

SEMAPHORE SHORT

GREETINGS SHIPMATES Welcome to the first Semaphore Short of what promises to be another busy year for the RNA. One of the highlights of 2024 will be the National Conference, which this year will be held in the city of Cardiff – a popular tourist and city break destination. Please do your best to make sure your branch is represented at the Conference so that all views are made known. Details of how to register as a delegate or observer, and information on the programme and accommodation, are in the January Semaphore Circular - go to <https://royal-naval-association.co.uk/members/downloads/january-2024:1/> Also see below for update on the Conference venue.

PLAY THE ROYAL NAVAL ASSOCIATION WEEKLY LOTTERY AND WIN UP TO £25,000

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OARSOME EFFORT A team of Royal Navy submariners have won the toughest rowing race in the world.

HMS Oardacious covered the 3,000 or so miles in 35 days, four hours and 30 minutes, finishing ahead of the other 36 starters in the World's Toughest Row, previously known as the Atlantic Challenge.

The team of five set out from the Canary Islands in mid-December in their tiny boat Captain Jim and crossed the finishing line in Antigua on Wednesday morning local time, where they were greeted by their families and friends as well as many well-wishers and onlookers.

The voyage has become an annual event for the submarine community, and is a significant fundraiser - the latest iteration of HMS Oardacious is raising funds for the RNRMC and The Submarine Family.

There will be another HMS Oardacious team in the 2024 race, making it the fourth year running that a team from the Silent Service has tackled the notoriously difficult ocean crossing.

And while the submariners did not beat the world record, they achieved the fastest time by any military crew, and are the first quintet to take the trophy - the race is usually won by teams of four because of the weight advantage,

See February's Semaphore Circular for more details of the team's epic journey.



CONFERENCE Many of you know already that very sadly the planned venue for the 2024 RNA AGM/Annual Conference, the Coal Exchange Hotel in Cardiff, has ceased trading. An alternative venue in Cardiff Bay has been identified and details will be promulgated as soon as possible.

Any shipmates who have privately booked themselves in to the Coal Exchange Hotel for Conference should seek a refund through the hotel, their credit card provider or their bank.

It is recommended that all bookings for Conference are made through the UK Holiday Group who have negotiated a special deal for the RNA.

MEMBERSHIP DETAILS If you know of someone who is not receiving the weekly Short or the link to the Circular when it comes out please make sure they let us know their contact details. The same goes for branch Branch Chairs, Vice Chairs, Treasurers and Secretaries across the RNA, who should receive a newsletter once a month from Central Office. Please send your contact details to Sara Field on ams@rnassoc.org

FIRESIDE CHATS The next Fireside Chat (Monday 22 Jan) will be on the subject of 'Lost at Sea in Mysterious Circumstances' by Richard Jones. Fireside Chats take place every Monday at 18:30 and to access the chats, log into Zoom here. The meeting ID is 288 830 5105 and the access password is Shipmate.

Thriving Together The RNA Sports & Comradeship Coordinator, 'Scouse' Reeves, is creating a programme of events for 2024 designed to foster and develop the comradeship and sense of community in the RNA by bringing together shipmates with similar interests or who would like to try something new.

The Thriving Together programme, which will be expanded as we go through the year, already demonstrates a broad appeal, capturing the camaraderie of Service days and perhaps tempting you to step outside your own comfort zone. The schedule so far includes:

- a **Chainsaw Experience** (16 March);

- **Walking and waterfall** Weekend (12-14 Apr);
 - an **outdoors weekend** including bushcraft, axe throwing and coasteering (27-28 Apr);
 - a **Snowdon walk** (18 May);
 - a **Normandy cycle event** (3-6 Jun);
 - **Introduction to surfing** (15-16 Jun);
 - **Women-only walking and waterfall** weekend (28-30 Jun);
 - **Introduction to dry stone walling** (13 Jul);
 - a **Surfing weekend** (20-21 July)
- Contact Scouse on scc@rnassoc.org for further details, or if you have an idea for an activity for the programme.



PROTECTING SEABORNE TRADE This is the view from the bridge of destroyer HMS Diamond as it launches a Sea Viper missile in response to an attack on shipping in the Red Sea by Houthi forces in Yemen. At 2115 local time Houthis launched a wave of attack drones, anti-ship cruise missiles and anti-ship ballistic missiles towards international shipping lanes in the southern Red Sea. The Royal Navy warship shot down seven drones using missiles and guns.



JOB SUPPORT The Forces Employment Charity continues to support women from the entire Armed Forces community, welcoming those preparing to leave the Armed Forces, reservists, veterans of all ranks, military partners and spouses (including bereaved family members).

The charity is organising a day, 26 March, which will focus channelling your superpower, knowing your worth and overcoming imposter syndrome. For more details see the 'Events' tab at <https://www.forcesemployment.org.uk/>

IT'S ALL KICKING OFF Supporters are invited to attend the first ever football fixture for the Royal Naval Association Football Club, which will be staged at HMS Temeraire in Portsmouth on Tuesday 20 February, kick off at 1900. The match, against the RN Eastern Region Veterans, will be played on Temeraire's 3G pitch.

The bar will be open for supports and players, and all support is welcome. The evening will also include a presentation, and RNA Chief Executive Officer Capt Bill Oliphant plans to address all players, staff and supporters. And if (like Bill) you might be keen for a spell on the pitch, please don't hesitate to let the RNA's Sports & Comradeship Coordinator, 'Scouse' Reeves, know on scc@rnassoc.org and you may get your moment to shine under the floodlights!

RNAMCC The Royal Naval Association's Motorhome, Caravan and Camping (MCC) Special Interest Group have had their booking confirmed at St Neots Campsite on 20-25 June, which will coincide with the Armed Forces Day in the town.

The Meet is somewhat bigger than last time as they have 45 pitches, of which 27 have already been booked. Organisers are pleased to see the WRNS getting involved as well, and will also be liaising with St Neots RNA branch regards possible social events.

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