! Further details please find us on <https://www.facebook.com/groups/294795378948752> or contact Ron Shilton (Lead Admin) [rnamcc@outlook.com](mailto:rnamcc@outlook.com) or Annette Laurie (PRO & Communications Lead) [commsrnamcc@outlook.com](mailto:commsrnamcc@outlook.com)

## SUPPORT FOR BRANCHES

Shipmates are reminded that Branches can apply to the BCSF (Branch and Club Support Fund) for financial support towards transport for the Army v Navy rugby match at Twickenham on 2 May, if the Branch is running a coach, for example. For details, see the form on the RNA website ([link here](http://linkhere)) or email Kate ([gso@rnassoc.org](mailto:gso@rnassoc.org)) or Sara ([ams@rnassoc.org](mailto:ams@rnassoc.org)).

## NEW PRESIDENT AT COMBAT STRESS

Veterans' mental health charity Combat Stress has appointed Admiral Sir Philip Jones as its new President. The former First Sea Lord brings more than four decades of military leadership to the role, along with a long-standing commitment to supporting the wellbeing of serving personnel and veterans. Sir Philip joined the Royal Navy in 1978 and rose through the ranks to command Type 22 frigates HMS Beaver and HMS Coventry. His early career included active service during the Falklands Conflict and, later, command of the Amphibious Task Group and the Fleet, as well as key positions within the MOD. In 2016 he became First Sea

Lord and Chief of Naval Staff, leading the Royal Navy through a period of significant modernisation before retiring in 2019. His experience across strategy, and personnel welfare will play a pivotal role in helping to shape Combat Stress's future direction. Reflecting on his appointment, Sir Philip said: "It is a privilege to take on this role at a time when the need for specialist mental health support for the military community has never been clearer. "It is vital that, as a nation, we continue to meet the mental health needs of every member of the military community, and as

## MARKING ANNIVERSARY OF OP TELIC

In May, the Royal British Legion will remember the 15th anniversary of the end of the Iraq War, and honour the extraordinary service of British Armed Forces in the Coalition. RBL are hosting a commemorative event at midday at the National Memorial Arboretum, Staffordshire, on Friday 22 May – the 15th anniversary of the end of Op Telic. They will remember the lives lost and those affected and pay tribute to the

professionalism and dedication of those who served, from the initial invasion to the rebuilding of Iraqi infrastructure. RBL invites all personnel who served with the British Forces and/or their families, including the bereaved, to come together for comradeship and reflection. To register your interest, visit <https://rbl.org.uk/telic15o>. Registration closes on Sunday 12 April. If you have any questions contact the RBL at [RemembranceEvents@britishlegion.org.uk](mailto:RemembranceEvents@britishlegion.org.uk)

the roles, demands, and landscape of the Armed Forces continue to change, we must be prepared to provide the best, responsive and most accessible support to veterans of the future. "Combat Stress has been a lifeline for so many, and I am committed to championing its vital work and ensuring that those who have served our country receive the care they deserve now and in the years to come."

# PARTY TIME FOR JANET AND FAMILY AS VETERAN TURNS 103

Navy veteran S/M Janet Patterson celebrated her 103rd birthday with her family at Royal Star & Garter in Solihull, where she now lives, on Saturday 21 February (pictured right).

She was treated to a special lunch with her children Gill and David, granddaughter and other family on her birthday.

They also brought birthday cakes for other residents and staff to enjoy.

The centenarian made headlines around the country when she received her War Medal 1939-45 in recognition of her service in the Women's Royal Naval Service (WRNS) during World War 2.

Her son and daughter had applied for it on her behalf, 80 years after the war ended, and 80 years after she left the Armed Forces.

Her story was covered in the national press, and she received letters from as far afield as USA, thanking her for her service.

Royal Star & Garter is a charity which provides loving, compassionate care and support to residents and their families living with disability or dementia, from homes in Solihull, Surbiton, High Wycombe and Worthing.

It also provides services reaching out into the community, including day care,



lunch club and a national telephone friendship service.

Janet was born near Stratford-upon-Avon in 1923. She joined the WRNS in 1942, and was a film operator, working on projectors which showed key educational and instructional films to new Naval recruits as part of their training.

She met Dennis, who was also serving in the Royal Navy, at HMS Glendower in Pwllheli, Wales, and the couple married in 1944.

Janet demobbed the following year. Now a great grandmother, she said:

"Spending time with my family is the best way I can celebrate my birthday."

Janet has been a resident at Royal Star & Garter since 2023.

Daughter Gill said: "We had a lovely time sharing Mum's birthday with her at Royal Star & Garter.

"The staff make such a fuss over Mum and all the residents there – it's a lovely home."

Royal Star & Garter in Solihull is welcoming new residents. For more information on this, its other services or to work at the home, go to [www.starandgarter.org/solihull](http://www.starandgarter.org/solihull)

## COUPLE CELEBRATE THEIR 60TH WEDDING ANNIVERSARY AT STAR AND GARTER HOME

A couple who met when they lived two houses apart as children have marked their 60th wedding anniversary. Roy and Patricia Elliott married on 19 February 1966, and celebrated their diamond anniversary at Royal Star & Garter in High Wycombe, where they both live.

Staff arranged for Roy to present his wife with a card and flowers, and treated the couple to a romantic meal and special cake. The home also planned a celebratory lunch for their family the following weekend.

Roy and Patricia are both living with dementia and have been at Royal Star & Garter since 2023.

As children, the pair would play together in their shared backyard in Sheffield, and Roy remembers pushing Patricia around in her buggy.

Roy went on to join the Royal Navy and served for ten years. Though they were not a couple when he joined up, the pair were smitten with one another, and looked forward to seeing each other when Roy returned home on leave.

They eventually got together and married, and went on to have two children.

Now grandparents, the couple enjoyed their anniversary meal in a private dining area at the home, decorated by staff with balloons and banners.

Their son Greg said: "It's quite a story that my parents have known each other since Dad was six and Mum was only one, and it's lovely that they are able to still be together at Royal Star & Garter celebrating their 60th wedding anniversary. "I'm grateful that staff made it such a special day for them, and we later had a wonderful afternoon celebrating their anniversary."

Greg stressed the importance of his parents being able to remain together at this stage of their lives: "If they weren't together, I think they'd both be deeply unhappy. They'd be lost without each other.

Jean Fanning, Deputy Home Manager, said: "We understand how important it is for couples to remain together when they move into care, particularly when one or both are living with dementia.

"Being together helps maintain wellbeing and supports both their comfort and security."

# RON IS THE LATEST LIFE MEMBER OF THE RNA

Ron Syson of York is the latest Life Member of the RNA.

Last month Ron was presented with this special RNA membership in honour of his service in the Merchant Navy in World War 2.

To celebrate his life The Veteran UK organised a podcast to be made, with RNA General Secretary Bill Oliphant and S/M Michael Davis-Marks interviewing Ron, who for the first time has told his extraordinary story to the public.

During the war, Ron tried to join the Royal Navy at the age of 14 and was, rightly, told to go back home to his mother. He didn't – he ended up in Hull on a Norwegian vessel, the Astrid, which was subsequently involved in the Arctic Convoys and many other voyages in the war effort.

By the age of 18, Ron had survived ten Arctic convoys and 12 Atlantic convoys before the Astrid was finally sunk.

"All these years I have kept it all in my head. If you haven't been involved in a bombing raid or a war you wouldn't believe it," said Ron, whose resilience and humility are a living testament to the bravery of those who served during the darkest chapters of modern history.

The podcast episode of Veteran Voice brings together two generations of service, sacrifice, and support, with Ron sharing his extraordinary life story, braving wartime convoys, multiple missions to Moscow, and even a meeting with Vladimir Putin.

Alongside him, Bill Oliphant highlights the ongoing work of the RNA to support today's veterans and serving sailors, carrying forward the same spirit of brotherhood that sustained Ron and so many others.



This is more than a podcast – it's living history, and a call to remember the past while continuing to serve those who served.

You can see the podcast using [this link](#).

## online book club



free books

all welcome

### ROYAL NAVAL ASSOCIATION

click this advert for the link to sign up

More Information:

[cml@rnassoc.org](mailto:cml@rnassoc.org)

# RACE RELATIONS A CRUCIAL FACTOR IN DASH ACROSS UK

To mark Valentine's Day, Royal Navy & Royal Marines Charity (RNRMC) asked one simple question: who would you race the length of the UK with?

Race Across the UK (RATUK) returns from 6–9 October this year, challenging teams of two to travel from RN Air Station Culdrose in Cornwall to Inverness – with no cars, no planes and no map apps.

Armed with nothing but a paper map, determination and whatever they can carry on their backs, duos must rely on teamwork, resilience and a healthy sense of humour to make it to the finish line.

With registration now open – and only enough places for 30 teams of two – there's no better time to choose your ultimate teammate.

Whether it's your other half, your best mate, your sibling or a favourite colleague, Race Across the UK is all about partnership.

Just ask Natalie and Kris Lewis (better known as Team Lewis), a husband-and-wife duo based in Helensburgh, who took on the challenge together last year, racing from Edinburgh to Dartmouth.

"I signed up and dragged Kris along for the ride," laughs Natalie.

"It was about doing things for a good cause whilst having a good time, and just being Kris and Natalie."

The couple – Royal Navy veterans and lifelong supporters of the Naval community – say taking part was one of the most rewarding experiences they've shared.

"Do it, 100 per cent," says Kris. "It was one of the best experiences I've had in a long, long time."

"Just don't take it too seriously. There is that competitive element, but you can also just enjoy the ride."

While the challenge tests both physical endurance and mental resilience, the heart of the race is fundraising. Teams are encouraged to raise £3,000, helping RNRMC continue its vital work supporting Royal Navy, Royal



Marines and Royal Fleet Auxiliary personnel and their families.

"We've seen first-hand the difference RNRMC makes," says Natalie. "From the first day of service to life beyond the military, RNRMC is there, providing support that's both meaningful and lasting."

"Their work strengthens the Naval family, and we're proud to play even a small part in helping them continue that mission."

The couple have witnessed the charity's impact across the community – from mess deck improvements that make deployments feel more like home, to morale-boosting events and funded wellbeing activities giving families the chance to reset and reconnect.

Now, they're encouraging other couples and friends to take the leap together.

So, too, are the RNA's finest – this couple of crazy Central Office staff (General Secretary Bill and Welfare Lead Jon, pictured left) joined the Race Across the UK and raised over £12,000 for RNRMC.

Racing from Edinburgh to Dartmouth, taking in places such as Chatham Dockyard, Oswestry Castle, Portsmouth Historic Dockyard and beautiful Dartmouth, they made new friends along the way, raced not only in speed (they didn't come first), but also in fundraising (they DID come first).

Bill said: "I heartily recommend this event to anyone who has a sense of adventure and wants to test themselves under pressure."

"It was enormous fun and I would definitely do it again!" So choose adventure. Choose teamwork. Choose someone you trust to navigate Britain with nothing but a paper map and blind optimism.

Registration for Race Across the UK 2026 is now open. Spaces are limited – sign up your team of two and start your journey today: <https://fundraising.rnrmc.org.uk/event/race-across-the-uk/home>





# RACE ACROSS THE UK



**START: DARTMOUTH FINISH: INVERNESS**

**TUESDAY 6TH - FRIDAY 9TH OCTOBER 2026**

**EVENT CAPACITY: 30 TEAMS OF 2**

**Navigate a secret route.  
Complete challenges.  
Race to checkpoints.**

Stay ahead of the competition -  
No shortcuts. No map apps. Just quick thinking,  
smart decisions and serious stamina.

**ENTRY FEE:**  
£300

**FUNDRAISING  
TARGET:**  
£1,500

\* per person

**SIGN UP NOW!  
SPACES ARE STRICTLY LIMITED.**



The Royal Navy and Royal Marines Charity is a company limited by guarantee registered in England and Wales (no. 4047940) and is a registered charity (no. 113794) and Scotland (SC044949).

# WHY TAKE PART?

**PUSH YOUR LIMITS**

**SUPPORT YOUR NAVY FAMILY**

**CREATE STORIES YOU'LL TELL FOR YEARS**

Every mile you cover helps change lives.

Your fundraising directly supports serving personnel and veterans when they need it most – from recovery and rehabilitation to family support and transition to civilian life.

“Wow. Hands down the best charity event we've ever been involved in. A week of racing, making new friends, and huge generosity from friends and complete strangers. Anybody reading this, should be signing up, immediately.”

Team Sea Dust, 2025



# SERVICES CRICKET FESTIVAL AT LORD'S

All three Services will be battling it out for a prestigious trophy at Lord's Cricket Ground in London next month. The Armed Forces Cricket Festival will take place on Thursday 23 April, when the Royal Navy, Army and RAF vie for the Inter-Services T20 Trophy. On the same bill will be a UK Armed Forces Women's fixture against the MCC.

This is a great opportunity to support your Service and enjoy high-level cricket with colleagues, friends and family, at the home of cricket. Gates will open at 0900, with the first match starting at 1000.

**Please note: timings may be subject to change, depending on the weather and other conditions.**

The Pelham Suite in the Warner Stand will be open during the event for all veterans to relax and watch the cricket. The schedule is as follows:

**1000-1245 Match 1:** UKAFCA

Women's vs MCC – T20

**1245-1315 Lunch:** Kwik Cricket to be played on Nursery Ground

**1315-1600 Match 2:** RAF vs Losers of Army/Navy - IST20

**1600-1630 Tea:** Military band to play on main ground

**1630-1915 Match 3:** RAF v Winners of Army/Navy - IST20

A post-tournament presentation will be held approximately 15 minutes after



the conclusion of the last match, when the respective trophies and awards will be presented by the President of MCC.

**Ground Admission Prices:**

■ Adults: £20

■ Serving Personnel / Veterans / MOD Civil Servants: £10\*

■ Over 65s: £5

■ Under 16s: £5 – Ticket holders must be Under 16 on the match date. Please note Under 14s must be accompanied by an adult.

Serving Personnel / MOD Civil Servants / Veterans – Please bring proof of identity with you to the match (eg ID cards, Veterans ID card). You may be asked to prove your entitlement to this discount.

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

Further details about the day, including links to ticket purchases, can be found at the Inter Services T20 website: <https://interservicest20.co.uk>

**Photo by Nipun Chandra Surnilla on Unsplash**

## CENTRAL OFFICE OPEN DAYS

Four dates have been set aside for shipmates to visit Portsmouth Naval Base to see what makes Central Office tick.

The Central Office Open days for 2026 are:

- Friday 29 May
- Friday 26 June
- Friday 17 July
- Friday 7 August

If you would like more details of what happens on Open Days, or to register your interest, please contact Sara Field on [ams@rnassoc.org](mailto:ams@rnassoc.org)

## AWARD NOMINATIONS CLOSE SOON

X-Forces Enterprise (XFE) has opened the nomination process for the 2026 Armed Forces Community Awards – formerly known as the Soldiering On Awards.

The awards are a national platform that celebrates the exceptional achievements of the Armed Forces community, not just on one night, but throughout the year.

Across 12 categories, the awards honour individuals, teams and organisations, including serving personnel, veterans, families, and those who support them. From regional storytelling to high-profile gatherings, the awards create ongoing opportunities to recognise and elevate these inspiring contributions.

Nominations for the 2026 Armed Forces Community Awards, opened on 19 January and close on 29 March. Judging takes place in April and May, with the finalists in each category being announced on 22 June.

There will be a reception for finalists at the House of Lords on 15 July, and winners will be announced on 17 September.

The 12 categories and partners are:

- **Animal Partnership** (Pets at Home)
- **Employee Champion** (Landmarc)
- **Education, Training and Development** (Reed in Partnership)
- **Working Together** (FiMT)
- **Connecting Society** (COBSEO)
- **Business Start-up** (Barclays)



• **Healthcare and Rehabilitation** (Redwood)

- **Business Scale-up** (LSEG Foundation)
- **Defence Inclusivity** (Babcock International)
- **Community Impact** (BAE Systems)
- **Inspiration** (NatWest)
- **Lifetime Achievement** (Oracle).

Full details of categories and how to nominate can be found at <https://www.soldieringon.org>

For more than a decade, these awards have shone a light on the extraordinary service, resilience and leadership found across the Forces community and among those who support it.

Members of the Forces community make a difference every day, often quietly and without recognition. These awards bring those stories into the spotlight and say, clearly and publicly, that your contribution matters.

A nomination can validate years of service, lift someone who never seeks praise, and amplify stories of compassion, collaboration and leadership that deserve to be heard.

It not only celebrates achievement but also gives visibility to the dedication that underpins a more connected society.

Nominations are open to anyone from the Armed Forces community and those who support it. This includes serving personnel, veterans, reservists, partners, cadets, volunteers, employers, leaders, community champions, organisations and beneficiaries. If someone's actions may feel ordinary to them but transformative to others, they deserve consideration.

# Welsh Open Uckers Tournament



Welsh Open Uckers Tournament

To be held at HMS Swan, Builth Wells Rugby Club

6th June 2026 First Roll of the Dice 10:00

Buffet Available 12:00 to 16:00

Entertainment by

**Lower Deck Shanty Men**

19:00 onwards

**2000 Grand Draw**

**All this for only £5 per entrant**

**Please Register ASAP with [davebuckingham10@gmail.com](mailto:davebuckingham10@gmail.com)**

# CAMPAIGN LAUNCHED 'TO ADDRESS TWO INJUSTICES'

Fighting With Pride (FWP) has launched Op Inclusio — a focused campaign to address two critical injustices that continue to affect members of the LGBT+ community. The campaign has two clear objectives:

## ■ To address the ongoing exclusion of LGBT+ veterans dismissed prior to 1967

Veterans dismissed before the partial decriminalisation of homosexuality in 1967 remain unable to access non-financial reparations under the current arrangements.

FWP says this exclusion perpetuates historic injustice, and they believe it must be rectified.

## ■ To secure justice for those forced, coerced, compelled, or threatened into resignation

Many veterans who were pressured



to resign have applied for a Discharge/Dismissal payment, only to see their applications rejected – and their subsequent appeals fail, despite clear evidence of what FWP describes as their appalling treatment.

These individuals remain without redress. Op Inclusio seeks to ensure their cases are properly recognised and addressed.

### Why Act Now?

The Armed Forces Bill Select

Committee is currently considering the Armed Forces Bill. This presents a critical opportunity to influence Parliament and ensure these unresolved injustices are formally recognised and corrected.

The case of pre-1967 veterans was raised with the Prime Minister in the House of Commons on 11 February. The issue of those veterans refused reparation under the DD Scheme is the subject of threatened legal action against the MOD following FWP's referral of appeal cases to Irwin Mitchell Solicitors, and received extensive coverage in the media.

Progress has been made because veterans spoke up. Change has happened because people engaged. Op Inclusio builds on that legacy.

## NAVAL HERO'S MEDAL GOES UNDER THE HAMMER

The Albert Medal awarded posthumously to Lt Cdr Walter Edmund Fletcher, who sacrificed his own life to save the life of celebrated aviator Amy Johnson after her aircraft crashed into the freezing waters of the Thames Estuary in January 1941, is up for auction at Noonans Mayfair (16 Bolton Street) on 18 March.

The medal is estimated at £6,000 to £8,000 and is being sold by his niece, who wants to give the money to her children.

Christopher Mellor-Hill, Head of Client Liaison at Noonans, said: "Lt Cdr Fletcher served during the Second World War in command of the Barrage Balloon Vessel HMS Haslemere, and on 5 January 1941, he was escorting a convoy off the Thames Estuary when, on an intensely cold and misty day, he saw a parachutist drop from the clouds into the rough sea.

"Almost immediately afterwards an Oxford aeroplane with dead engines spun down, crashing into the icy waters nearby, breaking up.

"Fletcher immediately altered course and put on full speed. There was a heavy swell and strong currents.

"A lifeboat was manned and lowered, but at that point the parachutist, described by eyewitnesses as female, was swept past, just 20 yards from the ship.

"Observing one of his men getting ready to go over the side to rescue

the parachutist, Fletcher immediately stopped him, on the grounds that the man was married, and as the only single officer on board Fletcher decided to attempt the rescue himself. "Diving in fully clothed, he searched in vain for the parachutist, before being spotted briefly resting on the door of the Oxford, which had been jettisoned by the pilot before baling out.

"Another boat was subsequently lowered from the Haslemere to pick up her gallant captain, who had been rendered unconscious from exposure to the freezing sea.

"Taken to the Royal Naval Hospital at Gillingham, he tragically died shortly after his arrival."

Christopher continued: "Although unknown to Fletcher and his crew at the time, the unidentified female parachutist was the celebrated aviatrix Miss Amy Johnson, the pioneering pilot who in 1930 had become the first woman to fly solo from London to Australia.

"Throughout the 1930s she set many long-distance flying records, including from London to Cape Town and from Britain to Japan.

"Following the outbreak of the Second World War she joined the newly-formed Air Transport Auxiliary, transporting RAF aircraft around the country.

"Advanced First Officer, on 5 January 1941 she was tasked with flying an

Airspeed Oxford from RAF Prestwick near Glasgow to RAF Kidlington near Oxford.

"Five hours after taking off, and inexplicably gone significantly off course, her aircraft ran out of fuel and crashed into the Thames Estuary.

"Her watertight flying bag, including her logbook, were washed up ashore near to the crash site.

"Quite why such an experienced pilot should have veered so significantly off course, albeit in heavy fog, is unknown, but may have been due to a faulty compass."

Walter Fletcher was born at Kibworth Rectory, Leicestershire, in 1906, the son of the Revd E S B Fletcher, and was educated at Kibworth Grammar School before joining HMS Conway, from where he proceeded to the Royal Naval College, Dartmouth.

Passing out as Midshipman in January 1924, he was promoted Sub Lieutenant on 15 February 1927, and Lieutenant on 1 April 1929, and served in the inter-war years in both the Atlantic and the Mediterranean.

He is buried in the Royal Navy section of Gillingham (Woodlands) Cemetery, Kent, and is also commemorated on the War Memorial at Monks Risborough.

His Albert Medal was posthumously presented to his mother and brother by King George VI at Buckingham Palace on 10 June 1941.

# EPICGigability

THE MILITARY VETERANS CORNISH PILOT GIG CLUB (CHARITY NO: 1192085)



## *Now making waves in Minehead*

EPICGigability is a Tri-Service club founded and run by military veterans' charity that welcomes serving members of the Armed Forces, veterans, and their families.

We've been running for over three years with resounding success in Cornwall, and now we're looking to expand to Somerset starting in Minehead. With many veterans and serving personnel in the area, we believe our mix of camaraderie, teamwork, and resilience can bring huge benefits to the service community.

### Blue Water Therapy

Fresh air, exercise, and time on the water

Mental wellbeing through focus and rhythm

A sense of calm, balance, and connection

### Our Philosophy: Every Person Is Capable

- No matter your age, background, or ability, you are welcome.
- Whether you've rowed before or never picked up an oar, we believe in inclusion, encouragement, and opportunity for everyone be that rowing, maintaining, support functions, coaching, talking and socialising with likeminded people.

### Why Join?

- Built on teamwork and mutual support
- Open to serving members, veterans, and their families
- Boosts physical fitness and mental wellbeing
- A new community with the spirit of service

*Find out more!*

Follow us on Facebook: [EPICGigability](#) or call 07929 572742 or email [info@epicgigability.co.uk](mailto:info@epicgigability.co.uk)



# EDINBURGH MILITARY TATTOO SUPPORTS RNRMC

RNRMC has been awarded £266,720 from the Royal Edinburgh Military Tattoo, marking a significant milestone in the partnership between the organisations.

This support reinforces a shared commitment to championing the wellbeing of the Royal Naval community. The funding will enable RNRMC to continue delivering essential support, invest in vital projects, and ensure that serving personnel, veterans and their families receive the care they need, when they need it.

To further support families, RNRMC now has a dedicated team based in Scotland, working alongside community partners to deliver tailored services that strengthen long-term family resilience. By bringing together national best practice with local delivery organisations,

RNRMC aims to improve mental health and wellbeing, foster stronger community connections, and enhance wider social support. One example of this support in action is Strengthening Families – West of Scotland, a new RNRMC programme launched in April to assist Royal Navy Submariner families facing the challenges of service life and separation. The initiative supports submariners and their families at all stages of their journey, addressing the pressures of extended deployments and limited communication.

Sam Nicolson, Chief Executive of RNRMC, said: "We are immensely grateful to the Royal Edinburgh Military Tattoo for this outstanding award and for the strength of a partnership that has endured for many years.

## ARE YOU WILLING TO HELP THE ASSOCIATION?

Change starts with a will... and it couldn't be easier. Writing a will isn't really for you, it's for the people you love, to make their lives easier. It's your chance to leave a legacy that lasts long after you've gone.

A will doesn't just save your loved ones time, money, and stress. It's also an opportunity to be part of something bigger. By including a gift in

your will, you can help support the Royal Naval Association and make a meaningful difference to shipmates for generations to come.

That's why we've partnered with expert estate planners Octopus Legacy to offer you the chance to write or update your will for free, online, over the phone, or in person with one of their professional will writers or solicitors. We

cover the cost of wills up to £150, meaning you can write a simple will at no charge, or receive a discount on a will with trust.

For more information, click here.

A free Octopus Legacy webinar on writing or updating your will is scheduled for midday on Tuesday 10 March – register here.

## 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/UU6ClVe3#association\\_members\\_area=xxxxx](https://51bwhwzvnuu.typeform.com/to/UU6ClVe3#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.

## REQUEST FOR EMAIL DETAILS

Branch Secretaries, can help us improve the accuracy of shipmates' details on the Central Office database.

Could you ensure all your members have an email address recorded – even if it is that of a friend or relative who could handle emails on their behalf..

We are striving to refresh our data and want to ensure that we are communicating with as many shipmates as possible on a regular basis.

If any Secretaries require assistance, or a new link into their portal access to the database, please contact the office on [admin@rnassoc.org](mailto:admin@rnassoc.org)



ONCE  
NAVY  
ALWAYS  
NAVY

Every Royal Naval Association member is entitled to £150 off the cost of making a will with our trusted partner, Octopus Legacy

[royal-naval-association.com](http://royal-naval-association.com)

In partnership with  
octopuslegacy

## SHOP ONLINE AND HELP US RAISE FUNDS

Central Office human dynamo Milly Luxford has set the RNA up on a great website called **easyfundraising** to help raise money for the Royal Naval Association – simply by shopping online.

easyfundraising turns your everyday online shopping into **FREE** donations when you use them to shop with more than 8,000 retailers such as eBay, John Lewis & Partners, Argos, ASOS and Booking.com.

Retailers then make a small donation by way of saying 'thank you', and easyfundraising gives those free funds to the cause. If you would like to get involved, please register using this link – just click **here** to sign up, and once you've raised your first donation, easyfundraising will give the RNA a £1 bonus donation! There are no catches or hidden charges and the Association will be really grateful for your donations.

## GIZZETS ONLINE

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 13 March** (Zoom 0900)

**Thurs 7 May** (Zoom 1800)

**Fri 7 August** (Zoom 0900)

**Thurs 15 Oct** (Zoom 1800)

### FACs (finance):

**Fri 20 March** (Zoom 0930)

Draft accounts

**Thurs 14 May** (Zoom 1800)

**Fri 14 August** (Zoom 0930)

**Fri 13 Nov** (Zoom 0930)

# TELL US YOUR VIEWS ON THE RNA – IT COULD BE WORTH £100



Do you have a few minutes to spare to help us help you and your shipmates? It could be very much worth your while...

Because it will only take a few minutes to complete the RNA 2026 membership survey, which will enable us to understand all members' views on the RNA and its activities.

And for one lucky entrant, drawn at random, there will be a £100 Amazon gift voucher.

Completing the survey will help us to deliver more of what members want and need.

And if you could all add your email addresses, this would enable us to communicate more effectively with members.

To take part in the survey please click this link: <https://forms.office.com/e/wbauj6qJmm>

## 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 RNA volunteers who manage the minibuses regionally, including bookings. To book a minibus, the contact details are:

**Plymouth** – Les Yeoman - [lesyeo3@gmail.com](mailto:lesyeo3@gmail.com) – 07795 231397

**Manchester** – David Barlow – [dbarlow@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:dbarlow@hotmail.co.uk) - 07747 006100

**Portsmouth** – Sara Field – [ams@rnassoc.org](mailto:ams@rnassoc.org) – 023 92 723747

For insurance, there are criteria for driving the minibuses and these, and other details, are at [www.royal-naval-association.co.uk/mini-bus-hire](http://www.royal-naval-association.co.uk/mini-bus-hire)



## ANDY IN CHARGE AT AGGIE'S

Naval veteran Andy Gordon has been appointed Chief Executive Officer of Aggie Weston's. Since October 2025, Andy has provided calm and steady leadership during a period of transition. As a former Royal Navy Serviceman, he brings lived experience and a deep understanding of Naval life to the role. The charity is celebrating its 150th anniversary later this year.

## TRINITY YOUR INSURANCE PARTNER

### Enjoy the following member benefits:

- Special Premium Rate for Veterans' **Personal Accident** cover
- 15% discount on Travel Plus **holiday insurance**
- 15% discount on Free Spirit **travel insurance**
- **Buildings & Contents Insurance** – on purchase, choose a military charity\* for your donation
- **Life Insurance** – on purchase our partner, LifeSearch will donate £50 to a military charity of choice
- 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.talktrinity.com](http://www.talktrinity.com)

[hello@talktrinity.com](mailto:hello@talktrinity.com)

# CONTRACT SPARKS NEW RELATIONSHIP

Relate has appointed Glasgow-based charity The Spark as its new subcontractor to deliver funded counselling services across Scotland on behalf of major UK benevolent funders, including RNRMC.

The partnership strengthens Relate's national service offer by working with a locally-established provider. The Spark will deliver eight funded contracts, supporting veterans, serving personnel, civil servants and others who are eligible for free counselling through benevolent funders.

Relate selected The Spark following a detailed process which confirmed strong alignment in clinical governance, training standards and safeguarding.

The partnership ensures a seamless experience for beneficiaries living in Scotland while keeping delivery rooted in a trusted local charity with a significant presence in Glasgow and the Central Belt.

The Spark supports around 1,800 people each year and will work closely with Relate's clinical and operational teams to deliver funded counselling for individuals, couples and families across Scotland.

Mandy Lindley, Director of Relationships and Funding at RNRMC, said: "We are delighted to see Relate working in partnership with The Spark which will strengthen the support available to Naval Service beneficiaries in Scotland.

"This collaboration means Scottish beneficiaries have the option of face-to-face counselling, alongside online support which ensures they can access help in a way that suits their circumstances.

"We are proud to support a partnership that broadens choice, improves accessibility and ensures consistent, high-quality support for those who need it most."

Are you:

**Ex-forces?**

**Eager to travel more this year? ✓**

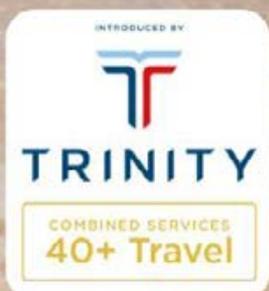
**Tired of rising insurance costs? ✓**

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](http://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](http://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](http://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](mailto:rna.american.football.sig@gmail.com)

Choir – Jon Everett: [wws@rnassoc.org](mailto:wws@rnassoc.org)

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

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

Collectors: Insignia and Badges – Paul Banyard: [rna.insignia@gmail.com](mailto:rna.insignia@gmail.com)

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

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

Genealogy – Mike Wilkinson: [mike.j.wilco@gmail.com](mailto:mike.j.wilco@gmail.com)

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

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

Motorhome, Caravan and Camping – Ron Shilton: [rnamcc@outlook.com](mailto:rnamcc@outlook.com)

RNA Football Club – [scc@rnassoc.com](mailto:scc@rnassoc.com)

Rugby Union – Steve Phillips: [rna.rugby.union.sig@gmail.com](mailto:rna.rugby.union.sig@gmail.com)

Woodcraft – Graham Warner: [vicechair@rna-7area.org](mailto:vicechair@rna-7area.org)

Yachting – David Monks: [david.c.monks@gmail.com](mailto:david.c.monks@gmail.com)

If you are interested in forming a Sports and Comradeship Group please contact [cml@rnassoc.org](mailto:cml@rnassoc.org)

# ANSON MAKES HISTORY DOWN UNDER

Royal Navy submarine HMS Anson has arrived in Australia for an historic visit to strengthen the UK's commitment to the security of the Indo-Pacific.

Anson docked at HMAS Stirling – the Astute-class boat's first visit Down Under – as part of the trilateral security partnership between Australia, the UK and the US, known as AUKUS. The visit is a crucial part of the ongoing process of supporting Australia to develop the skills and capabilities necessary to operate, maintain and steward conventionally-armed, nuclear-powered submarines. Waiting for the submarine – normally based at Faslane – was Second Sea Lord Vice Admiral Paul Beattie.

"It is a privilege to welcome HMS Anson to Australian waters for the first time, standing alongside our Royal Australian Navy and United States Navy partners," he said.

"This visit represents far more than a port call, it is a demonstration of the deep trust, shared purpose, and collective ambition at the heart of AUKUS. Together, we are forging the interoperability and cooperation that will define our partnership for decades to come."

During her visit to the base, near Perth, the boat will host a series of high-profile engagement activities and will be in the country for the 125th anniversary of the Royal Australian Navy. The boat, which stopped in Gibraltar before making a non-stop transit through the Mediterranean Sea and Suez Canal will also undergo a maintenance period with the Royal



Australian Navy. Commanding Officer Cdr Aaron Williams, said: "The crew of HMS Anson are excited to be in Australia. Travelling a distance unsupported of over 8,000 nautical miles, we are ready to showcase what HMS Anson has to offer." Image: PO Phot Unaisi Luke MOD © Crown copyright 2026

# 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  
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or visit [RNAlottery.co.uk](http://RNAlottery.co.uk)**



## ACTIVITY, CONNECTION AND IMPACT ACROSS THE RNA

The past month has shown the Royal Naval Association at its very best. Across the country, volunteers have been delivering steady, compassionate support while the national team continues to strengthen the structures that underpin our welfare and wellbeing offer.

From major developments to the quiet, everyday acts of kindness happening in branches, the picture is one of growing professionalism, deeper connection, and a shared commitment to ensuring that no one in the Naval family faces life's challenges alone.

### National Developments – A Stronger, More Connected Network

The new National Welfare and Wellbeing Support Team (NWWST), soon to be introduced, will mark a major leap forward in how we can support shipmates even more.

This volunteer-led team will bring together professional expertise and lived experience to provide consistent, compassionate support across our Welfare and Wellbeing.

Replacing the implementation group, the NWWST will be supporting Areas and Branches with complex cases, sharing best practice, and reinforcing high

standards of safeguarding and care. Supporting this is a refreshed suite of welfare and wellbeing documents including updated policies, such as the Safeguarding and Lone working policies, and monthly reporting tools. These resources give volunteers the clarity and confidence they need to deliver safe, structured support and ensure a consistent approach across the country.

### Branch Welfare Activity – The Heart of the RNA

Across the country, Branch Welfare and Wellbeing Officers continue to embody the Seven Cs of Comradeship: Community, Connection, Commemoration, Care, Compassion, Companionship and Celebration.

It is in the small, steady acts of support check ins, hospital visits, practical help, and quiet companionship that the RNA's welfare ethos is lived out every day. Branches have been exceptionally active this month, with shipmates:

- Checking in on isolated members
- Visiting shipmates in hospital
- Supporting families through difficult moments
- Providing practical help and signposting

Taunton, Portsmouth, Yeovil and Plymouth.

This break is for women who quietly keep going, who support others, those coping with change, those feeling isolated, or are in need of a reset.

The programme has already transformed lives. For some, it has been the first time in years they have laughed freely, tried something new, or felt genuinely connected. For others, it has re-ignited confidence and purpose.

Welfare and wellbeing is not only about responding to difficulties, but it's also about creating opportunities for people to thrive. Thriving Together offers exactly that.

If you know someone who would benefit, especially someone unlikely to put themselves forward, nominate them! You can nominate yourself too – tell us why you need this.

Closing date for nominations: 13 March. Contact: [wws@rnassoc.org](mailto:wws@rnassoc.org)

- Offering companionship and social support
- Keeping vulnerable members connected

These everyday acts rarely make headlines, but they make a profound difference.

They are the living expression of what it means to be part of the Naval family.

### Looking Ahead

The coming months promise to be just as active, with continued training, wellbeing activities, branch support and national development.

The focus is on volunteers and strengthening the network, supporting volunteers, and ensuring every shipmate, wherever they are can rely on the Association for connection, compassion and practical help.

## QUIZ SEASON WILL END ON A HIGH

The winter quiz series has been one of the real success stories of the season, drawing shipmates from every corner of the country into an evening of laughter, light hearted competition and genuine connection. What began as a simple online get together has grown into a much loved monthly fixture that people look forward to, a space where new friendships form, old ones strengthen, and everyone feels part of something bigger.

These quizzes have shown, time and again, how powerful it is when shipmates come together. Whether you join for the fun, the banter, the challenge, or simply the company, you are always guaranteed a warm welcome and a good laugh. It's relaxed, it's inclusive, and it captures the very best of the RNA spirit.

The final quiz of the season takes place on Friday 20 March, and we're planning to end on a high. There are whispers of a "make and do" round, a few surprises, and plenty of opportunities to get involved, no pressure, no seriousness, just a couple of hours of shared fun. If you've never joined before, this is the perfect time to give it a go. If you're a regular, we can't wait to see you back.

Come along, bring a brew, bring a friend, and be part of something that truly brings people together.

## RESET, REBUILD, REDISCOVER YOURSELF

Occasionally, an opportunity arises that offers far more than a change of scenery, it offers a turning point. Thriving Together is one such opportunity.

On 15 May, a group of women shipmates will head to Westward Ho! in Devon for a wellbeing weekend designed to help people feel like themselves again. Not through pressure or formality, but through fresh air, shared experience, and the simple act of stepping away from daily demands.

Participants will enjoy professionally led surfing lessons, structured wellbeing activities, and relaxed time outdoors. The dedicated bunkhouse accommodation fosters a sense of camaraderie that many participants say they haven't experienced in years. The only costs are for food.

Free transport is available on a first-come basis from Manchester, Liverpool, Birmingham, Bristol,

## NAVIGATING CHILD ARRANGEMENTS ON MOTHER'S DAY

Mother's Day is on 15 March this year. I am looking forward to sharing the day with my daughter at a local art exhibition

It can also be a difficult and complex day for separated or divorced parents, and it might be that as co-parents, consideration is required to allow your children to spend time with the other parent (if this would fall outside of the usual arrangements) on Mother's Day. This of course applies to Father's Day too, and it is therefore important for parents to understand their rights and responsibilities in relation to the arrangements for their children generally.

### Parental responsibility

On separation or divorce, parents maintain Parental Responsibility (PR) for their child, even if they do not live together on a full-time basis. It is very rare that PR is removed and any removal is not automatic. PR refers to the rights, responsibilities and decision making of parents in relation to their child. The decisions could include choices relating to medical treatment, education and religion.

### Sorting the arrangements

As parents, both parties are always encouraged to make decisions together in relation to a child – this still applies on separation or divorce. One of those decisions relates to the contact arrangements, ie where the child shall live and how much time they shall spend with each parent.

The arrangements can be determined directly between the parents. It might be that a bit of help is needed via a non-court dispute resolution (NCDR) process such as mediation and it may be appropriate to utilise resources such as a parenting plan to record the terms agreed relating to the child. If any agreement cannot be reached and/or in cases where direct communication is unsuitable, there is the option to apply to the court for a Child Arrangements Order (CAO). A CAO made

## Knights

as part of a court process is legally binding and can be enforced if one parent does not comply with the terms of the order. The CAO

is often very specific and will set out the arrangements for a child during term-time and school holidays (if applicable) as well as special occasions such as Christmas, Easter, birthdays and Mother's and Father's Day.

### Special occasions

I encourage parents to sort the contact arrangements for their children directly between them if possible. If not, there are options available (as set out above) to assist with resolving the dispute. When resolving the arrangements, I advise parents to agree special occasions in advance. This removes ambiguity and concerns about not spending time with a child on a particular day, such as Mother's Day. If the child for example, would usually spend time with the other parent e.g. Dad, perhaps that child can visit their mum between 10am-6pm or go out for tea with them. The arrangements can be completely flexible, and it is important to ensure correspondence when agreeing the arrangements is open and respectful. The arrangement is usually reciprocal – if a child is spending between 10am-6pm with their mum on Mother's Day, the same should apply for Father's Day. This is always worth baring in mind.

### Change the day?

If you are not spending time with your child on a particular special occasions such as Mother's Day, keep these points in mind:

- If you can, plan ahead for next year. This applies to Father's Day too. Perhaps make arrangements the previous year and/or agree to vary the existing arrangements to accommodate the special occasion.
- Mother's Day doesn't need to be exclusive to a Sunday. If you are spending time with your child on any other day, celebrate that day! Have a "Sunday" roast



on a Thursday evening, just because you can.

- Reach out to family and friends for support. It's likely that people you know are in the same boat and perhaps taking about the arrangements might make it easier.

- Keep busy! If you cannot see your child on Mother's Day, it does not make you any less of a mother – so still celebrate! Make plans with friends, enjoy a day out and take time for yourself.

If you are worried about the arrangements for your child or not spending time together on Mother's Day, please get in touch. Knights have a specialist team of family solicitors who are able to assist. I am an Associate in the family team at Knights and my partner is a Royal Navy Veteran. I come from a military family and have a little girl who is almost 2!

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

[www.linkedin.com/in/emmxjones](http://www.linkedin.com/in/emmxjones)

[emma.jones@knightsplc.com](mailto:emma.jones@knightsplc.com)

**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.

# WELFARE AND WELLBEING

## STRONG SHOW AT DARTMOUTH

The RNA was proud to have a strong and visible presence at the BRNC Dartmouth Families Day, which was held on 14 February. Raising awareness among Officer Cadets and their families, our stand attracted steady interest throughout the day, with many taking the opportunity to learn more about the Association's role, values and support.

This event showcased the RNA at its best: welcoming, knowledgeable, and forward thinking. It strengthened our connection with the next generation of naval leaders and their families.

A special thank you goes to RNA Brixham, whose support ensured a warm, professional and engaging presence throughout the event.



### FUNERAL GUIDE AVAILABLE ON 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>**

### FOCUS ON RELAXATION

On 4 February the Wellbeing Wednesday session offered shipmates an introduction to Tai Chi Qigong, led by Stephen, who guided the group through a calm and thoughtful hour focused on relaxation, breathing, and mindfulness.

Stephen began by explaining that Tai Chi Qigong is a gentle, non-combat form of Tai Chi that focuses on healing and the smooth flow of energy, or qi. He led participants through a centring exercise to help them feel grounded. A simple guided meditation followed – a chance to clear their mind and settle into the practice.

From there, Stephen introduced a range of mindfulness and stress-relief techniques, including breathing exercises. He shared his own experience of using these methods to manage pain and stress, helping to show how accessible and practical they can be in everyday life. He also used a metaphor about carrying rocks to illustrate the importance of letting go of past worries, a point that resonated strongly.

The conversation developed into a wider discussion about managing stress.

The hour offered a calm and inclusive space to pause, learn and explore practical ways to support both physical and mental wellbeing. A sincere thank you to Stephen for leading such an engaging and encouraging session.

■ We are currently building the calendar for upcoming Wellbeing Wednesday sessions and would welcome contributions from shipmates. If you, or someone you know, has a hobby, passion, or personal experience that has supported your wellbeing and could benefit others, we would be pleased to hear from you. These sessions strengthen connection across the Association. Contact: [wws@rnassoc.org](mailto:wws@rnassoc.org)

### WELFARE CONTACTS

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

# BRANCH NEWS

## AREA 6

On Saturday 14 February, the Area 6 AGM at the Eternit Sports & Social Club, Meldreth, Royston, was well attended with over 40 shipmates from nine branches out of 12.

Area 6 welcomed S/M Mark Slawson, representing the National Council, who gave a presentation on the RNA Governance Review, which was very informative and well-received.

S/M Paul McKay was elected as Vice Chair, S/M Geoff Apperley was re-elected as Secretary and S/M Bill Small was re-elected as a committee member.

Area Trophies were awarded as follows:  
■ **President's Trophy** to S/M Keith Ridley for his long-standing service to the RNA (right).

■ **Shipmate of the Year** to Tony Webley of St Neots for his outstanding contribution to the branch (middle right).

■ **Block & Gavel** to Rushden for the most active branch.

■ **Area Trophy Cup** to Hemel Hempstead for the most improved branch.

■ **Pembroke House Shield** to St Neots for the highest percentage increase in fund raising/recruitment (far right).

As part of the Area 6 Meeting following the AGM, S/M Paul McKay gave a presentation on the Area 6 Engagement Strategy, which explained why it's so important that we take steps to improve it.

He outlined the strategy for this, the first step being a survey of Area 6 shipmates, which will hopefully give us a better idea of why many shipmates are reluctant to get involved in branch, area and national events.

Following the AGM and Area Meeting, shipmates enjoyed an excellent buffet provided by S/M Penny Jarvis, Up-Spirits, a raffle and the company of like-minded shipmates. Our thanks to **Royston** Branch for hosting a very successful AGM and to Mark Slawson for attending.

The next Area 6 AGM will be held on Saturday 13 February 2027 and S/M Janice Scott has kindly offered to host it at Newbury RBL Club.



Area Trophy Cup winners Hemel Hempstead Branch are pictured above, while (right) members of Rushden Branch are pictured with the Area 6 Block and Gavel



### **EASTBOURNE Branch**

With the reduction in active Branches across East Sussex, Eastbourne Branch has launched an outreach programme to engage with and support any Naval veteran in the county.

A social media campaign, word of mouth and direct emailing, supported by RNA Central Office, has identified several veterans and local care homes who have welcomed the contact.

A vibrant and thriving branch, Eastbourne is offering a broad and varied social programme, including guest speakers on military and local history, informative talks on crime prevention, fire safety and scam awareness.

Social outings for cream teas, pub lunches, formal dinners, theatre visits, boat and train trips and – for the more active – ten-pin bowling and crazy golf.

Any veteran interested or who would like more information, please contact the Chairman, Mal Chumbley, on [ChairmanRNA@outlook.com](mailto:ChairmanRNA@outlook.com), telephone 07793 167 075, or the Honorary Secretary, Stuart Ramsden, telephone 07972 640066 or email [seceastbourne@gmail.com](mailto:seceastbourne@gmail.com), or simply come along on one of the monthly branch meetings which take place at the Fisherman's Club, Royal Parade, Eastbourne, BN22 7AE, starting at 1900.



### **LICHFIELD Branch**

As we should all know, the whole idea of the RNA is to help our members through life's highs and lows via peer support, welfare signposting and organised activities and events.

Our core values can be summed up in the Seven Cs of Comradeship:

Community, Connection, Commemoration, Care, Compassion, Companionship and Celebration.

We seek to maintain the Naval ethos and enjoy sharing experiences with like-minded people while supporting each other in times of need.

When Central Office examined the Lichfield archives, they found the commissioning form stating that the inaugural meeting was held on 26 January 1956 at the Castle Inn, Market Street, Lichfield.

Now, some of you may not know where the Castle Inn is in Lichfield – in fact, some members of our branch didn't know – but for those that don't it is now the Oxfam shop on the other side of the road to Woolworths (which is now B&M bargains).

William 'Bill' Gallimore was the licensee in 1963 when it closed due to the development of the shopping arcade, when part of it was demolished.

Older members have told shipmates that the very old wooden panels from the building were shipped to the USA for a wealthy American's home.

In 1969 the Royal Naval Association Club came to be on the Mount., with its own building.

The opening was a big event

in Lichfield, was attended by quite a crowd and officially opened by Admiral Sir David Luce.

Arthur Fawns and his wife were the original stewards of the club. Rita's husband, Don, was the club treasurer for a number of years. Sheila's husband Joe Browne was the secretary for a good few years in the 1980s and 90s.

Rita joined the Association about 50 years ago with Don (who did his National Service with the Royal Navy).

They were invited by Pauline Collingswood, who ran the club and lived in with her husband John.

They used to go every Thursday night, when dominoes and darts matches were on (even though they did not participate), on

a Saturday night (as there was free entertainment), and also on a Sunday night.

Rita has been Lichfield's Welfare Officer for many years, visiting members in hospital and in their homes.

She has attended welfare training courses in Portsmouth offered by Central Office.

This is why shipmates had the



pleasure of formally recognising Rita's commitment to the branch and her role within it.

On behalf of all the Lichfield members it gave them great pleasure to award Rita the Certificate of Appreciation and the associated lapel badge.

Thank you, Rita, – seen above cutting the Lichfield Branch's 70th birthday cake.

### **STREET Branch**

**At the Branch Monthly meeting on 23 February, in recognition of S/M Mike Morton's service, Branch President S/M Bernie Page and wife S/M Betty, on behalf of his shipmates, presented a 'Branch Bravo Zulu Certificate', monetary voucher and flowers to Mike's wife Jan.**

**Mike unfortunately was recovering from pneumonia, and after 25 years' service had reluctantly retired from his Standard Bearer duties. The award was to show the members' gratitude and admiration for Mike's total professionalism and dedication as Standard Bearer to No 4 Area, Bridgwater and Street Branch.**

**Mike has consistently maintained the highest level of skills, attending countless ceremonial events, numerous refresher courses, carrying out Standard Bearer training and winning an extremely impressive number of competitions.**

**However, the award also paid tribute to Mike's 'good lady' Jan. Jan has tirelessly not only driven Mike to wherever he was needed but also ensured he had her invaluable 'The Flag Hoist Bravo Zulu' eye for detail and the selfless support vital to his role as Standard Bearer.**



**Bravo Zulu Mike & Jan, Yours aye to you both!**

**Footnote: The Branch has nominated Mike to receive the RNA Certificate of Appreciation for his dedication and commitment in furthering the aims and objectives of the Royal Naval Association.**



**AREA 12**

Shipmates from Area 12 (Ireland) joined with shipmates from the Glorious, **Ardent & Acasta Association** in the legendary Harland & Wolff shipyard in Belfast for a commemoration service and the dedication of a plaque in memory of the 1,531 officers and men lost on three ships – aircraft carrier HMS Glorious and destroyers HM Ships Ardent and Acasta, sunk in an action off the coast of Norway on 8 June 1940. Glorious was built in Harland & Wolff as a Courageous-class BattleCruiser

and commissioned in January 1917. She was later converted to an aircraft carrier. Shipmates were then given a tour of the yard where the RFA's new Fleet Solid Support Ships will be constructed – the RNA group is pictured above with Harland & Wolff managers and apprentices. The shipyard, with its famous yellow gantry cranes Samson and Goliath towering overhead, is also the birthplace of doomed ocean liner RMS Titanic, which went down the slipway in 1911, just five years before Glorious.



**REIGATE Branch**

Shipmates from Reigate Branch attended the Sea Cadets' Royal Naval Parade at TS Ark Royal on 24 February and were privileged to present the unit with a painting commemorating the events of July 1949, when sloop HMS Amethyst escaped from her incarceration on the River Yangtse to rejoin the Fleet. The picture was given to Reigate Branch by Gilly O'Reilly, daughter of the late Cdr Stewart Hett, Amethyst's Navigating Officer during the escape and long-time president of the Amethyst Association. The painting, by the late Cdr John

Muxworthy RN, was originally donated by his widow on the understanding that it would be given to a suitable organisation for posterity. It was accepted by the Reigate Sea Cadets' CO, Lt (SCC) Peter Bishop RNR, who undertook to ensure that the picture would be displayed prominently in the unit. Reigate Branch gave an undertaking in 2019 to continue to remember



Amethyst's escape, coupled with the fallen from HM Ships Black Swan, Consort and London, so it is fitting that the painting has found a permanent home on the drill deck of TS Ark Royal, where it will serve as a reminder to the cadets and visitors of one of the Royal Navy's greatest exploits. The commemoration

takes place at St Peter's Churchyard, Tandridge, and this year will take place on Sunday 26 July. More details from the Branch secretary. Amethyst came under fire from Communist forces during the Chinese Civil War, ran aground and was trapped on the Yangtse for more than three months, losing 22 of her ship's company. A further 25 men were lost during rescue attempts by HM Ships London and Consort before Amethyst made a thrilling 104-mile night-time dash downstream to rejoin the Fleet on 31 July 1949.



### PORTLAND Branch

On the evening of Thursday 5th February, twelve shipmates from the Royal Naval Association – Portland Branch, were delighted to attend the Divisions and Annual Awards evening of the Portland Sea Cadet Unit TS Penn, to celebrate the incredible achievements by the Cadets throughout the previous year in 2025. The Unit was packed with proud parents, supportive families and friends cheering on their Cadets. It was fantastic to see so many people come together to celebrate the hard work, dedication, and spirit of the Cadets.

The evening commenced with Colours and Divisions; Shipmates were honoured that the Mayor of Portland and Branch Shipmate, Councillor Charlie Flack was invited to inspect Divisions where he chatted to each of the Cadets. On completion of divisions a short break for refreshments was

had after which the presentation of awards began in earnest. Shipmate and Mayors Consort, Maria Flack, presented four Specialisation and Proficiency awards to Cadets with Shipmate Pete Shoemsmith presenting another four. The evening moved on with Branch Chairman Shipmate Dusty Miller presenting Boating awards to Cadets and Shipmate Karen Miller presenting Best Junior Cadets awards. Shipmate Councillor Charlie Flack then presented Best Cadets awards to the Senior Cadets section. The presentations then concluded with Shipmate Dusty presenting the Portland Branch sponsored award the "Diamond Community Award" which was shared by no less than three Cadets, Ordinary Cadet Ruby and Cadets Alexander and Vinnie after which Shipmate Pete Shoemsmith presented the other Portland Branch sponsored trophy "Barton Award", donated by previous Branch President Shipmate Dick Barton, for Best Improved Piper to Ordinary Cadet Oscar. On completion of the awards, the evening was concluded with Evening Colours.

Shipmate Chairman Dusty Miller later said: "it was a pleasure to be able to participate in the awards evening and that the Cadets were a credit to the Unit, the branch looks forward to supporting the Unit throughout 2026."



### TORFAEN and CAERPHILLY Branches

Reports from Torfaen and Caerphilly Branches were accidentally conflated in last month's Semaphore Circular, for which Mike, the Semaphore editor, humbly apologises. Shipmates submitting reports are asked to make sure they mention the name of the Branch in their report in order to avoid any future confusion.



### DOHA Branch

Doha Branch has responded to a message of support from RNA General Secretary Bill Oliphant in light of the increasingly volatile situation in the Middle East. Doha Branch Vice Chairman S/M Andrew Davison said members genuinely appreciated his kind message. "Here in Qatar things remain calm and daily life is continuing as normal as possible," said David. "They have implemented a Covid-style lockdown with all schools and most office-based employees currently working online from home.

"Naturally everyone is keeping an eye on developments across the region, but there is no sense of immediate concern and the general atmosphere remains steady and well managed.

"The authorities here are very experienced in maintaining stability, which gives people a good deal of confidence." Andrew added that shipmates were all safe and well, and the message of support meant a great deal.

"It is always reassuring to know that the wider Naval family is looking out for one another, wherever we happen to be in the world," he added.



### NORWICH Branch

Norwich Branch shipmates were involved in another successful charity collection day at their local Tesco (right). Members of the Branch also joined serving Army and RAF, cadets and other veterans including Forces2Canaries and the Armed Forces Owls for a half-time pitch parade at Norwich City Football Club's Armed Forces appreciation fixture against Sheffield Wednesday at the end of February – great support from both sets of fans, plus the Canaries won 2-0!



## TORBAY Branch

More than 40 members and friends of Torbay Branch were joined by members from **Brixham** and **Newton Abbott** Branches and Paignton RBL for the annual Festive Lunch in a Torquay hotel on Sunday 15 February. The event is normally held in January but due to complications with the hotel booking, the festive season was extended into February this year! After the obligatory pre-dinner visit to the bar, 'Hands to Dinner' was piped by S/M David Reynolds and shipmates mustered at their allotted tables prior to the meal. Chairman S/M Terry Membery welcomed guests, including our former Patron, Capt Chris Wreford-Brown RN (Retd), and current Patron, Cdr Jane Allen RNR (Retd), and

thanked everyone for supporting the event.

The loyal toast was proposed by S/M Jane Allen and the Toast to Absent Friends followed, proposed by S/M Mark Spacagna (Welfare Officer). S/M Paul Lomas (Branch Padre) then said Grace before everyone tucked into a delicious three-course meal which included the options of turkey with all the trimmings and homemade Christmas pudding. Christmas crackers and hats still made an appearance to add to the festive atmosphere. A raffle and a separate Pusser's raffle raised funds towards the event, as did the auction of a large framed picture of HMS Plymouth. Photographs supplied by S/M Mark Spacagna.



# "Once Navy, Always Navy"

## Chief Petty Officer Maurice Cole Officer Steward 1951 - 1974



*With Best Regards From RNA  
South Bristol Branch Shipmates*

*Anch A Norman Low  
The Old School for Walter  
Big Torley Rosemary Kim  
Daniel Thompson Ann Nixon  
Alison Lucas Andrew Nixon  
D. S. Sumner  
A. S. S. S. S.  
R. G. S. S. S.  
R. G. S. S. S.*

**HMS Ceres**  
**HMS Drake (Barracks)**  
**HMS Cambridge**

**HMS Sea Eagle (Londonderry)**  
**HMS Heron (Yeovilton)**

**HMS Triumph**  
**HMS Ark Royal**  
**HMS Puncher**

**HMS Kent**  
**HMS Glamorgan**  
**HMS Barbastel**

### SOUTH BRISTOL Branch

South Bristol Branch recently paid tribute to S/M Maurice Cole with a framed picture commemorating his distinguished Royal Navy career. Maurice's service spanned more than two decades, from 1951 to 1974, beginning as a young Officer's Steward and culminating in his retirement in the rank of Chief Petty Officer. His journey reflects the dedication, discipline, and camaraderie that define Naval life. The presentation was made during a visit to Maurice at his care home, where S/M Jon Winter represented the

branch. Maurice and his wife Rosemary were deeply moved by the gesture, describing the framed tribute (pictured above) as a thoughtful reminder of his years of service. Rosemary was proud to share the display with carers, echoing the enduring motto: "Once Navy, Always Navy." Beyond his Naval career, Maurice continued his commitment to service by joining the RNA, strengthening the bonds of fellowship that remain central to the association. The pride and joy expressed by

Maurice and Rosemary highlight the importance of honouring legacy and ensuring that the contributions of shipmates are remembered. This presentation not only celebrates Maurice's personal achievements but also reinforces the values of loyalty and remembrance that the RNA upholds. It is a reminder that Naval service is more than a career – it is a lifelong identity, cherished by families and communities alike.

**A VOLUNTEER** with South Bristol Branch and the Royal British Legion has received a personal letter of thanks for his service from Defence Secretary John Healey, according to a report by the Downend Voice (<https://downendvoice.co.uk>). 90-year-old S/M Norman Low continues to play a role at community events, including honouring those who died in the service of the nation by laying crosses on Commonwealth war graves at Christ Church Downend ahead of Remembrance Day. The letter was arranged by Filton and Bradley Stoke Labour MP Claire Hazelgrove, who said: "It was an honour to request this recognition for Norman Low. His service to our country and his ongoing commitment to the Royal British Legion and Royal Naval Association truly deserve to be acknowledged."





**WALLASEY Branch**

We have had a round-up of activity from Wallasey Branch, covering a fair bit of time as shipmates on Merseyside have been very busy.

The Branch has taken on a ladies dart team which is reported to be going very well.

They have also had a meeting to discuss what more members could do for the community – Chairman

S/M Kevin Cosgrove, Vice Chairman  
 S/M John Williams, Branch Secretary  
 S/M Barry Davies and bar manager Vicky decided to hold an afternoon bingo session from 1300 to 1700 once a month which has really taken off – so much so that there are plans to increase the frequency to two a month, though nothing concrete has been decided yet.

In addition, two Branch members

undertook a sponsored walk, raising over £300 for the club.

A Christmas party for local children proved very popular.

Also the Branch has a buffet team – Karen Price the lead, Ena Antrobus, Brian Antrobus and John Williams, with help from others.

So in good Naval tradition as Shipmates the Branch never stops helping others.

# OBITUARIES

## S/M STEVE CHAMPION

*S/M Ron Dorey of Maidstone Branch writes:*

Shipmate Steve Champion, a Falklands Conflict veteran who served with distinction, was very much front and centre of Maidstone Branch.

He brought to the Branch the disciplines acquired whilst serving with the Royal Navy and the Metropolitan Police. Whatever we did as a branch, Steve was at the forefront with his resolve and diligence.

Best known as the National, Area 2 and Branch Standard Bearer, he was determined to parade the Standard, despite his ill health, at the Channel Dash memorial parade in Dover, just a matter of a few days before his passing.

He lived his life to the full, and listed motorcycling, gardening, rugby and a decent run ashore amongst his pursuits.

To say Maidstone Branch will miss him is an understatement. May Steve rest in peace.

I could write forever on what he has done for not just our Branch but for the Area and nationally as well.

At branch level he would put together our annual area and Maidstone Sea Services, inviting various dignitaries, arranging a venue with catering, summoning up as many standards as possible, liaising with Kent Sea Cadets to arrange a band and setting up a mast for a drumhead parade.

With his standard he would attend as many funerals as possible so that he could pay his respects to those that had served.

He belonged to Kent Standard Bearers, and he would train anyone who needed training up to his standard. Steve would arrange visits to other branches for their functions and parades, and remembrance parades at our local cenotaph and Maidstone Football Club and other civic parades and functions.

Steve lived a private life in some respects – we know he was involved with Special Forces whilst in the Falklands, but he never revealed exactly what he was involved with, such is his loyalty to our monarchy.

Steve would help anyone with any kind of problem, regardless of what he was doing.

His strength and determination always came to the fore – sometimes to the point of obstinacy – and at many times he would not be shifted in what he was trying to achieve. Julia, his lovely wife, stood by him in whatever he was doing, and she remained a rock behind him.

As a mate, he was incredibly kind and generous, and we have experienced many memorable runs ashore wherever we went. At times it could be said that Steve never left the Navy, such was the pride in which he felt in himself.

I'm sure that many people have their own stories, especially during his Service life, but I'm sure they would come up with the same memories and thoughts that I have of Steve. I think of the Seven Cs which we all aspire to, and Steve is the ideal role model to follow.

What a man, what a mate!

Our Branch is now less functional without him, and we have to follow his lead.



**RNA National President S/M Duncan Potts presents Steve with his Coronation Medal for standard bearing at the Coronation of King Charles III**

## S/M DONALD OULD

Shipmates have bid farewell to Cromer Branch member Donald Ould, who crossed the bar on 29 January, just two days after his 100th birthday.

Donald joined the Royal Navy in 1943 and completed his basic training at HMS Ganges before joining HMS King Alfred, which was a training establishment for RNVR Officers. He was commissioned as a Sub Lieutenant RNVR in 1944 and went on to serve in the destroyer HMS Middleton as part of the Eastern Patrol.

He travelled as far as Cape Town where, in his own words, he became "fully acquainted with white wine..."

Following Japan's surrender he joined a minesweeper, then went to Australia in the aircraft carrier HMS Victorious, which was tasked with returning almost 700 War Brides to the UK.

He was discharged from the Royal Navy on 1 January 1947.

Back in Cambridge, without formal certificates but already with considerable life experience, he won a place at Selwyn College to study Geography.

He rowed five times a week – which suggests



either great dedication or a strong desire to avoid lectures. Or possibly both! Then in 1949, another destination appeared on the horizon.

He joined the Bangweulu Swamp Expedition in Northern Rhodesia with his university colleagues – months spent surveying in remote landscapes, notebooks filled in neat handwriting that still survive.

He returned the following year.

He joined the Colonial Service and in 1951 headed to Northern Rhodesia as a District Officer.

■ S/M Donald kept a personal diary for part of the war, and his family has kindly allowed us to reproduce some of it in this Circular.

It is a refreshingly candid glimpse of the war at grass-roots level, whether it be waiting (with increasing impatience) for his ship to turn up for his first draft or a chance to let his hair down in wartime Grimsby.

You can find Donald's diary on [page 40](#)



## S/M WAYNE PEAKE

S/M Wayne Stuart Peake, known as 'Brum', passed away at Queen Alexandra Hospital, Portsmouth, on Sunday 1 February at the age of 59.

Wayne's funeral service took place at The Oaks, Havant Crematorium on Tuesday 3 March. After the service mourners join the family at Arty's Gosport, to raise a glass in his honour and to remember him with love and affection. Donations in Lieu of flowers were made to Combat Stress, a charity close to Wayne and his family.

## S/M STAN FORD

South Bristol Branch report with sadness that S/M Stan Ford, a Normandy veteran, crossed the bar at the age of 100.

Stan's funeral is planned to take place at 11am on Tuesday 10 March at The Church of St John the Evangelist, South Parade, Bath BA2 4AF.

The Branch will provide their Standard Bearer and coffin drape, and members of the Branch will also be in attendance.

Stan leaves behind two daughters, Lorraine and Julie, their families, and many friends.

S/M Stan was Bristol-born and served in the Royal Navy during World War 2 as a gunnery rating in Barrage Balloon Vessel-turned accommodation ship HMS Fratton, suffering life-changing injuries when the ship was torpedoed in Seine Bay off the coast of France on 18 August 1944.

Stan joined RNA Weston-super-Mare Branch in 1992 and transferred to HQ Roll (since renamed Lanyard Branch) when that Branch decommissioned and laid up their Standard in 2010.

He was also a guest of South Bristol Branch at their May 2024 Branch Meeting, where Stan was presented with his RNA Life Membership Certificate (together with a complimentary bottle of Pusser's Rum provided by RNA Central Office) by Lt Col Mick Stafford RM, at that time Head of Establishment, HMS Flying Fox).

RNA Deputy President Cdre Mark Slawson was also in attendance at this event. S/M Stan lived in Bath and had celebrated his 100th birthday (including a card from Buckingham Palace) in May of last year.

He was also an ambassador for the Normandy Veterans Association, later to be renamed the Spirit of Normandy Trust, and was a champion of veterans rights and Remembrance, and as such would often cross paths with the then Prince of Wales and later King Charles III during Acts of Remembrance.



## S/M VINCE MATCHETT

On 15 December 2025 members of Newark Branch should have been marking S/M Vince Matchett's 100th birthday.

Celebrations were planned, RNA Central Office had supplied a bottle of rum and the local press were attending.

Sadly, Vince didn't quite make it, crossing the bar just 14 days before he reached the century landmark.

Instead, shipmates' thoughts turned to how they could best honour their last surviving World War 2 veteran – Vince had quite a story for them to honour. He joined the Royal Navy in 1944 aged 17 years old.

He did his training at HMS Royal Arthur in Skegness and then trained as a Stoker before joining his first and only ship, the Fleet minesweeper HMS Vestal.

The ship was attacked by Japanese kamikaze aircraft and sunk on 26 July 1945 off the coast of Thailand – the only Royal Navy ship to be sunk by kamikaze aircraft, and the last RN ship to be lost in the war.

Vince was invalided out of the Royal Navy due to the injuries he sustained. He had been a member of both the Burma Star Association and the RNA for many years.

In 2017 he was reunited with HMS Vestal's ship's bell, which had illegally been recovered from the wreck before being recovered and donated to the National Museum of the Royal Navy (NMRN), where Vince was able to see it, along with his son Glenn and grandson Rob.

Rob asked the NMRN if it might be possible for the bell to be present for his grandfather's funeral.

A loan to an individual or family from

the NMRN is not usually possible, however as Newark Branch Secretary S/M Snowy Winter had volunteered at the NMRN in his final two years in the RN, and had been a curator at the National Civil War Centre – Newark Museum, the museum was able to arrange an inter-museum loan so that the bell was present for Vince's funeral. Both the family and Snowy are extremely grateful to the NMRN for finding a way to let this loan happen. So, on Friday 16 January, Vince's final voyage took place at St Mary Magdalen Church in the centre of Newark.

S/M Snowy carried the Newark Branch standard, which was paraded alongside standards from Mansfield and Grantham Branches, with the Newark RBL and Balderton RAFA standards also in attendance. Branch members formed a guard of honour as his coffin entered the church, where the bell from HMS Vestal lay waiting for him on the altar.

After a Royal Navy-centred funeral service, the standards were dipped and Branch members saluted as Vince made the last part of his journey to Newark Cemetery.

The Last Post and Reveille were played as he was laid to rest before the family joined other attendees at Newark Services Club. RNA Central Office allowed us to use the bottle of rum to raise a toast to Vince, for which we are very grateful. Vince has finally been reunited with the shipmates who lost their lives on that July day 80 years ago, as we lose another link with that remarkable wartime generation.

Thanks go to all those who helped give Vince a memorable send off, of which they hope he would have been proud.



# WARTIME DIARY OF A YOUNG SUB LIEUTENANT

*Written in 1944, this is an extract from the personal diary of Sub Lieutenant Donald Ould RNVR, who recently died just two days after his 100th birthday (see Obituaries).*

*It is a first-hand account of a young officer's early days in the Royal Navy in 1944, capturing the excitement, uncertainty and dangers of life at sea with an immediacy that only a personal record can provide.*

*The author captures the frustrations of waiting, the thrill of battle, encounters with the enemy and cherished moments of shore leave – all from a youthful perspective.*

## Call to service and goodbye to home

### Thursday August 3rd 1944

Today I received my appointment from King Alfred Naval Training Establishment. I have to report to Captain (D) Portsmouth on Monday 7th. I have been told to buy white suits so I am wondering whether I will pay a visit to our "friends" on the other side of the world.

I loathe this business of bidding farewell to all the friends of the family whom we have met. Anyway, I've enjoyed my fortnight's leave - although it could have been longer.

### Saturday August 5th

A further letter arrived today, giving all the dope about the appointment. I am joining HMS Middleton on Monday.

### Sunday 6th to Friday 11th (New Pen)

On Sunday, I set off from Cambridge with many farewells, mostly fond ones, thinking that in 24 hours I may be heading for the back of beyond or some such distant destination. I stayed the night in the wardroom RNB Portsmouth and duly reported to the office of Captain (D) the following day. To my intense satisfaction I discovered that the Middleton was not in so I was packed off home again and told to report back on Wednesday. However, not to be menaced with another

fruitless journey (a snotty's pay!), I took the precaution of telephoning said office and asking whether it was worth returning that day. As Clay Keys (or however you spell it) would say: "The happy answer was" she's not in yet, come back on Friday! I obeyed and having reported to Captain (D) again, I was told to go out to the Empress of Russia in the Solent and await the return of my little destroyer. Well, as Mumma bunny said to Papa bunny "Here I am, I have a beautiful cabin and a bunk with more springs in the mattress than that. Everything is just Hunky Dory and I'm feeling on top of the world. I wonder what tomorrow will bring?"

## New beginnings

### Sunday 13th for Saturday

Yesterday was much the same as any other day of late. I did all the normal things which one can do when one is waiting – I read, smoked, watched passing ships and generally laid around. In the afternoon I went ashore to fetch my gear from RNS and returned feeling very hot, on the 1630 fast motor boat. Then I read and smoked again and turned in very early. I omitted to say before that whilst in Portsmouth on Friday, I joined the Junior Officers Club. I expect to leave the Empress this afternoon to join Middleton which should be coming in at about 1900.

The afternoon has now arrived and I am disgusted and annoyed to hear that the Middleton won't be coming in until Tuesday at least. I am going to see the Navigating Officer when he wakes up, to see exactly what the position is. If I can go ashore until Tuesday, I think I'll go up to London and sleep aboard the Discovery.

### Sunday 13th continued

I have seen the Navigating Officer and he has confirmed that the ETA of the Middleton is expected to be sometime during Tuesday evening. When I heard this, I went to see the First

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**Hunt-class destroyer HMS Middleton pictured in 1943. Image from the Imperial War Museum collection: © IWM (A 19648)**



Lieutenant and he said that I could go ashore and come back on Tuesday. Hearing this, I rushed around and prepared a case to take ashore. The OOD gave us a fast motor boat to Lee-on-Solent and from there I taxied to Gosport. Luckily, I shared the taxi with five other people (because it is some journey). I crossed to Portsmouth on the ferry and caught a fast and comparatively empty train to London. In the dead of night, I went aboard the Discovery and Arthur and the Cox'n found me a cabin.

### **Monday 14th**

In the morning, I paid a visit to the scout shop and purchased another Deep-Sea Scout wristlet badge, and a book or so. In the afternoon I went out to Woodford Green and visited one whom I have not spoken of before – Wren JP Smith. We had a very pleasant evening and I now know what a grand young woman she has grown up to be. We had said goodbye to each other, some four months ago but somehow, we have drifted together again. I think I'm the cause of ill [sic] I returned to Portsmouth and the Empress of Russia on Tuesday, to find that my ship the Middleton was in the Eastern Assault Area on the Coast of France. I was sent to the Ulysses which was to have taken me across to France, but there was a mistake, and I am now on the Polish Destroyer Krakowiak which is at present half way across the English Channel (Wednesday 1100).

The Polish officers are very nice chaps and in spite of the language difficulties, they are quite well to get on with. They gave me a great welcome and were very apologetic when they could only offer me a camp bed in the wardroom. In the wardroom here they have a pretty set of Polish National pictures and one or two Polish dolls in their native costume. (We have just finished exercising Action Stations.)

### **Eastern patrols and vigilance**

#### **Wednesday 16th - Friday 25th August**

Shortage of time has prevented me from making any entries since Monday 14th. After a speedy trip across the Channel, I joined Middleton in the Eastern Assault Area. It was a bit strange at sea in a ship again, but by now I have settled down and I now know my way around the ship and some of the ship's company. The rest of the Officers are nearly all decent chaps and we all go along quite well together. We did nightly patrols off Le Havre and further west along the coast until Friday and then returned to Portsmouth. Nothing much happened on these occasions although we had one or two contacts which had to be investigated, but nothing developed. One observation however, brought the reality of the war home. That was the way in which the light coastal forces go "through the mill." From about six miles off we watched them in action with E-boats and saw more tracer and HE shells than could have been comfortable for them. I certainly take my cap off to those coastal forces lads.

In the daytime we anchored off Courseulles, just west of Le Havre, where the biggest job was watching for human torpedoes. Several ships had been sunk in the area, so we took the precaution of sending out the motor boat to be off on the quarter which was to have machine gunned any human torpedoes which appeared. Fortunately, none did.

I wasn't able to get ashore in France owing to the fact that I was still finding my way around the ship and felt it advisable to stay aboard. I am looking forward to visiting France if and when we return to the Eastern Assault Area. There is some doubt as to whether we will return or not, at present. It is not certain that the night patrols will still be required.

We returned on Friday or Saturday (I can't remember which now) to Portsmouth, and besides getting one or two runs ashore I was able to get my head down for some considerable

time and so make up for the lack of sleep. The system on which we worked, as regards watchkeeping, is very tiring. We do one watch and one off, unlike many other ships which do one in two or three. This, combined with Action stations makes for practically no sleep at all during the night. The deficit has to be made up at odd times during the night, and mostly odd times during the day. On no occasion can we get more than four hours sleep in a stretch.

Whilst back in Portsmouth I went to the pictures twice and went to a dance. For the first time since I left Greenwich, I met some of the chaps who were at Greenwich and KA just following our division. The Junior Officers Club saw us nearly every time that I went ashore – nearly always ended up the evening there with a meal and a drink. We were at a greater notice for steam on Monday, so all night leave was given. On that occasion I stayed at the Keppel's Head Hotel just near the Southern Railway Pier.

### **Confrontation off the coast**

#### **Wednesday afternoon (following a short leave in Portsmouth).**

We received urgent orders to put to sea and patrol off Le Havre. The army had crossed the Seine and it was expected that there would be a large German evacuation from the port. Nothing happened during Wednesday night except the fact that all the sleep I had was from 03.30 to 03.45 – the period between the end of Action Stations and the beginning of the morning watch.

#### **Thursday (Daytime)**

During the day we did an anti-sub patrol farther up the Channel. We had numerous contacts and dropped 15 depth charges in three attacks. We were unsuccessful, but one thing I gained, and that was some knowledge of the Asdic set used in attacking submarines. The lack of success was in some measure due to the number of wrecks in the Channel, which were easily mistakable for submarines.

#### **Thursday Night**

Thursday night was the most interesting of all. As was expected the German evacuation from Le Havre started soon after dark. From the Dover Area in which we had been carrying out the anti-submarine patrol we raced to Le Havre at very short notice, in company with a frigate and about 9 MTBs and SGBs at 25 knots. On arrival we went to Action Stations and very soon the action started. It was our job to create a diversion, give support to the light craft, and engage the enemy.

The E-boats and merchant ships leaving Le Havre [sic], whilst we patrolled up and down about two miles distant. At about 2300 the coastal batteries fired star shells over us, and having lighted us up like a whitewashed wall proceeded to hurl HE "bricks" at us. Luckily no direct hits were scored, but there were several close ones. From the pom-pom platform (I am Officer of the Quarters on these guns) I saw a 6lb tracer shell beetling over our stem. It was certainly too close to be comfortable. We fired several 4in star shells for the light craft and some 2in illumination rockets. We couldn't use anything deadly against the enemy because we saw him for very short moments and it was impossible to get a range. We secured at 0350 and for the first time since we left Portsmouth, I had 3½ hours sleep.

#### **Friday**

We returned to Pompey this morning taking rather a long time because we were carrying out an anti-gnat zig-zag (this gnat is a type of torpedo which is attracted by the ship's screws). This afternoon I have had a very good sleep and a bath and I

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feel fairly fit once more – although still a bit tired. I am planning on getting my head down quite early tonight.

## First action

**Saturday 26th -Thursday 1st September- Sunday 10th Sept**  
Portsmouth didn't see us for long this time. We had very little time, but paid visits to Pytchely and Eglinton whilst in the harbour. I went with the NS Party to an Asdic instructional bus at Lee-on-Solent on Saturday afternoon. On return to the ship, we found that a signal had arrived telling us to return to the British Assault Area. Having done so we carried out a patrol off Le Havre. Naval Intelligence had informed us that there was a likelihood of a large-scale evacuation of German shipping from Le Havre and to prevent this we were to engage any enemy vessels on leaving.

We went into Action at about 0230 on Sunday morning accompanied by British and American light coastal craft. The target was a convoy of eight Landing Craft making their way out of Le Havre and up the coast. On receiving reports from Radar as to the bearing and distance of the enemy, we started the engagement by illuminating with star shell from our 4in guns. In the light of the bursting shells, the MTBs went in and delivered the first attack. They did a considerable amount of damage and unfortunately sustained hits. However, none of them were sunk and they disengaged after about ten minutes. Now came our turn! We closed the range, having been previously at some distance and fired some more star shell. In the light of this, our six 4in guns, one Oerlikon, (the one on the starboard side) and my Pom-Pom, all opened fire. This would have been all right, but the enemy took it into his head to reply to our salvos. It is not very easy to imagine what 40 88mm cannons are like when firing at you. Not content with this, Jerry opened up on us with great ferocity and not quite accurate shooting with his bunch [sic] shore batteries. By this time the MTBs were well away from us and we were consequently left by ourselves. Being the first action I had been in, I didn't realise how deadly all that gunfire could be and I can proudly say that I was as cool as the proverbial cucumber.

One thing I was worrying about and that was what would happen if something hit the hundreds of shells in the pom-pom trays, just 18 inches away from me. I didn't get time to worry much, however, because when I wasn't standing up behind the Pom-Pom giving spotting orders, I was ducking low behind it and avoiding the flying shrapnel. After ten minutes of hell on the fo'c'sle a fire broke out on a gun and a rocket was thrown over the side behind by the PO at the gun. It was indeed a

brave action on his part.

I am sorry to say that just before the fire broke out, a piece of shrapnel ricocheted from the Radar office and went flying to the starboard pom-pom where CD Rushbrooke was busily changing his magazine. He had just emptied one magazine of 62 rounds into a landing craft when the piece of shrapnel entered his head behind the ear and he was killed instantly. From all accounts of him, he was a very nice fellow.

Seeing the fire on the fo'c'sle the captain thought it best to disengage, so we retired behind a smoke screen. When the fire was under way, and the smoke was beginning to come from the funnel, the Captain turned sharply to port and then resumed his previous course. With a turn like this at 25 knots, the ship heels over quite considerably, and not realizing this, I thought for a moment that we had bought it. We returned to the quid of the night [sic] however and in the morning inspected our wounds. We were surprised to find them exceedingly few. The "chance-in-a-million" shot was a piece of splinter going through the halyard of the answering pendant and cleanly severing it!

We cleaned ourselves up in the morning, and at 1115 when the sun was shining brightly and the coast of France was looking particularly beautiful, we buried our dead one. I had not seen a burial at sea before and it seemed very sad. We continued our nightly patrols for a few more nights and whilst over there, I paid my first visit to France.

It was a great moment for me when I stepped on foreign soil for the first time in my life. It was the village-town of Courseulles that I visited, a pretty enough place in peacetime, but greatly overcrowded by our own troops now. Many of the small shops were open, selling the goods which they had probably been storing up ever since the Hun had come. I bought a length of lace for Irene's birthday and a Camembert cheese for Mother. It was quite strange, haggling in French about the price of goods. Later in the afternoon I walked further afield in the little town and came to the cemetery. Here I found a lad of about 16 years of age, working among the graves, and looking after the flowers. I talked in French with him for half-an-hour, mainly about his past life and mine. Later on, I returned to the jetty, across the town, amid all the swirl of dust caused by our vehicles of supplies moving up to the front. A landing craft took me back to the ship. More patrols, and another short stay in Portsmouth Harbour, and then an Anti-Submarine Patrol off Calais and Boulogne.

We set off on Tuesday evening for the Straits of Dover and

**HMS Middleton off Iceland in 1942. Image from the Imperial War Museum collection: © IWM (A 8923)**

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went straight to our patrol line on arrival. It was uneventful until 0730 in the morning of Wednesday 6th September. I had the Middle watch and so naturally I was just turning out at 0730 when we heard a rattling noise on the upper deck.

The RAF officer who had come with us for "sea experience," asked what it was. and I calmly told him that the Oerlikon gun was being tested. I was very much surprised when the Steward, Wheeler, came down and told us that we were being shelled from the French Coast. There was nothing much that could be done, so we continued with our breakfast. After a short lull in the firing, I made my way on to the upper deck through the usual cloud of smoke which spreads through the ship on these occasions – when going to Full Ahead from Half Ahead. I was greeted with another shell burst over the ship, so I hurriedly retired from my exposed position.

We reported the incident to C-in-C Portsmouth and were instructed to return at once. On surveying our damage and casualties we found that all the Radar equipment was out of action, as well as other smaller items of damage (among them, the Engineers cabin), and that one man had been killed, three seriously wounded and four not quite so seriously wounded. The very strange thing about it is, that a splinter of about six inches diameter passed straight through the 271 huts, smashing all the gear, but leaving the operator only wounded. We came into harbour at lunch time and our dead and casualties were taken off. We stayed at the buoys until Saturday morning and then came into the dock which we are in now. I was quarterdeck officer when we came in and it was quite an experience, it being the first time that I had had the job. The reason was that a lot of the other officers had gone on leave (I am hoping to go next Thursday 14th).

## **Dance and duty**

### **Sunday Sept 10th – October 14th**

I travelled on leave in the forenoon of the Thursday, and arrived home with high hopes of about six clear days. But, of course, something had to happen, and I was promptly recalled on the Sunday night. Arriving back, I found that I had been fitted, so I had to do a two-day course on the gear, at Eastney AA School. This finished on Wednesday afternoon, so I hopped off home again until Friday night. Another couple of days swinging round the buoy followed by a practice shoot HA & LA (with Wrens on board), found us ready operationally. Then we had another few days swinging round the buoy and then we were sent to Sheerness. It looks as if we are being permanently attached to D21 now. It's rather good for me, because I can go to Gillingham and Chatham when I get ashore.

We moved to Southend this morning where we are picking up a convoy in about three-quarters of an hour's time. We are taking it down through the Straits and out off Southern Ireland. There are eight ships at present – all Liberty ships – and some more are expected to join us on the way down the Channel.

### **1735 Sunday 1st October**

We have just left Southend with the convoy and I have got the last Dog and Middle. We are going into three watches when we have passed through the Straits of Dover. I forgot to mention anything about the leave before. Well, I had a jolly good time on the three clear days leave which I did eventually get. I went to a dance at the Guildhall with Irene, who "allowed" me to have a dance with Hazel. I really enjoyed the dance, and not only because I saw Hazel I believe it's started something. I went in Boots to see Hazel twice and since I've been back, I've written to her. I might add that she's written to me. She's cute! By the way, it's all off with that other girl, Pat.

### **Sunday 1st – Friday 6th Oct**

Today is Friday and we are now on our way back to Sheerness, hoping to arrive there at about 1830. Nothing exciting has happened on the trip, except that I was horribly sick for three days and nights. We took the convoy out to 92 West (South of Ireland) and met another one coming in the opposite direction on Wednesday afternoon. It was at this time that I felt the worst. There really is no other feeling to equal that of intense sea-sickness. We have been working in three watches on this trip which has really been a Godsend. The longer periods of sleep have made life much more pleasant than it would have been if we were in two watches.

There are only three things I have done since we started this trip: hang my head in a bucket whilst keeping watches on the bridge, eat the driest of food (never contained in my system for more than 15 minutes during Tuesday and Wednesday), and sleep – ah, sleep!

I have taken the ship on several occasions during this trip and am getting quite accustomed to it now.

### **1513 Friday**

We have just passed Dover in broad daylight, a thing which hasn't been done for a very long time, in fact since Jerry started shelling our coast.

The weather is absolutely grand this afternoon and the sea now begins to look sandy again, now that we are going through the Straits. (The untidiness of the writing is wholly due to the motion of the ship at present – the sea is by no means calm). I am going to watch at 1600.

### **Friday 6th – Tuesday 17th Oct**

Since I last made an entry, we have been out on two jobs. The first was escorting a convoy up to Immingham. Nothing of any particular importance happened except that we were able to get a run ashore in Grimsby. I had a walk round the shops in the afternoon, and in the evening paid a visit to the Anglo-Polish Ballet, at the Palace Theatre, Grimsby. When waiting for the bus after the show I met No1 and the Doc. We went to have a drink before the bus came and met five or six of the lads in the Bar. We all had a good game of darts.

The next day we took a convoy back to Southend and anchored off Sheerness. During our stay here I went up to Chatham to see Pop. We both had a very nice evening. I am hoping to see Marjorie when next I go up to Chatham.

The second job was a patrol. We did a patrol off Yarmouth on the first night, anchored in Yarmouth Roads on the next day and did a patrol further North on the second night. On this occasion we were at Action Stations for the most part of the night, being outside the range of shore Radar stations. It's not much fun when all the sleep one gets is an hour before breakfast. Still, I can't gripe. I had two hours sleep on the following afternoon!

We are now an hour's journey from Sheerness, having just left on another Immingham Convoy trip. I like these things; for one thing, I'm not sick and another thing, the hours go soaring up.

### **Tuesday 17th – Wednesday 25th Oct**

The Immingham trip was much the same as the first one, except that the main attraction this time was a Charity Dance given by the Wrens instead of the Anglo-Polish Ballet. The Dance went down extremely well and I'm confident that a good time was had by all. I certainly enjoyed the evening, as did the Wren with whom I danced nearly all the evening.

In the afternoon I had been to see the Song of Bernadette at the Savoy in Grimsby. It was a most fascinating show, but one had to be in the right mood to really appreciate it. Fortunately,

I was.

A Force 9 gale had been blowing in the Humber Estuary but it subsided before we sailed for Sheerness on Thursday. There was no convoy on the return trip and we came back at an average of 22 knots. The signal telling us to return to Sheerness without a convoy caused humorous quips to develop.

The outcome was that on Friday we were to take an Atlantic Convoy to IW again. Arriving in at Sheerness in the dark is no pleasant occupation and everyone was a bit chocker knowing that the Atlantic gales would now be in full swing.

### **Wednesday 25th to November 1st**

It is now the afternoon of Wednesday 25th, and we shall be at Dover shortly, on our way home. The trip has been as pleasant as can be expected and I'm glad to record that this time I have only been sick once. Working in three watches gives more sleep, which helps in checking the *mal de mer*. There are now six ships left in the convoy (some left at Portsmouth and Cherbourg), two of which had a minor collision during the Middle. Not much damage was done and the speed of the convoy remains steady at about ten or eleven knots. I have now taken the ship for the whole four-hour watch (both during the day and the night).

There is some doubt now as to whether we shall be able to get into Sheerness before dark. If we can't we are going to anchor outside and do some fishing, either with a depth charge or fishing lines!

We did, through the efforts of the Engine Room staff, manage to reach the buoy before the boom closed. It was a hard job on the fo'c'sle, but a couple of hours in all saw us safe for the night. On Thursday afternoon I enjoyed, as did everybody else who played, a game of Rucker against the Vinny. We won of course, 6-3, but did we know all about it on Friday?! Stiff – I

hadn't been so stiff since the last cross-country race at school!

On Saturday we went out and did a patrol off Yarmouth. Before reaching the patrol line however, we had a most interesting experience. At about 1900, I was on watch at the time, we saw red Verey lights being fired, about five miles away. We called the Captain who thought that it was best to investigate. We altered course towards, taking us into a minefield incidentally, and increased speed. At about two miles distance we could recognise a dark floating object 'up moon' from where we were. At once we realised that it was a dinghy with some airmen in it. They continued to fire their Verey lights and so guided us to the position. By this time the whole of the ship's company was on the upper deck having heard the buzz. When we were very close, we lowered the motor boat and Sub Lieutenant Hamn took it away to the raft. The survivors were by this time shouting and whistling, and generally feeling pretty pleased with themselves. We also were pleased with ourselves. The fact was that we had managed to...

(And here ended my record. No1 reminded me that for security reasons it was not permitted for diaries to be kept. I had to accept his instruction – even though I understood that Midshipmen RN, perhaps in other circumstances, kept a log).

### **EPILOGUE**

*Although the diary comes to an abrupt close, its final entry is a reminder of the strictures imposed by wartime security. It leaves behind a legacy of determination, the trials of life at sea, and the personal cost of a global conflict. May this serve as a testament to the spirit of those who served and as an enduring chronicle of an era defined by both its heroism and its hardships.*

**Destroyers and corvettes anchor at Sheerness at sunset. Image from the Imperial War Museum collection: © IWM (A 7578)**



# FOLLOW THE COMPASS

Career change does not only happen at the point of leaving Service. Many veterans find their first civilian role is a stepping stone rather than a long-term destination. Others reassess direction later in life, seeking progression, purpose or better alignment with their strengths.

Veterans bring exceptional leadership, resilience, technical expertise and operational judgement to the civilian workforce. The challenge is rarely capability. It is clarity, direction and translating Service experience effectively.

That is why the White Ensign Association developed Career Compass, an intelligent digital platform designed to support Service leavers, reservists, veterans and family members as they navigate career transition and progression with confidence.

Many career changes begin with trawling job sites without a clear sense of direction.

Career Compass takes a more structured approach:

- Begin with self discovery – clarify what matters to you and identify the working environments where you will thrive.



- Share your experience – translate Service skills and achievements into a strong professional CV.
- Explore live vacancies – view opportunities aligned to your profile, skills and career goals.
- Submit tailored applications – create targeted CVs and cover letters for selected roles.
- Prepare for interview – build confidence through simulated interview preparation and feedback.

By guiding users through this personalised journey, Career Compass helps veterans move from uncertainty to informed decision-making. It supports sharper positioning, more focused applications and greater confidence in articulating value to civilian employers.

Lt Col John Middleton RM, currently using the platform during his transition, said: "I didn't realise how expansive the Career Compass was until I started exploring it."

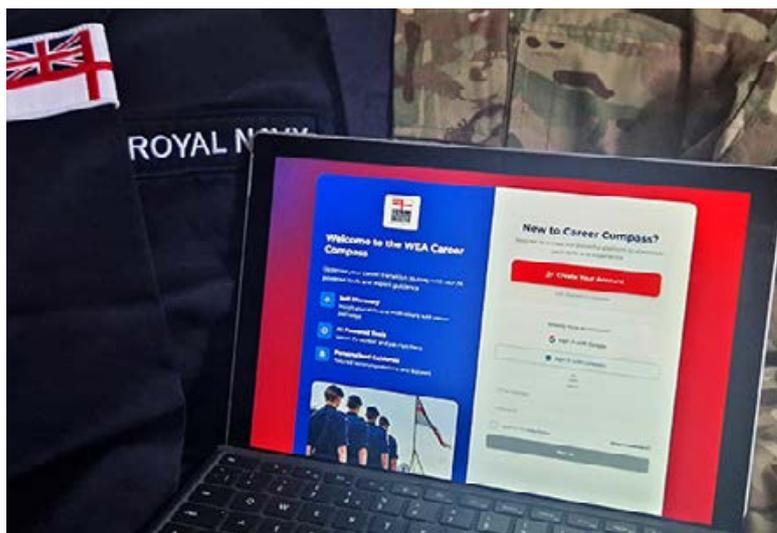
"After I built a profile and uploaded my CVs, the platform directed me towards the roles that aligned with my skills and experience saving a huge amount of searching and scrolling time."

"The AI tool proved really helpful in quickly refining my CV for particular roles, highlighting shortfalls and offering passages of text as an alternative which you can tailor to suit your own style or approach."

Career Compass was developed by veterans with first-hand experience of Service transition, ensuring it reflects the realities of Naval careers rather than generic career advice.

The White Ensign Association is trusted by Naval Command to deliver independent transition guidance and support personnel to leave well. Career Compass forms part of its wider employment support offer, which includes one-to-one consultation, mentoring and direct engagement with organisations actively recruiting from the Naval community.

For those considering their next step, whether immediately after Service or later in civilian life, Career Compass offers a structured and intelligent way to reflect, reposition and move forward with confidence. Find out more at [www.whiteensign.co.uk](http://www.whiteensign.co.uk)



## Your successful career transition starts here

The WEA Career Compass is a powerful digital platform that will support you to take your next steps into the civilian workplace with confidence.

Our expert employment team has developed this unique interface in response to 'Service leavers' challenges when approaching career transition, to support a successful journey of **discover > prepare > connect**.



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### Share Your Experience

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Find roles matched to your individual profile.

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# MARCH 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](http://www.thehistorypress.co.uk)). It is currently available online for around £65 new (search ISBN number 978-0750982665)

A remarkable act in the remarkable career of a remarkable man resulted in the saving of life from a doomed passenger steamer in the Far East on 7 March 1921. Veteran 4,000-ton ship SS Hong Moh, built in Scotland in 1881, had been plying her trade in and around Singapore and Hong Kong since 1902, and on the morning of 2 March 1921 sailed from the latter port bound for Swatow in China, reportedly with 1,135 passengers and 48 crew. Arriving in Swatow the following morning her master was informed that she would be unable to pass over the bar, so he set out for Amoy in the afternoon. At 7.20pm she ran aground on the White Rocks in rough seas and poor visibility. Heavy seas prevented the launch of lifeboats, and early the following morning she broke in two. With no electrical power, she was unable to contact passing ships, and it was not until six hours later that the merchantman SS Shansi approached, standing by until the following afternoon and picking up 45 survivors who had risked swimming across – several others died in the process. Shansi then sailed to Swatow and raised the alarm, which resulted in the British Consul alerting the Senior Naval Officer in Hong Kong (SNOHK), who in turn put out a radio appeal for help. Acacia-class sloop HMS Foxglove was first on the scene late on 5 March, but could not immediately locate the wreck in the dark. She was joined at dawn on 6 March by C-class cruiser HMS Carlisle, and the warships together rescued survivors until Foxglove had to withdraw at 5pm as she was low on fuel, taking 48 survivors with her. Carlisle continued to work through the night using her powerful searchlights, and into the following day. At around 8pm a British sailor went into the sea twice with a safety line, swimming over to the wrecked steamer to help the last survivors into boats; the rescue operation was suspended at 11pm and a sweep of the site on the morning of 8 March revealed no signs of life – it is estimated that between 900 and 1,000 people died in the tragedy. Carlisle returned to Hong Kong with 220 survivors on board. When Carlisle's Commanding Officer, Capt Edward Ratcliffe Garth Russell Evans, provided his report, the SNOHK noticed that the sailor who had swum across to the wreck was not named by Evans, and demanded that the man should be identified. It turned out that the hero was Evans himself, and his efforts earned him a rare Lloyds Gold Medal for Saving Life at Sea.; two of his ship's company were awarded Silver Medals, and two more Bronze. Evans was one of those Naval officers who appeared to rise effortlessly to the top in whatever task he turned his hand to. Born to a middle-class family, young Edward's spirit of adventure manifested itself early on – he and his two brothers regularly ventured into the East End of London, on one occasion being detained by police after a theft, and he and his older brother were expelled from



**Cdr Edward Evans, pictured when Commanding Officer of the British Flotilla Leader HMS Broke in 1917. Image from the IWM collection: © IWM (Q 19611)**

Merchant Taylors' School when he was ten for persistent truancy and fighting. A special school for 'troublesome' boys put him on the straight and narrow, and he left at 14 as a model pupil. He trained at the private HMS Worcester, displaying both diligence and that troublesome nature, but won a cadetship with the Royal Navy, joining HMS Hawke in the Mediterranean in 1897 as a midshipman. He won promotions and served in several ships before being seconded, at his own request, onto the ex-whaler SY Morning, the relief ship for Capt Scott's Discovery expedition of 1902-4. His support was invaluable, and his reward was the naming of Mount Evans by Scott, as well as a Bronze Polar Medal. Evans was planning his own expedition in 1909 when he was made aware of Scott's intention to return to the Antarctic, so threw his support behind

Scott, becoming second-in-command of the so-called Terra Nova expedition of 1910-13. In a remarkable feat of strength and endurance, Evans and Chief Stoker Lashly were obliged to pull fully loaded sledges some 600 miles, but as the Last Supporting Party were ordered back by Scott when only 160 miles from the South Pole. In increasingly poor weather and at the limit of his endurance, Evans was suffering snow blindness and scurvy and at one point ordered his two Naval colleagues to abandon him, but they ignored him and he was finally rescued and recovered, returning to the frozen continent the following year to find that the Polar party had died in its effort to return from the South Pole. Evans assumed responsibility for the expedition, bringing the remaining elements home though he lost his wife to peritonitis while en route to England through the Mediterranean in April 1913. In the 1948 film of the expedition, *Scott of the Antarctic*, the role of Evans was played by Kenneth More. He became a household name during World War 1 while in command of destroyer HMS Broke in April 1917 when two German destroyers were sunk at the Battle of Dover Strait. Broke rammed G42 and her sailors fought Germans in hand-to-hand combat as the two warships remained locked until Broke pulled away, leaving G42 to sink. Early in 1928 Evans was promoted Rear Admiral and took command of the Royal Australian Navy fleet, moving up to Vice Admiral in 1932 and assuming command of the Africa Station. In 1936 he was made full Admiral, by which time he was Commander-in-Chief The Nore. After participating in the Norwegian Campaign at the start of World War 2, Evans retired in early 1941 at the age of 60, though he immediately took on the job of London Regional Commissioner for Civil Defence. In November 1945 he became Baron Mountevans of Chelsea, but that was not the end of his maritime adventures – in March 1947 he was a passenger on the Norwegian vessel MV Bolivar when it ran aground and broke in two off Dublin. Evans and 43 others were rescued by Irish lifeboats. His last mark on public affairs was perhaps typically eccentric – in 1947 he was chairman of a committee which formalised the rules of professional wrestling in the UK which became the Admiral-Lord Mountevans Rules. The peer died in Norway on 20 August 1957 aged 76 and was buried in a family plot in Oslo.

**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

2026

<b>13-16 March</b>	RNA Motorhome, Caravan and Camping SCG Meet, Lincolnshire
<b>23 April</b>	Men's T20 Inter Services Cricket Final, Lords Cricket Ground
<b>2 May</b>	Army v Navy rugby match, Twickenham
<b>8-9 May</b>	National Standard Bearers training and competition, HMS Collingwood, Fareham
<b>9 May</b>	Area 5 Quarterly Meeting (Stowmarket Branch)
<b>16 May</b>	Area 4 Meeting (St Austell Branch)
<b>16 May</b>	Scottish Area Uckers Competition, RBLs Club, Bathgate, West Lothian
<b>6 June</b>	Welsh Open Uckers Tournament, Builth Wells Rugby Club
<b>8 August</b>	Area 5 Quarterly Meeting (online)
<b>12-14 June</b>	National Conference and AGM, Salford Quays
<b>11 Sept</b>	CONA Conference, Portsmouth
<b>12 Sept</b>	Scottish Area Quarterly Meeting (City of Edinburgh Branch)
<b>19 Sept</b>	Area 4 Meeting (Weymouth Branch)
<b>3 Oct</b>	RNA Uckers World Championships, Royal Maritime Hotel, Portsmouth
<b>8 Nov</b>	Remembrance Sunday
<b>14 Nov</b>	Area 5 Quarterly Meeting
<b>13 Feb 2027</b>	Area 5 Quarterly Meeting

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

[www.royal-naval-association.co.uk](http://www.royal-naval-association.co.uk)



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Visit [royalmaritimehotel.co.uk](http://royalmaritimehotel.co.uk) for more information and to book

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### MORE OFFERS

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



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## 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.*

*Full Members and Life Members are eligible to act as their Branch Delegate. Associate Members are eligible to be elected to act as their Branch Delegate provided that they have completed three years continuous membership of the Association immediately prior to election.*

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.

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

**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@massoc.org](mailto:ams@massoc.org)

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

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

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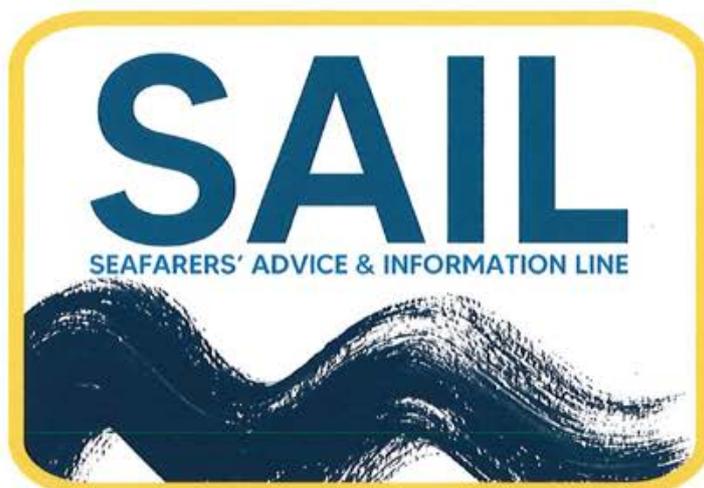


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