

SEMAPHORE CIRCULAR



CENTRAL OFFICE PARTY

The Association recently welcomed a party of visitors from Portland and Torfaen Branches to Central Office in Portsmouth for a special RNA Open Day.

The visit provided a wonderful opportunity for shipmates and partners to meet some of the Central Office team, hear the latest updates from National Chair Andy Christie, and spend time catching up with fellow shipmates.

Throughout the day, old friendships were renewed, new connections were made, and there was no shortage of

dits, laughter and good company.

A huge thank you to everyone who attended and helped make the event such a success, including Area 3 President Soapy Watson, and Steve for their support and contributions throughout the day.

RNA Membership Secretary Jon Boreham is putting together the 2027 Open Day programme, and would like to hear from shipmates with ideas as to what could be

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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 or editions switched – if so we will endeavour to tell you in advance by email and/or through our social media channels.

The next Semaphore Circular will be published on Friday 4 September, and the deadline for material is 1000 on Wednesday 2 September. Branch Notes will next be published on Friday 14 August, and Semaphore Shorts on Friday 21 and 28 August.



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added to (or removed from) the Open Days. We get valuable feedback from those who attend such events, but in order to improve the offering (and we appreciate some shipmates travel long distances for the occasion) we want to know what potential visitors would like to see and do when they visit us at Portsmouth Naval Base.

What would really tempt you to make the journey?

And for those who have already visited, what went well, and what could you have done without?

Any thoughts on the matter, whether you have been to a previous Open Day or not, should be directed to Jon at ams@rnassoc.org.

The Royal Naval Association remains committed to supporting shipmates, preserving our Naval heritage and fostering lifelong friendship across the Naval community.

We are also grateful to the Royal Navy & Royal Marines Charity, whose grant funding helped make this activity possible.

Pictures of the Open Day were taken by the RNA's ace photographer S/M Nigel Huxtable.





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Find Semaphore Circular online at

www.royal-naval-association.co.uk/news

or navigate to

RNA Website / About / News / Semaphore Circular

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FROM THE (INTERIM) GENERAL SECRETARY

Dear Shipmates,

It may be high summer (I've lost count of the heatwaves we've 'enjoyed' so far this year) and peak holiday season, but Central Office is still humming as we continue to make sure we are doing our best to support shipmates in all the ways we can.

For me personally the tempo is as high as the temperatures – I am still doing my "day job" as governance lead at the RNA as well as sitting in as interim General Secretary until S/M Andy Coles takes over next month.

And while I will obviously not be making any major strategic changes of course – that is for Andy to decide when he takes over the helm – there are still plenty of decisions to make on an operational level, issues to resolve and engagements to fulfil.

One of those engagements was not necessarily the worst in the world – a flying visit to Venice to fly the RNA flag at the International Maritime Confederation Executive Council and visit the sailing camp for young people from across Europe.

What an inspiring occasion that was!

The RNA is the British representative on the IMC, which is a pan-European organisation dedicated to fostering and developing connections between like-minded maritime groups. One objective is to introduce the younger generation to maritime issues, and in so doing helping to build bridges between young people in different countries. We had the honour of hosting this 'jewel in the crown', the IMC Sailing Camp, last year at the Royal Hospital School in Suffolk, and this year it was Italy's turn to welcome teenagers from across the continent.

Yes, of course it was a pleasure to visit Venice in an official capacity, but believe me, it was no jolly – and I am happy to report that our young ambassadors did the Association proud.

You can read about the event later in this Circular (see [page 9](#)), but I would just like to personally thank the Naval Children's Charity for funding the British involvement, and Pam Potts, wife of RNA National President Duncan Potts, for going well above and beyond in the vital role of safeguarding lead for our young people.



Back at Lanyard Building, while we work around the contractors who are surveying the site and laying the groundwork for some pretty major infrastructure upgrades, you can still detect the ongoing drumbeat of Association business – our bread and butter.

Membership supremo Jon B is keeping a close eye on our role in this November's Remembrance Sunday parade in Whitehall (see [page 8](#)) while Milly, EA to the General Secretary (and much more besides!) is on a shorter timescale as she and Malcolm Little, our Secretary to the National Council, finalise plans for next month's CONA gathering in Portsmouth – see [page 18](#).

We are also working on the Central Office Open Day programme for next year – we asked for any suggestions in last month's Circular, as we want to make these occasions as interesting and useful as possible to our members. Please do consider making the trip to Portsmouth to put some faces to the names and see how (and why) we do what we do – it's a win-win situation, as far

as we are concerned, because it not only gives us the opportunity to explain the workings of Central Office, but also allows us to get a feel for the issues that our members (you!) think are important to them.

And all that is in addition to the dozens of emails and phone calls we receive every day, any one of which can start a new hare running and add a little more to the workload.

Every day is different here in Central Office, but the constant is you, our members. It is my genuine pleasure to be part of this Association and strive each day to support someone's day, in even a small way.

Yours aye,

Kate

NEW RNA GENERAL SECRETARY PICKS UP HIS MEMBERSHIP CARD

The Royal Naval Association has announced the appointment of Andrew (Andy) Coles as its new General Secretary and Chief Executive – and Andy is now officially a card-carrying member of Cardiff Branch.

At a recent meeting Cardiff Branch Chairman S/M Andy Clark was delighted to formally present Andy Coles with his membership card.

“Everyone at Cardiff Branch extends a very warm welcome as he begins this important chapter,” said Andy Clark.

“We look forward to supporting him in his new position, and hope that, despite the demands of his new responsibilities, Andy will be able to join us at branch meetings and events whenever time permits.

“We wish him every success in his new role and look forward to working with him in the years ahead.”

Andy will join the Association on 7 September.

A former Royal Navy Commander, Andy served for 38 years after joining as a Junior Seaman in 1979.

During a distinguished Naval career, he commanded submarines HMS Turbulent and HMS Astute, held senior leadership appointments including Base Commander of HMS Drake and Commander of 2nd Submarine Squadron, and was appointed an Officer of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire (OBE).



Since leaving the Royal Navy in 2017, Andy has built extensive commercial leadership experience across the maritime sector, working with Svitzer, Survitec, MDL Marinas and Western Marinas.

Andy already knows the Association well and understands the vital role the RNA plays in supporting serving personnel, veterans and their families.

Until Andy's joining date Kate Aldous will remain as our Interim GS/CEO.

In recognition of Kate's dedication and skill – she is also fulfilling her role as governance lead at the

Association while covering the top job – the RNA has also asked her to take on the role of Deputy GS/CEO when Andy takes up the reins, a post we are delighted to say that she has accepted.

Speaking about his appointment, Andy said: “It is a real honour to take on the role of CEO of the Royal Naval Association.

“As someone who served in the Royal Navy for 38 years, I have a real understanding of the lived experiences of our serving members and veterans of all ages, as well as their families.

“I look forward to working with our shipmates, volunteers, staff and supporters to build on the RNA's legacy and ensure it continues to adapt and thrive for future generations.”

UNIVERSITY FUND SCHEME OPENS

The Naval Children's Charity (NCC) has relaunched its University Bursary Scheme this month.

The scheme is now named the Kilmorey Bursary Scheme in recognition of the Kilmorey Fund for Naval Children at the Royal School Haslemere, which closed its doors last month. Trustees of the Kilmorey Fund gave the remaining money in their Fund to the NCC.

Offering practical financial support for students at university from Royal Navy families, where a parent or guardian is serving, or has previously served, the bursary can help with essential living costs and study resources, giving students one less thing to worry about as they begin or continue their first undergraduate degree.

Applications open on 10 August.

Find out more and apply on through the NCC website at <https://www.navalchildrenscharity.org.uk/university-bursary-scheme/>

MAKE YOUR VIEWS HEARD ON PAY AND ALLOWANCES

The Naval Families Federation (NFF) is currently gathering feedback from Royal Navy and Royal Marines personnel and their families to inform their evidence to the Armed Forces Pay Review Body (AFPRB) as they consider their recommendations for the annual pay and allowances review.

As one of the few organisations able to present family evidence directly to the AFPRB, the Federation – an independent charity which provides support and guidance on matters affecting the daily lives of Naval service families – depends on your views to help shape their submission and ensure the experiences and financial challenges of Naval families are

also heard by the government, the Ministry of Defence and the Royal Navy.

If you are serving in the Royal Navy or Royal Marines or are the spouse or partner of someone who is, please take five minutes to complete their anonymous questionnaire.

As a thank you, you can also choose to enter a prize draw to win a £25 Amazon voucher.

The Federation's call for evidence on pay and allowances sits alongside their other open surveys which cover various aspects of Service life – please take a look: <https://nff.org.uk/your-voice-your-views/have-your-say/> The AFPRB pay and allowances survey will remain open until 14 September.

CLAIM YOUR PLACE IN RNA'S CENOTAPH CONTINGENT

Shipmates who would like to march as part of the RNA contingent in the Remembrance Sunday parade in London are invited to email Central Office in order to register their interest.

The Association has been allocated 140 places for its squad at the Cenotaph parade on Whitehall on Sunday 8 November, and there are now around 40 places remaining to be

VETERANS AWARDS DEADLINE LOOMS

Nominations for this year's English Veterans Awards close in just over a week.

If you are, or you know of, a veteran who has done some great things since transition to civilian life, or you're a business/organisation/charity that's gone above and beyond to support our former military, and they live, work or are based in England, then get in touch! The final awards ceremony will

take place at the De Vere Cotswold Water Park on 1 October. Categories include Role Model of the Year, the Community Award, Military Charity Fundraiser of the Year, Inspiration of the year and Volunteer of the Year.

Last year saw the RNA's HMS Raleigh Mentors team, led by S/M Terry Whitty, shortlisted for the Team of the Year award. You can apply or nominate a deserving individual or group at <https://veteransawards.co.uk/english-veterans-awards/>

TIME TO GET ON BOARD

We are now just two months from the World Uckers Championships 2026, which will be staged in Portsmouth – are you on board this prestigious competition yet?

Hosted by the Royal Naval Association at the Royal Maritime Hotel in Queen Street, the event takes place on Saturday 3 October, with registration between 0900 and 1000.

So if you think you have a chance of taking the title Uckers Champion of the World, join us for a day of dice, drama, and full-on matelot mayhem. Whether you're a seasoned pro or just fancy your chances, we want to hear from you.

And please bring your families and friends – this is an event for everyone. To help us plan, please email ceo-ea@rnassoc.org to register your interest. Include your name, contact details, and whether you're entering solo or with a teammate.

Spaces are limited – don't miss your shot at Uckers glory!

claimed.

To register your interest, please email Jon B at ams@rnassoc.org no later than 1200 on Friday 14 August. After this deadline, Jon will submit the final list of participants to the Royal British Legion so that the appropriate tickets can be issued.

Please note that those registering with RNA will be expected to march with the RNA contingent.

In order to march you must possess at least one of the following:

- Veterans Recognition (ID) Card
- Veterans UK Status Card
- Certificate of Service – this must include date of discharge

SEEING RED TO MARK MERCHANT NAVY DAY

The Seafarers' Charity invites shipmates to join their celebration of Merchant Navy Day 2026 on Thursday 3 September.

For more than a decade their 'Fly The Red Ensign' campaign has championed the outstanding contributions that Merchant Navy seafarers make to the UK. Widely known as the 'Red Duster', the Red Ensign is the official flag of the UK Merchant Navy.

Those who sail under it help keep the UK supplied with food, fuel and medicine – according to Maritime UK, some 95 per cent of UK imports and exports are transported by sea at some point.

In addition, many civilian seafarers

■ Certificate of Discharge

■ Veterans Railcard

■ For Merchant Mariners – a copy of the personal details page of your Discharge Book, along with the vessel names on which you served and the operation names and date.

Please check the RBL website for full eligibility details: <https://www.britishlegion.org.uk/.../remembrance-sunday>.

Following the Cenotaph parade the RN will host a sandwich lunch reception for 50 members on a first-come, first-served basis at the Civil Service Club, which is at 13-15 Great Scotland Yard, London SW1A 2HJ.

support the Royal Navy through the Royal Fleet Auxiliary (RFA).

What you can do:

■ **Fly the Red Ensign:** Raise the Red Ensign on a flagpole at your home, office, town hall, or community centre on 3 September. You can order a flag from Hampshire Flag Company at www.hampshireflag.co.uk. Use the discount code

Seafarers15 to receive a discount on your order.

■ **Wear red instead:** If you can't fly a flag, wear a splash of red at work or around the home to mark Merchant Navy Day. Co-ordinate with friends and colleagues and share your pictures!

■ **Digital Support:** Show your support on social media by using the hashtag #MerchantNavyDay. A social media toolkit and digital assets is available on their website.

■ **Spread the Word:** Invite your friends, family, and colleagues to get involved in Merchant Navy Day via word of mouth, email, newsletters, or social media.

■ **Get your free merch:** Email marcomms@theseafarerscharity.org by 11 August to request a lapel pin displaying the Red Ensign. They also have Red Ensign car stickers available, all for free.

For more details of Merchant Navy Day follow [this link](#).



MAKING FRIENDS WITH THE QUEEN OF THE ADRIATIC

Five British teenagers flew out to Italy with a sense of apprehension – and returned with a new set of life skills, lasting friendships and some amazing memories of ten days spent in one of Europe's most beautiful cities.



The five, aged between 16 and 18, were the lucky ones chosen from almost 60 applicants to this year's International Maritime Confederation (IMC) Sailing Camp.

Funded for the most part by the Naval Children's Charity, the British party left Heathrow Airport on 21 July bound for Marco Polo airport, and on arrival transferred by ferry to their home for the next ten days – the Francesco Morosini Naval Military School, operated by the Italian Navy, where an education provided both by civil teachers and naval officers promotes, in addition to regular studies, interest and love for life at sea through various related activities such as sailing, rowing and swimming.

Six of the eight countries of the IMC were represented – the UK (the RNA is the IMC representative for the country), Italy, Germany, France, Belgium and Austria, with each nation contributing small group of 16 to 18-year olds.

At the heart of the camp, naturally, was sailing, which was undertaken just a short ferry ride away each day; the students used boats from the school and sailed off the Venetian resort of Lido.

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The students learned sailing theory as well as practical skills, spent some time rowing, and even had the opportunity to try their hands at gondoliering – very much trickier than it appears... An important element of the Camp is the chance to interact with young people from other countries, and as in previous years firm friendships were formed – international cooperation and understanding is a key driver for the IMC. Among those accompanying the party were RNA National President Duncan Potts and his wife Pam, and Interim General Secretary Kate Aldous. Duncan and Kate were in Italy in part for an IMC Executive Council meeting, where strategic matters were on the agenda, but it was generally agreed that it was Pam (far right of picture) who played a blinder.

A constant presence as safeguarding lead for the group (and for one or two more from other groups, as it turned out), it was Pam who helped the young people – some of whom were low on confidence to start with – make the most of their opportunity, ensuring they finished the Camp with morale boosted, new life skills learned and new friendships cemented.

It was not all plain sailing – it was relentlessly hot with temperatures consistently in the low 30s Celsius, for one thing – but Italian hospitality and a packed and varied programme ensured the Camp was a great success.

Next year it is Austria's turn to host, and once again the RNA will work with the Naval Children's Charity to offer places on the Camp.

The IMC is a European association for maritime organizations, marine societies, and Naval veteran associations, founded in 1967 to promote maritime understanding and international cooperation.

For more information on the organisation and its aims use [this link](#).



LIFE SKILLS, MEMORIES, FRIENDSHIPS – AND AN ADDICTION TO GELATO...

The mother of one of our Sailing Camp five has expressed her thanks for including her daughter in the trip.

"I just wanted to say a huge thank you for giving Darcey the opportunity to take part in the Venice sailing course," said Tina.

"Knowing that so many young people applied, we feel incredibly fortunate that she was selected. It really was a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity, and we're so grateful that you saw something in her and gave her the chance."

Pam Potts' role as safeguarding lead provided participants and parents with welcome reassurance ("Pamela was a total star!" said Tina).

"From speaking to Darcey, I also know that the first night was a bit of a shell shock for everyone, so we're especially grateful for the care and support shown throughout," continued Tina.

"As the days went on, everything just seemed to get better and better. By the end, Darcey genuinely didn't want it to finish and wished she could have stayed longer.

"She has come home with so much more than sailing experience (although I'm still not convinced she'll become a sailor!).

'She has learnt not to give up, tested her resilience, pushed herself outside her comfort zone, experienced different cultures, learnt a little Italian, and made friendships that I genuinely think will last a lifetime – they're already making plans to meet up again.

"These are life skills, memories and confidence that she simply wouldn't have gained without this amazing opportunity, and we are incredibly grateful that she was given the chance to be part of it.

"Please pass on our sincere thanks to

everyone involved in organising the trip and making it happen. It was clearly a huge undertaking and one that has had a lasting impact on so many young people."

Tina said Darcey would jump at the opportunity to give something back one day: "who knows – perhaps in a few years' time she'll be the one supporting and encouraging another nervous teenager at the start of their own adventure."

Now it's time for the participants to return to normality – "We're currently trying to wean Darcey off gelato and spritzes – although I think the gelato is proving to be the harder addiction to break!" said Tina.

"Thank you again for everything. This experience has given Darcey memories, confidence and friendships that will stay with her for life, and as parents we couldn't be more grateful."

WOMEN'S RETREAT IN CORNWALL

The Royal Naval Association is delighted to open Expressions of Interest for a new Women's Retreat, taking place in Falmouth from 18-20 September.

Delivered in partnership with Lest We Forget Association, the retreat will bring together women from across the Naval community for a weekend focused on connection, wellbeing, resilience and peer support.

Set on the Cornish coast, the weekend is expected to include coastal walks, wellbeing workshops, social activities and opportunities to connect with others who understand the unique experiences of Naval life.

Accommodation and meals will be provided for a single contribution of £50 per person.

Places are limited, so if you'd like to attend, we'd love to hear from you.

Register your interest: <https://snra4jc54f7.typeform.com/to/rCg5LiM4>

The Lest We Forget Association's mission is "to strive to explore all avenues available to honour and support both current and former members of the UK Armed Forces and Merchant Navy and their families.

Originally formed in 1922, the Association can now offer retreats at the RV Guesthouses in Falmouth – see <https://www.lestweforgetassociation.org.uk> for more details.



HELP TO STRENGTHEN NAVAL COMMUNITY



CONA 2026

Conference of Naval Associations

Friday 11th September
1300-1700
Lunch Included

Royal Maritime Hotel, Portsmouth

Chaired by
Vice Admiral Duncan Potts CB

For more information and
to book your place email: ceo-ea@rnassoc.org



What does the future of the Naval family look like?

CONA 2026 (the Conference of Naval Associations) brings together representatives from Naval associations across the UK to share ideas, strengthen connections and discuss matters that affect our wider Naval community.

Whether you're involved with an association, a branch committee, or simply interested in the organisations that support those with a Naval story, CONA offers an opportunity to meet fellow members, hear from guest speakers and contribute to important discussions.

■ Friday 11 September, 1300–1700

■ Royal Maritime Hotel, Queen St, Portsmouth

To book your place, email: ceo-ea@rnassoc.org

Delegates also get a ten per cent discount when booking a room at the RMH if they quote CONA

RNA TRANSPORT IS AN ASSET FOR ALL

The RNA has three minibuses 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.

To book a minibus please contact Jon Boreham at Central Office in Portsmouth – ams@rnassoc.org or telephone 023 92 723747.

For the purposes of insurance cover, there are certain criteria which must be met in order to drive the minibuses; these and other details are available for shipmates at www.royal-naval-association.co.uk/mini-bus-hire



FOCUS ON PHOTOGRAPHERS AT HMS VICTORY CEREMONY

The winners of this year's prestigious Royal Navy Peregrine Trophy were formally recognised at a special prize-giving ceremony on board HMS Victory, celebrating the very best photography from across the Naval Service.

Royal Naval Association Interim General Secretary Kate Aldous had the honour of presenting the awards to this year's winners in the RNA-sponsored categories:

- RNA Veteran – **Chris North** (pictured right),
- RNA Amateur – **ET(WE) Simon Evans** (pictured lower right),
- RNA Professional – **LPhoto Ollie**

Leach (pictured below left).

Chris North is a proud member of the RNA's Leeds No 1 Headingley Branch, and received the RNA Veteran Award in recognition of his outstanding photography.

The Peregrine Trophy is the Royal Navy's premier annual photographic competition, showcasing exceptional images captured by serving personnel, veterans, reservists and cadets.

The competition celebrates photographers who document the people, operations, traditions and everyday moments that tell the story of the Royal Navy and Royal Marines.

Following the announcement of the results earlier this year, the ceremony aboard the iconic HMS Victory provided an opportunity to celebrate the achievements of the winners and recognise the talent and dedication behind their work.

The Association congratulates all three winners on their outstanding achievements, and is particularly proud to see one of its own members recognised at one of the country's most prestigious photographic competitions.

To view the winning images and learn more about this year's Peregrine Trophy winners, visit the Royal Navy's announcement: **Around the globe, around the clock – Awards showcase Royal Navy's outstanding photographers**



AUSSIE PROJECT KEEPS MEMORIES ALIVE

The Naval Graves Project in Australia is a group of mostly ex RAN men and women preserving naval history in Australia one sailor at a time by identifying their final resting places and using the graves as a portal to the story of the RAN and its people.

The Project is an ongoing, nationwide effort to locate and document every naval interment within Australian territory. Ambitious? Yes. Achievable? Perhaps not entirely. Worth doing? Absolutely!

Project members 'Research, Record, Remember', and in doing so they do not forget their links to the Royal Navy and its people.

The NGP, set up and run by Mark Fleming, exists to:

- Research cemeteries and memorial parks for naval personnel,
- Record the location of their resting places,
- Remember the individuals behind the names.

What makes their work unique is their scope. They record all those who served in an armed navy, regardless of race,

creed, nationality, or whether they saw active service. Service itself is their only criterion.

Because of this, you'll find some remarkable and unexpected stories in their archive, including two pre-World War 1 sailors of the Austro-Hungarian Navy, a member of the little-known NSW Marine Light Infantry, and many others whose histories have slipped between the cracks of official record keeping.

The Project recently partnered with the Naval Historical Society of Australia (NHSA) to place more than 6,400 records online at <https://navalgraves.navyhistory.au/>. The site is hosted online by the NHSA – without their support the Project could not have shared its work.

Take a look at their site, and see how they have not forgotten RN sailors at rest in Australia.

If the site meets with your approval please spread the word about them – the site was set up to share information publicly and freely, there are no firewalls/paywalls, and there will not be.



THE BIG MEET HAS GROWN FROM SMALL BEGINNINGS

After almost a year in the planning by an amazing admin team and financed in part with a grant from RNRMC (Royal Navy & Royal Marines Charity), Naval veterans, RAF veterans, partners and a host of furry, four-legged friends, descended on the Oxfordshire countryside from all over the UK and Europe for the RNAMCC (Royal Naval Association Motorhome, Caravan and

Camping) group's annual Big Meet. Hardwick Park near Witney played host to the gathering, held to rekindle old friendships, make new ones, remember old oppos and have fun. Reducing isolation and reaching out to be inclusive to all, the event started five years ago by 14 people all involved with the Falklands Conflict and who wanted to see if anyone else may be interested.

Within two years the SCG (Sports and Comradeship Group) grew to over 700 members.

The 'Big Meet V' for this year had a waiting list after all 67 pitches sold out fast.

There was no stopping the attendees as the Rum Bosun introduced Tot Time each day at noon, and the following five days were filled with a whole host of events ranging from singalong sea shanty time, a scavenger hunt, ladies get-together with quizzes, bingo, who's who and the men's beer and cider-tasting sessions.

The theme for this year was Beach Party/Hawaiian/Caribbean, and the colours of the outfits were vibrant! With an interesting pirate or two, many, many questionable reggae outfits and a little bit of the old Hawaiian thrown in, the Limbo competition took place – some went over, not so many went under...

The horse racing evening raised funds from which a donation of £100 was made to Scarves for Falklands Veterans who produce items in the SAMA colours, and Darwin the giant penguin was donated by attendee Dawn Easterbrook – and is now the



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Group's mascot.

More funds were raised after three days of raffles took place with everything from bottles – of everything you could imagine (Including household detergent) – to teddy bears, penguins, a solar light “Tommy” and more.

The generosity of people donating was second to none.

Sunday saw a Remembrance Service take place with a short service, wreath-laying and placing of small crosses for those still held dear in people's memories.

The beach barbecue (not quite on the beach!) was catered for by the crazy chefs for the day whilst others played giant Jenga, Connect 4 or tried their best at the limbo competition.

When it got too hot, shipmates just took themselves off for a swim in the on-site lake which proved a welcome relief

in the temperature, which ranged between 25 and 33 degrees over the days.

The men did a lot of drinking, but the ladies didn't miss out having their own afternoon of high tea, cakes and sandwiches, all dressed up in their finest.

While the bubbles flowed, once they reached their limits of gastronomic delights, they invited the chaps over from their lowly corner of the field to come and join in and devour the rest of what was left.

The ladies' afternoon evolved from feedback from last year where a Wrens

event took place but it was felt that the non-Wren ladies may have felt left out – not so this year! All ladies in it together, as they say. Call rounds happened morning, noon and night. The flags were flying amazingly, while the slop stores did a roaring trade.

One of the highlights of the whole event was Defaulters, with the miscreants being brought before Table, charged, always found guilty and receiving their punishment of dried biscuit coated in strong chilli sauce.



Evening colours took place on the Monday evening before shipmates weighed anchor and departed on the Tuesday.

The aim of the meet was achieved – get together with old friends, make new ones, enjoy the comradeship and empathy of those that “get us”, feel included and never alone, and whether you are ten years old (the youngest helper and OD Danny from Czech Republic) or almost 90 years old, whether you are in a wheelchair, have a tent or a motorhome – everyone is welcome and ALL are included.

Thanks again to the RNRMC for enabling the group to put this event on and they will be back for Big Meet VI in 2027 – just follow them on Facebook at Royal Naval Association Motorhome Caravan and Camping Club <https://www.facebook.com/groups/294795378948752> or email Ron Shilton on RNAMCC@outlook.com or Annette Laurie on commsrnamcc@outlook.com.



BEST-SELLING AUTHOR TELLS STORY OF ARCTIC CONVOYS

Best-selling author Hugh Sebag-Montefiore has already published books on momentous Naval events.

Later this year the paperback **Dunkirk: Fight to the Last Man** and **Enigma: The Battle for the Code** are riveting accounts of crucial aspects of World War 2 in which the Royal Navy played a central role.

But arguably no campaign during the war encapsulated more drama, courage, fortitude and heartbreak than the Arctic convoys.

Last year the author published the hardback book **Battle of the Arctic: The**

Maritime Epic of World War Two.

And on 5 November this year the paperback version will be published by William Collins (ISBN: 9780008335816, £12.99).

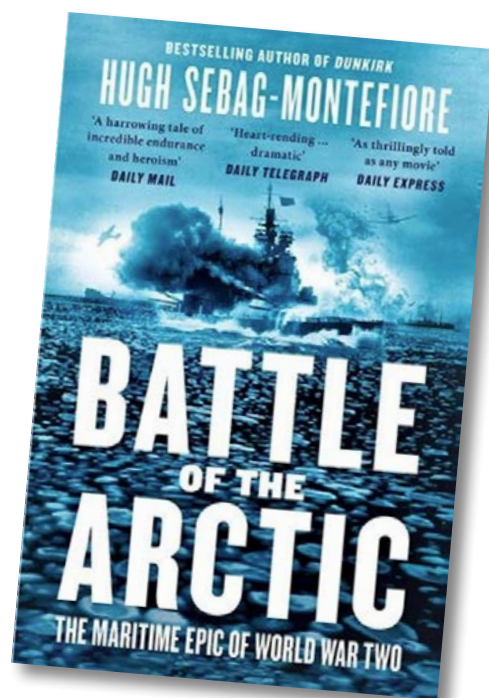
The convoys – and the multifaceted Battle of the Arctic that had to be fought to get them through to Russia – remain one of the war's most undercelebrated feats.

The action unfolded as Allied Naval and merchant seamen, airmen, submariners, soldiers and intelligence officers

delivered on their countries' promise to take arms to Russia, notwithstanding the German attempts to hunt them in their aircraft, U-boats and surface fleet, spearheaded by the much-feared battleships Tirpitz and Scharnhorst. When ships were attacked and went down, the seas were so cold that a man could die after five minutes of immersion.

Men perished one by one in lifeboats, or as castaways on deserted Arctic islands where they were stalked by polar bears.

Frostbitten and wounded survivors ended up in primitive Russian hospitals where amputations were carried out without anaesthetics.



Others were stranded for months in the communist state they were aiding. The hardback version of the book has already attracted very favourable reviews, such as this from the Wall Street Journal: "Excellent. Sebag-Montefiore uses wartime diaries, interviews and newly available archives from Russia to focus on the officers, armed guards and



Cruiser HMS Sheffield on Arctic convoy escort duties in December 1941. Image from the Imperial War Museum collection: IWM (A 6873)

HELP PRESERVE OUR NAVAL MEMORIAL

The RNA has an appeal to raise £75,000 to preserve the stunning Naval Service Memorial (NSM) at the National Memorial Arboretum at Alrewas.

The NSM 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 essential repair work and long-term maintenance planning to ensure its continued preservation.

One of the Memorial's glass panes has developed water ingress at its upper edge. To prevent further deterioration, and to protect the structure as a whole, remedial work is required to repair the pane and to install protective seals across all panes.

These seals were not available when the Memorial was constructed in 2014.

Alongside this work, appropriate arrangements for the ongoing maintenance and upkeep of the Memorial are essential to ensure it remains in a fitting condition.

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 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 is calling 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](#)

NEW PLATE, NEW CAR?

August is here – the perfect time to start looking for your next new car with the new 76 registration plate just around the corner.

This month's Forces Cars Direct line-up includes fantastic offers such as the Toyota Urban Cruiser, with savings of up to £10,987, and the all-new Jaecoo 7 Black Edition, available with savings of up to £6,503. The friendly Forces Cars Direct team is on hand to guide you through the process, answer any questions, and help you discover your next vehicle today.

See the latest offers on their display poster on **page 47**, and also see their specials **here**.



STRIKE GROUP TAKES A BREAK

The Royal Navy's two aircraft carriers have been in the headlines in the past couple of weeks – one without even leaving harbour.

HMS Prince of Wales took her turn in the spotlight as she returned to Portsmouth after the UK's premier Naval force completed the first phase of a major training and international cooperation programme (*pictures by S/M Nigel Huxtable*).

The UK Carrier Strike Group, led by Prince of Wales, supported by destroyer HMS Duncan, tanker RFA Tidespring, F-35B Lightning fighters and helicopters, plus an array of drones, returned home from Operation Firecrest, which will continue in the autumn in northern Europe.

The first half of their mission, a three-month block, concluded with Exercise Neptune Strike, which saw ten NATO allies operate across air, sea and land in the Atlantic.

The aim of Neptune Strike was to reinforce NATO's 360-degree protection of Allied territory by demonstrating the ability of its personnel and equipment to work together as a unified deterrent.

The exercise focused on the Strike Group delivering long-range air strikes with Lightning jets of 809 NAS, which made use of an RAF Voyager and an Italian 767 tanker to extend their range to conduct sorties not just over the North Atlantic, but as far as Poland.

The group's ships concentrated on surface and underwater actions, supported by the carrier air group's Merlin and Wildcat helicopters, supported by frigate HMS Somerset and a French destroyer.

The strike group has worked with 19 allies from NATO and the Joint

Expeditionary Force since sailing in April, bolstering regional partnerships and strengthening the defence of the Euro-Atlantic and High North.

As well as aviation operations the group went submarine hunting during another NATO exercise, Dynamic Mongoose, and there was an Anglo-Norwegian test of helicopter, missile and fast-attack boat tactics in the confined waters of the fjords.

The group most recently visited Iceland, where they hosted the UK's Defence Secretary and Iceland's Foreign Minister and Defence Director before the NATO Summit in Ankara. HMS Queen Elizabeth took centre stage when she hosted new Prime Minister Andy Burnham and Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy while she was alongside in Portsmouth Naval Base (*pictured right, © UK MOD Crown Copyright 2026*).

Mr Burnham and Mr Zelenskyy were hosted by First Sea Lord Gen Sir Gwyn Jenkins and the carrier's CO, Capt

Claire Thompson, as they discussed ongoing Anglo-Ukraine cooperation. Under the UK's support to the Ukrainian Armed Forces, Operation Interflex, more than 200 sailors have been trained to operate five minehunters over the past three years, operating out of Portsmouth.

"We value that we can always count on Britain's principled decisions, leadership, and support. Thank you, Britain!" said President Zelenskyy.



SIGN UP FOR STROLLS IN DUNDEE AND EDINBURGH

Kiltwalk is Scotland's largest mass participation walking event, with more than 240,000 people taking part since 2016 and raising considerable sums for charity at a series of events staged annually in major Scottish cities.

The Kiltwalk community have taken big strides for charities close to their hearts and together with the Hunter Foundation, have managed to raise a staggering £63 million to date. All funds raised have been distributed to 4,400 Scottish charities.

The Kiltwalk programme has

valuable support from the Hunter Foundation, set up by entrepreneur and philanthropist Sir Tom Hunter. Registration for Kiltwalks in Dundee and Edinburgh are now open.

The two Dundee walks – the 20-mile Mighty Stride and the four-mile Wee Wander – take place on 16 August, with some starting times already sold out.

The Mighty Stride costs £20 to enter, with a £13 fee for the Wee Wander, and all money raised by participants goes directly to the charity which they

are supporting.

The Edinburgh Kiltwalk is on 13 September, and features a Mighty Stride (21 miles, £20 fee), a Big Stroll (11.2 miles, £20) and a Wee Wander (4.6 miles, £13 fee).

For full details of how the Kiltwalk fundraising model works and how to register for the various walks see <https://www.thekiltwalk.co.uk>.

Kiltwalks have raised some £63 million for 4,400 charities in the past decade, and the aim is to hit £100 million by 2030.

VETERANS SUICIDE MEMORIAL TO BE FORMALLY DEDICATED

The UK's first memorial solely honouring veterans and members of the Armed Forces who have died by suicide will be officially dedicated at a ceremony starting at 1100 on 13 September.

Located at the National Memorial Arboretum at Alrewas in Staffordshire, the Elysium Memorial will offer families, friends and colleagues a dedicated place to remember their loved ones, honour their service, and reflect together.

The memorial was created at Leyburn in North Yorkshire; it departed from Leyburn Market Place in June this year on its journey to its new permanent home at Alrewas, escorted by a motorcycle 'guard of honour'.

Elysium Memorial Foundation co-founder Sgt Edward Mackenzie said: "I appreciate that suicide is an extremely sensitive subject, but by making more people aware of the memorial it is hoped that they will find some comfort and also bring the subject out of the shadows."

"The charity's aim is to make the subject easier to talk about for both those who have suffered a loss and those who are struggling with suicide ideation."

The Foundation's mission is to reduce the risk of suicide by raising awareness of the complexities of mental health faced by those who have served or are still serving.

Edward, who served in the British Army for more than 30 years, set up the Elysium Memorial Foundation in 2020 with 'Nick' and his late father after losing another fellow veteran to suicide – he has now lost more than 20 friends with whom he served.

The Foundation continues to provide veteran-to-veteran support, signposting and introducing alternative options to isolation and seclusion that are the

main contributors to mental health and suicide.

The Foundation takes its name from Elysium, or the Elysian Fields, a vision of the afterlife mainly associated with Greek religious and philosophical groups.

Entry to Elysium was initially reserved for mortals related to the gods and other heroes, though later generations included those chosen by the gods, such

as the heroic, who would live a blessed and happy afterlife.

For further information on the Arboretum ceremony please contact Edward on 07979 003049 or email - edwardmackenzie@icloud.com

For details of the Foundation and its aims and services, see <https://www.elysiummemorial.co.uk>

GO LEARN

FREE ONLINE TUTORING

for serving Royal Navy families

Funded by **GREENWICH HOSPITAL**
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Managed by **Naval Children's Charity**

Delivered by **mva Tutors**

A NEW NAME COVERING CENTURIES OF HISTORY

The National Museum of the Royal Navy is no more...

Not that it has disappeared, but you may have noticed a new name and fresh look for a museum group that incorporates centuries of history and tradition that are close to shipmates' hearts. Earlier this year the group unveiled its new name and brand –

Royal Navy Museums.

The organisation was formerly known as the National Museum of the Royal Navy – generally accepted as being quite a cumbersome title – and the inevitable reduction to initials NMRN was surprisingly difficult to pronounce.

The new identity launched across all digital platforms in May, with a phased physical rollout across its museums and ships over the next two years.

As it approaches its 20th anniversary, the UK's youngest national museum group is pairing a new vision with a rebrand designed to bring greater clarity and coherence to its family of museums and ships.

Home to the world's largest fleet of historic Royal Navy ships, which includes the iconic HMS Victory, HMS Warrior and a collection of over 2.5 million objects, the organisation now brings together its expanded portfolio under a single identity that better reflects both the scale of its collection and the breadth of the stories it holds.

An identity that helps audiences better understand what it offers and why it matters now.

At the heart of the new brand and vision is storytelling, **Linking Navy and Nation** with inspiring stories and experiences.

Royal Navy Museums holds thousands of stories, from famous victories to hidden histories, from life at sea to operations stretching from the seabed to space.

The new brand invites audiences to climb on board, get closer and see themselves as part of a wider national story.

This approach will be brought to life through a long-term digital initiative, **Our Untold Stories**, which will uncover and share stories from across the Royal Navy's past and present through its museums, ships, and collections.

The new visual identity is already well-established.

The flag, designed to look as though it is fluttering in the wind, draws on the rich



graphic language of the Royal Navy, including semaphore, signalling and Naval flags, to create a brand that is rooted in heritage yet reflects a contemporary museum experience. The rebrand was developed in consultation with multiple stakeholders including the Royal Navy and in collaboration with

award-winning creative agency Johnson Banks, with strategic support from Jo Marsh.

Matthew Sheldon, CEO, Royal Navy Museums, said: "We knew it was time for change. We have thousands of powerful stories to tell, and we needed a clear vision and a bold brand to tell them in ways that resonate with new and broader audiences. "Royal Navy Museums gives us a stronger, simpler way to bring our museums and ships together and to show how the story of the Navy is woven into the story of Britain itself."

Michael Johnson, of Johnson Banks, said: "From day one, we saw a vast muddle of competing names and symbols, and no one could say their old name correctly. "So we shortened it to three words then searched for a symbol that could unite the group. A flag that echoes their history – and could fly confidently across each site – seemed to be the perfect solution."

Royal Navy Museums covers a number of sites across the country:

- Royal Navy Museums: **Portsmouth** (Portsmouth)
- Royal Navy Museums: **Submarines** (Gosport)
- Royal Navy Museums: **Explosion** (Gosport)
- Royal Navy Museums: **Naval Aviation** (Yeovilton)
- Royal Navy Museums: **Hartlepool** (including HMS Trincomalee)
- Royal Navy Museums: **HMS Caroline** (Belfast)

The group's collection includes these iconic ships and submarines:

- Royal Navy Museums: **HMS Victory** (Portsmouth)
- Royal Navy Museums: **HMS Warrior** (Portsmouth)
- Royal Navy Museums: **HMS M33** (Portsmouth)
- Royal Navy Museums: **HMS Alliance** (Gosport)

HANDS-ON FUN IS HANDS DOWN WINNER

From supersonic jet engines to ship propellers, families will get the chance to try out some hands-on science at Royal Navy Museums this summer holiday. At the Naval Aviation museum in Yeovilton the centre of attention will be the unique airliner Concorde, which takes pride of place in the museum's Hall 4.

Concorde 002 never flew commercially, but was used for trials and still contains original test equipment.

It was loud, experimental and futuristic – and all three aspects of the jet will be looked at during a series of activities which will be free to join in with a valid museum ticket.

The School of Noise will run on 11-13 August between 1000 and 1500, sessions of experimental STEM activities will be offered on 18-20 August, while the chance to design the next generation of supersonic airliners is on the agenda for 25-27 August.

For more details on the Concorde activities use [this link](#).

Meanwhile, in Hartlepool, you are challenged to see if you could design a propeller powerful enough to drive a naval ship.

This hands-on family workshop takes place on 17 August (1000-1600), while the following week (24 August) the focus shifts to the possibilities of renewable energy from the ocean.

For more details of activities at Hartlepool's Historic Quay use [this link](#).

FORGET THE HEATWAVES AND PLAN FOR A LAPLAND ADVENTURE

Are all these heatwaves getting to you?

Are you thinking fondly of cooler days without a scorching sun in cloudless skies?

And do you need a focus for getting fit and challenging yourself?

SSAFA, the Armed Forces charity, works closely with the RNA network to help with welfare and support wherever it is needed.

In turn you might consider coming with us on a little venture – but it's not for the faint of heart...

Welcome to the Warrior Challenge, which will take place in Swedish Lapland on 23-26 January 2027.

It is perhaps the ultimate bucket-list challenge.... a

25 or 50k run under the spellbinding Northern Lights, surrounded by Arctic wilderness.

Just imagine running across frozen lakes, through dense pine forests, and over sweeping white landscapes, all beneath vast Arctic skies.

Lapland offers a rare combination of isolation, challenge, and breathtaking natural beauty. This is not just a run – it's a test of resilience, teamwork, and sheer determination.

Fully supported, this is one heck of an adventure – gather your buddies and make a team or test yourself to the limit alone.

Whether you choose to run, walk, or trek, this adventure is open to all abilities. With the right training plan and support, participants of **any** fitness level can successfully complete this challenge.

SSAFA's expert team will help you prepare from day one, offering training guidance, kit advice and fundraising support to ensure you feel confident, capable, and ready for the Arctic wilderness.

If you're motivated, determined, and excited to push yourself for a cause that matters, this challenge is for you.

There are limited places left, so act now, and join Sarah – the RNA's recently-departed Comms lead – and Big Phil Champion on this epic adventure.

On a personal note, Sarah said she would love to take an



RNA team along.

There is a registration fee of £200, which includes two nights accommodation and local transport, and a fundraising target of £1,500. Certain elements are not included – such as flights to Lapland

But if you fancy this once-in-a-lifetime challenge, you can find out more by going to the SSAFA website ([click here](#)) or by emailing Sarah on sarah.bewley@ssafa.org.uk.

You can also call on 0204 5586644.

Don't forget – every step you take in the frozen north helps support serving personnel, veterans, and military families in need.

Why choose HMCA?

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MALDIVES PRIZE ON OFFER

This summer, Royal Navy & Royal Marines Charity is one of the beneficiary charities of the RaiseHero 50/50 Raffle.

Enter from just £5 for your chance to win incredible prizes – including a holiday for two in the Maldives – while helping to support those who serve in the Royal Navy, Royal Marines and Royal Fleet Auxiliary.

The main draw takes place on 30 September, with the prize being a luxury Maldives holiday for two, with white-sand beaches, crystal-clear waters and £10,000 cash to spend. Or you could take home a £20,000 cash alternative.

And if you spend £25 or more and you'll be entered into a bonus draw to win £1,000 cash.

There are also weekly bonus prizes, so the earlier you enter, the more bonus draws you'll be eligible for:

- Ninja Woodfire grill – 12 August
- Ninja Double Stack air fryer – 19 August
- iPad – 26 August
- Apple smartwatch – 2 September
- Fortnum & Mason hamper – 9 September
- Ninja coffee machine – 15 September
- Nintendo Switch – 22 September

A £5 stake will get you 50 entries, £10 will pay for 120 entries, £25 means 340 entries and £50 will get you 800 entries.

Every entry supports the Royal Navy & Royal



Marines Charity, with 50 per cent of tickets purchased helping those who serve, have served, and their families.

So don't delay – remember, the deadline to enter the main draw is 30 September, and the lucky winner will be contacted shortly afterwards.

The draw is open to UK residents only, who must be 18 or over.

For full details of the draw and the rules, see <https://rnrmc.the5050raffle.com>

QUICK QUOTE FOR TRAVEL INSURANCE

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

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

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

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

REQUEST FOR EMAIL DETAILS

Branch Secretaries – you 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

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

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royal-naval-association.com

In partnership with **octopuslegacy**

SHOP ONLINE AND HELP US RAISE FUNDS

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.

UPCOMING MEETINGS

Assoc Management Committees:

Fortnight ahead(ish) of NC, preferably pre FAC (Advisor/Area input two weeks pre-AMC)

Thurs 15 Oct (Zoom 1800)

FACs (finance):

Fortnight ahead(ish) of NC,

RNRMC THANK RIDERS BRANCH FOR SUPPORT

Royal Navy & Royal Marines Charity (RNRMC) has said a "huge thank you" to the Royal Naval Association's Riders Branch Area 6/8 for their incredible support and generous £500 donation at Armed Forces Day in Northampton.

At last year's AGM, the Branch decided to support a named charity for 12 months, with RNRMC chosen as the first charity to benefit from this initiative.

The £500 cheque was presented to Carrie Seaton, RNRMC Community Fundraising Manager, during the Armed Forces Day celebrations in

Northampton's Market Square, where Carrie spent the day engaging with veterans, serving personnel and members of the public.

Carrie said: "It was a real privilege to receive this generous donation from the RNA Riders at Northampton's Armed Forces Day.

"Their support will help us continue to provide lifelong support to serving personnel, veterans and their families. "We're incredibly grateful for their commitment to the Royal Navy family and for helping raise awareness that RNRMC's support reaches communities across the country."

STAND BY FOR POSSIBLE DISRUPTION

Lanyard Building, the home of RNA Central Office in Portsmouth Naval Base, is undergoing something of a refit.

There is a programme of rewiring scheduled to be carried out over the coming weeks and months, and any issues that come to light as the building is surveyed will also be attended to. Contractors are set to begin work shortly, so there are no details as yet, but there could be periods when disruption to our normal work patterns cannot be avoided.

Please keep an eye on our social media platforms and communications channels for further details as we get them.

OUR MAN BILL IS BACK FOR A FIRESIDE CHAT

There has been a change to the Fireside Chats programme, which will now be a monthly feature – but the subject matter will be as engaging and thought-provoking as ever. Our next Chat, on 7 September, is due to feature our very own Bill Oliphant, the recently-departed General Secretary of the RNA, who will talk about the Royal Navy's attack on Fort Henry and the Star-Spangled Banner. Fireside Chats are online talks on subjects of Naval

preferably post AMC
Fri 14 August (Zoom 0930)
Fri 13 Nov (Zoom 0930)

National Councils:

Fri 11 Sept (F2F 0900, pre-CONA, Portsmouth, venue tbc)

Fri 20 Nov (Zoom 0900)
Annual Report

and wider maritime interest. The presentations are held on Monday evenings commencing at 1830 using 'Zoom'. All are welcome. The meeting ID is 288 830 5105, and the password is Shipmate (case sensitive). Or click **this link**. If anyone would like to host a Fireside Chat, or has a suggestion as to an interesting subject to cover, they should contact Milly Luxford at RNA Central Office on **ceo-ea@rnassoc.org**


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- 15% discount on Free Spirit **travel insurance**
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- Life insurance** – on purchase our partner, LifeSearch will donate £50 to a military charity of choice
- Eligibility for Trinity's **40+ travel insurance** scheme

**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

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

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WILL YOU 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](#).

CONFERENCE RAFFLE TOTAL

All those pennies have now been counted, and we can confirm that the National Conference raffle made £2,980 for the Association – thank you for supporting the draw.

Don't forget to let us know what you thought of the Conference – the feedback survey is still available for shipmates to fill in at [this link](#).

Your views allow us to fine-tune the Conference programme for the benefit of members at future events, starting with Durham next June.

Are you:

Ex-forces?

Eager to travel more this year? ✓

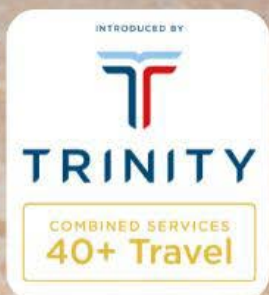
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*TERMS AND CONDITIONS APPLY. ALL INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHEME AVAILABLE AT: WWW.COMBINEDSERVICESTRAVELCOVER.ORG.UK



BE A WINNER WITH THE RNA LOTTERY

You could win up to £25,000 in our very own Weekly Lottery, which gives supporters the chance to win cash prizes as well as backing our rank-blind network of serving, veterans and family members of the Naval community. Once players have registered online they will be entered into the draw every Friday they are in credit (£1 per line, per week).

The lottery is an exciting way of fundraising and with at least 50 per cent from each £1 donated supporting the work we do, we will be able to help those in our community who need it most. Visit www.RNALottery.co.uk to sign up.

PUTTING US ON THE MAP

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

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

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

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

Any feedback to the RNA Communications team please.

GET YOUR SLOPS HERE

Shipmates are reminded that items such as blazer badges, pin badges, ties, beret badges etc are still available for purchase from Central Office. If you would like to obtain such items, please contact Central Office on the main office number (023 9272 3747) or via the 'Shop' button at the top of the RNA website home page at www.royal-naval-association.co.uk

SPORTS AND COMRADESHIP GROUPS

Shipmates might be interested in becoming involved with the popular and successful RNA Sports and Comradeship Groups (SCGs). Whether you are already a part of a group or are yet to join one we recommend you get involved and see what it's all about. For more information on each group please contact the designated leaders, listed below:

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

Choir – Jon Everett: wws@rnassoc.org

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

Cricket – Mark Smith : Markmiff1962@gmail.com

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

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

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

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

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

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

RNA Football Club – scc@rnassoc.com

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

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

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

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

VETERANS CELEBRATE BIRTHDAYS

A special lunch was hosted in the Wardroom at HMS Excellent in Portsmouth – an event celebrating four milestone birthdays, with the veterans reaching a combined age of 404 years. Among those being honoured were:

■ Dorothy Walsh (100) – a former Wren codebreaker who operated the Bombe machine at the Stanmore outstation of Bletchley Park, playing a vital role in Britain's wartime intelligence efforts.

■ Ken Arkell (100), who served in the Royal Navy in various ships and establishments throughout the war.

■ Len Chivers (102), whose Naval service included several ships – notably, he survived the bombing of HMS Kipling.

■ Robin Boodle (102), who joined the Royal Navy at just 14 years old in 1939, later serving during the Battle of the Atlantic and in the Far East campaign.

Other World War 2 veterans at the lunch included 100-year-old former signalman Henry Rice, who arrived off Juno Beach five days after D Day, and former Wren Sybil Parker (101), who was stationed in the Southwick Tunnels – a key operational centre for Allied naval activities.

This brought the combined age of the six veterans in attendance to 605 years. Jean Taylor was also invited in order to celebrate her 102nd birthday, but she was unable to make it on the day. Jean served with the Wrens as an Officer's Steward at HMS Shrapnel in Southampton, and was also involved with Operation PLUTO, the cross-Channel fuel pipelines – one of the most ambitious engineering achievements of the war.

The event gathered serving personnel

and veterans in a fitting tribute to those who served. The centenarians were also recognised with commemorative letters from the First Sea Lord, adding a special touch to an already memorable occasion. Robin Boodle was also presented with a special beret with a hand-sewn 'Arctic Convoy' badge kindly donated by Tin Trousers.

Special thanks goes out to Southwick Revival WW2 Veterans Club, who bring veterans together once a month, and their volunteers that helped get the veterans to the event. And thank you to ESS services for providing the birthday cake and dessert for the celebrations. Royal Navy & Royal Marines Charity alongside Greenwich Hospital were proud to support the celebration, helping to bring veterans together to honour their service.

Royal Naval Association Lottery



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WELFARE AND WELLBEING



HELP MAKE A BIG DIFFERENCE FOR OUR OVERSEAS RECRUITS

Every year, young men and women arrive at HMS Raleigh in Cornwall to begin one of the most challenging and rewarding journeys of their lives.

They come from all corners of the UK and Commonwealth, leaving behind family, friends and the familiarity of home to pursue a Service career.

Initial training is demanding, both physically and mentally. Recruits are pushed outside their comfort zones, required to learn new skills, adapt to military life and work as part of a team, often while managing the pressures of being away from home for the first time.

Whilst HMS Raleigh provides excellent training and support, there is still tremendous value in the little things that help lift morale, especially when many UK-based recruits have gone home and only a handful are left at the training establishment over leave periods.

That's where you can help.

Through our campaign, we are seeking donations to provide simple welfare and wellbeing activities for recruits who remain behind when their colleagues head home.

Your contribution could help fund simple things like a pizza night, cinema tickets for a well-earned break, or refreshments and social activities that bring the remaining recruits together are great opportunities to strengthen camaraderie, resilience and wellbeing.

These may seem like small gestures, but they can make a huge difference to a recruit's experience.

A shared meal, a trip to the cinema, or simply knowing that someone cares enough to support them can provide a valuable boost during what could otherwise be a lonely time.

Every pound donated will go towards supporting recruits and helping create positive memories during the early stages of

their Naval journey.

Whatever you feel able to contribute, your support will have a direct and meaningful impact.

Together, we can show our future sailors that they are valued, supported and appreciated.

To make a contribution, use the following link: <https://www.justgiving.com/campaign/boostarecruit>

The images on these pages come from the Easter leave period at Raleigh earlier this year, when RNA Welfare and Wellbeing Coordinator Jon Everett travelled to the West Country to play his part in boosting the morale of the sailors of the future.

Activities such as go karting gave trainees the chance to let off steam, laugh together, and enjoy a rare break from routine.

These moments of shared enjoyment allowed friendships to deepen and confidence to grow both essential in the early

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RNA WELFARE AND WELLBEING CO-ORDINATOR JON EVERETT – wws@rnassoc.org

WELFARE AND WELLBEING

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stages of Service life.

An historic walk around Plymouth, led by Brett Crabtree, a member of the RNA Plymouth Branch, offered something different. As trainees walked the streets shaped by centuries of Naval history, there was a quiet but powerful sense of continuity – today's sailors walking in the footsteps of those who served before them.

There were also quieter moments that carried equal importance, such as an Uckers and pizza afternoon, which provided a familiar, relaxed space where trainees could unwind, talk openly, and simply enjoy each other's company. The RNA also recognised the generosity of the China Fleet Club, whose support opened the door to additional wellbeing activities.

Access to facilities such as the golf driving range allowed some trainees to try something entirely new, offering a welcome sense of achievement and distraction during a subdued period.



TOP DIVORCE AND FINANCE FAQs – WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

Divorce can be one of life's most challenging experiences, and dealing with the financial aspects often adds another layer of complexity.

Understanding your rights, obligations, and options can help make the process more manageable and ensure you are able to make informed decisions about your future.

Below, I have answered some of the most frequently asked questions about divorce and finances in England and Wales.

Who pays for a divorce?

Typically, the person who starts the divorce process (known as the applicant) pays the court fee for the divorce application, which is currently £682. This is generally the case even where a joint application is made.

Beyond the court fee, legal costs will depend on the circumstances of the case. In most divorces, each party is responsible for paying their own solicitor's fees, although there can be exceptions depending on the conduct of the parties and the nature of any court proceedings.

What assets can be looked at on divorce?

Financial matters in a divorce extend far beyond simply deciding what happens to the family home. A financial settlement can include a wide range of assets and liabilities, including:

- The family home
 - Additional properties
 - Savings and investments
 - Businesses and business interests
 - Debts, including loans and credit cards
 - Valuable personal possessions, such as antiques, cars or collections
 - Income and earning capacity (spousal maintenance)
 - Pensions
 - The financial needs of any children.
- Other assets may also need to be

Knights

considered, including inheritances, trusts, compensation payments, redundancy packages, life insurance policies with a surrender value, endowment policies, and offshore assets.

Every case is different, and the list of assets that may be relevant is by no means exhaustive. It is therefore essential that both parties provide full and frank financial disclosure.

How are the finances resolved on divorce?

There are several ways to reach a financial settlement following a divorce. Couples may:

- ☐ Reach an agreement directly between themselves
- ☐ Negotiate through solicitors
- ☐ Participate in mediation or use another form of non-court dispute resolution
- ☐ Apply to the court for a judge to determine the outcome.

I generally consider court proceedings as a last resort when an agreement cannot be reached. Most couples aim to resolve matters outside of court, as doing so is often quicker, more cost-effective, and less stressful. Check out my article on non-court dispute resolution for more information!

Where an agreement is reached, it is strongly recommended that it is formalised through a consent order to make the agreement legally binding and enforceable.

Without a financial order, either party could potentially bring financial claims against the other in the future.

This is why obtaining a clean break order, where appropriate, is often so



important. A clean break severs financial ties between former spouses and provides certainty moving forward. However, it is not suitable in every case, particularly where ongoing maintenance is required.

How are assets split in a divorce?

One of the most common questions people ask is whether assets are automatically divided 50/50. The answer is no. The court's guiding principle is fairness, and there is no fixed formula for dividing assets. Each case is assessed on its own facts, meaning settlements can vary significantly.

When determining how assets should be divided, the court will consider a range of factors and the outcome will depend on the particular circumstances of the family rather than a rigid percentage-based calculation.

Who gets the family home?

Deciding what happens to the family home (if owned rather than rented) is often one of the most significant aspects of a financial settlement. Possible outcomes include:

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Emma Nicholas 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.

TOP DIVORCE AND FINANCE FAQs

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- One party buying out the other's share and transferring ownership from one party to the other
 - Selling the property and dividing the equity
 - Deferring the sale until a future event, such as children reaching adulthood
- When determining what should happen to the home, the court will carefully consider the housing needs of any children, as well as:
- The current market value of the property
 - The amount outstanding on the mortgage
 - The available equity
 - Each party's ability to secure alternative housing
 - Mortgage affordability and borrowing capacity
 - The availability of other assets that could be used to meet housing needs.
- Every family situation is different, and there is rarely a one-size-fits-all solution.

Can you get a divorce without resolving the finances?

It is possible to legally divorce without

finalising financial arrangements. However, doing so can leave both parties vulnerable to future financial claims, sometimes many years after the divorce has been finalised – see above regarding a clean break! For this reason, obtaining a financial order from the court is generally advisable, even where an agreement has already been reached.

Does the length of the marriage determine the outcome of the financial arrangements?

The duration of a marriage can have an impact on how assets are treated. Generally speaking:

- Longer marriages are more likely to result in assets being shared equally
 - Shorter marriages may place greater emphasis on each party's original contributions
 - Assets acquired before marriage are more likely to remain with the original owner following a short marriage
 - In long marriages, pre-marital assets may become part of the overall asset pool, particularly where both parties have benefited from them.
- The court will also consider other factors such as children, health, income,

earning capacity, and the length of cohabitation before marriage.

Will my pension be affected on divorce?

In many cases, yes. Pensions are often among the most valuable assets in a marriage and are typically included in the overall financial settlement. One common approach is a pension sharing order, which enables a percentage of one spouse's pension to be transferred into a separate pension arrangement for the other spouse. This provides both individuals with independent retirement provision. Check out my Semaphore article in relation to pension sharing on divorce from **February 2025** for more information!

Am I entitled to spousal maintenance?

You may be entitled to spousal maintenance if you cannot meet your reasonable financial needs following the divorce and your former spouse has the means to provide support. The court however certainly has a preference towards achieving a clean break and encourages financial independence, if it is appropriate in the circumstances.

Seeking advice

Every divorce and financial settlement is unique. While understanding the general principles can be helpful, tailored legal advice is often essential to ensure the best possible outcome for you and your family.

If you would like to discuss any of the issues covered in this article, please get in touch. Knights' specialist family law team has extensive experience advising clients on all aspects of divorce and financial settlements, helping individuals navigate what can often be a complex and emotionally challenging process.

I am an Associate in the Family Team at Knights. Coming from a military family and being married to a Royal Navy veteran, I understand the unique challenges that military families can face during relationship breakdowns. I am also a proud mother to my two-year-old daughter, which gives me a personal appreciation of the importance of securing the right outcome for families and children during difficult times.

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

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WELFARE CONTACTS

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

WELFARE AND WELLBEING

PRACTICAL SUPPORT AVAILABLE FOR VETERANS AND THEIR FAMILIES

A new year-long support programme is set to help Royal Navy and Royal Marines veterans – and the families who have supported them throughout their service – build confidence, strengthen relationships and feel more connected as they navigate life beyond the Armed Forces.

Delivered by Accrington Stanley Community Trust in partnership with Royal Navy and Royal Marines Charity (RNRMC), the **Veterans & Families Wellbeing Network – Transition, Wellbeing & Community** offers practical, personalised support for working-age veterans and their immediate families.

Leaving military service can bring significant changes. While many veterans transition successfully, others experience challenges such as loneliness, changes in identity, employment concerns or adjusting to civilian life.

Families can also feel the impact, often balancing new routines, financial pressures and emotional changes of their own.

This new programme has been designed with those experiences in mind, recognising that successful transition is strongest when veterans and their loved ones are supported together.

Participants will have access to personalised transition planning, helping them identify goals around employment, finances, housing, wellbeing and social connection. Alongside one-to-one support, veterans will be able to take part in regular wellbeing sessions, social activities and peer support, creating opportunities to meet others with shared experiences and build lasting friendships.

Families are equally at the heart of the programme. Weekly Family Resilience Circles will provide a welcoming space for partners and immediate family members to develop practical coping strategies, strengthen communication and connect with others who understand the unique challenges of military life and transition.

Family-friendly events and activities throughout the year will further encourage shared experiences and reduce social isolation.

The programme also aims to create sustainable community networks through peer mentoring, buddy schemes and regular community events, ensuring that support continues long after individual sessions have ended.

Mandy Harding, Head of Commissioned Grants at RNRMC, said: "Leaving the Armed Forces is a significant change, not only for veterans but for the families who have supported them throughout their service.

"We're proud to fund a programme that recognises those shared experiences and provides practical support, opportunities to connect with others, and the chance to build a lasting network.

"We hope anyone that feels they could benefit will take a look at what is on offer and get involved."

Martin Fearon, Chief Executive Officer of Accrington Stanley Community Trust, said: "We are incredibly proud to be



working alongside Royal Navy & Royal Marines Charity to deliver the Veterans & Families Wellbeing Network.

"At Accrington Stanley Community Trust, we've seen first-hand the positive impact that community, peer support and meaningful relationships can have on veterans' wellbeing.

"This funding allows us to build on that work by providing tailored support not only for veterans, but for their families too, recognising that successful transition from military to civilian life is something that affects the whole household.

"Together, we hope to create lasting support networks that help veterans and their families feel connected, valued and supported long into the future."

The Veterans & Families Wellbeing Network is open to Royal Navy and Royal Marines veterans of working age and their immediate families.

To find out more about the programme, eligibility or how to get involved, visit <https://www.stanleytrust.co.uk> or contact via email: info@stanleytrust.co.uk

Accrington Stanley Community Trust is an award-winning, non-profit, self-funding registered charity (Number 1139575) and community organisation that has been working within the Hyndburn community since 2007. After becoming a registered charity and re-forming as a Community Trust in 2010, the organisation has seen an accelerated rise and growth.

Accrington Stanley Community Trust was originally established under the banner of Football in the Community in 2007, with the aim to bring the professional football club and their community closer together.

Natural progression from Football in the Community resulted in the scheme being taken on to work alongside and under the guidance of the Football League Trust.

Accrington Stanley Community Trust has expanded at a phenomenal rate and now works in four key themed areas – Sports Participation, Education, Health & Wellbeing and Social Inclusion.

Football and, in particular, Accrington Stanley Football Club, has the ability to engage people, improve community cohesion and raise the hopes and aspirations of the people of Hyndburn. As a Club they are committed to ensuring that they respond to local needs whilst working strategically in line with regional and national agendas. They all recognise that sport can play a prominent role in addressing major issues such as obesity, anti-social behaviour, health, employment and attainment.

FUNERAL GUIDE AVAILABLE ONLINE

The RNA has created a Funeral Guide, and reminds shipmates that we offer ceremonial and administrative support for members and all those who have served in Our Naval Forces.

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

BRANCH NEWS



NEWPORT (SHROPSHIRE) Branch

As part of the continued fundraising at Newport Navy Club, they have been lucky to have been given access to a new Mini for a long weekend, (insurance and fuel provided) by Sytner Mini of Shrewsbury, Shropshire. We are therefore selling raffle tickets at £2 to win this wonderful prize.

The winner will be drawn at a social evening on Friday 11th December at the club.

Newport Navy Club depends upon voluntary donations to enable it to continue to thrive and make improvements to the building for the comfort of all our customers. We aim to support live music, social activities, and also hold many community events including a monthly veterans breakfast club.

If anyone in our area would like to hold a charity fundraising night they can use Newport Navy Club free of charge to help their good cause



CITY OF EDINBURGH Branch

S/M Stephen Elliot, Chairman of the City of Edinburgh Branch, took the opportunity at the July Branch meeting to present S/Ms Ian Irvin and Bob Cumming with their President Commendations. The awards were two of a number of such awards announced at the National Conference in Salford in July – the first time these awards have been made. Ian is pictured left receiving his award, with Bob pictured right.





HUNTINGDON and DISTRICT Branch

Sunday 12 July was Sea Sunday – a time to commemorate all seafarers around the world.

Members of Huntingdon & District Branch and representatives of the Merchant Navy Association were joined by the Ven Hugh McCurdy (former Archdeacon of Huntingdon & Wisbech), the Vice Chairman of Huntingdonshire District Council, Cllr Michael Burke, the Mayor and Mayoress of Huntingdon, Cllrs Patrick and Marion Kadewere, Karl and Julie Brockett, and members of All Saints' Church, Hartford, to remember and honour seafarers past, present, and future.

The service, conducted by Huntingdon Branch padre, Revd Dr Clifford Owen, included a sermon by the Ven Hugh McCurdy, readings and recitals from Mark Fearon, Avis Owen, Karl Webb, and Cdr Catherine Fearon. Huntingdon's Branch Standard was paraded by the Branch Standard Bearer (and Branch President), S/M Bill Small. Royal Navy and Merchant Navy Ensigns were also in place in All Saints Church.

On completion of the service, the congregation walked to the riverside where carnations were thrown into the river in a ceremonial mark of respect to all seafarers.

Thank you to Revd Geoff Boucher, Rector at All Saints, for supporting and allowing the RNA to lead the service. Thanks also go to all of the church representatives (and Tony Humes on the organ), the Ven Hugh McCurdy, civic guests, and to all the congregation and guests who came to pay their respects.



ORKNEY Branch

An annual commemoration was held on the morning of Thursday 9 July at the Naval Cemetery at Lyness on the island of Hoy Orkney in honour of those who were killed onboard HMS Vanguard in Scapa Flow 109 years ago to the day. A small contingent, including four shipmates of Orkney Branch, two members of Kirkwall branch of the Royal British Legion Scotland and local naval historian Brian Budge, were joined by the cemetery groundsman Adrian Clarke.

A short service of remembrance was conducted by Eddie Ross, Chairman of Kirkwall branch of the Royal British Legion Scotland during which branch wreaths and poppy crosses were laid, followed by a two-minute silence. The Orkney Branch Standard was carried by S/M David Hughes, former standard bearer and former branch chairman.

HMS Vanguard was a St Vincent-class dreadnought battleship of 19,700 tons built by Vickers in Barrow-in-Furness. She was laid down in 1908 and commissioned two years later. She formed part of the Home Fleet and saw action in the Battle of Jutland in 1916, emerging from the action unscathed.

She saw very little action following the battle, with routine patrols and exercises being her main tasks.

Following a day on exercises, at around 1830 on July 9 1917 she moored just off the north coast of the island of Flotta in Scapa Flow.

At 2320 a series of internal explosions rocked the ship, followed by one catastrophic explosion which caused her to disintegrate and sink immediately killing 843 of the 845 men on board, including an exchange officer from the Japanese Navy.

Debris was scattered far and wide; some sections of her plating fell on other ships close by, while one of her 400-ton 12in gun turrets was said to have landed on Flotta, almost a mile away.

Only 17 bodies were recovered and laid to rest in the Naval Cemetery at Lyness, and a temporary wooden cross was erected shortly after by Naval ratings from HMS Diligence. The permanent stone cross was unveiled shortly afterwards.

Although it was the magazines

which exploded, causing the ship to disintegrate, the initial cause of the detonation is a matter of debate. Among the possibilities put forward are old, out-of-date cordite charges that became unstable, or possibly high temperatures near the magazines due to the boilers being in use and watertight doors being left open.

It remains the Royal Navy's worse wartime disaster not attributed to enemy action.

A handful of Vanguard's ship's company, mostly officers, had the good fortune to have been at a concert held on board HMS Royal Oak that evening and were preparing to return to their ship when they saw the explosion from afar.

One of them, Mid Nichols, went on to become Commander of Royal Oak, and survived when that battleship was sunk by German U-boat ace Gunther Prien in U-47 in the same anchorage in 1939, killing 835 sailors.

Nichols thereby lived through two of the Royal Navy's most disastrous ship losses. Pictured right is Standard Bearer S/M David Hughes beside the Vanguard cross, and pictured below is Eddie Ross staking down the wreaths – a must in Orkney to stop them blowing away. With his are Shipmates David Hughes and Catriona Matheson.



SALISBURY Branch

Members of Salisbury Branch – and any shipmates from elsewhere who might be planning to visit – are reminded that the Branch will not be holding a meeting during the month of August.

The next Branch meeting is scheduled for 14 September.

HELSTON Branch

Helston Branch were at Plymouth Armed Forces Day in June to march with the veterans, but the main reason was to hand over a cheque for £1,000 to the Devon Air Ambulance on behalf of S/M Sharon Clarke, whose husband Mike's life was saved after a cycling accident by the DAA quick response.

The money was raised by the No4 Area charity chest from the Area Reunion in March, held at Bideford. Monies were raised with raffles, a quiz and horse racing. Plymouth Branch had the majority of those attending the reunion. Other charities which benefited were Combat Stress and Portland Coastal Watch.

In the main photograph (right) are Sue Yeoman (Plymouth), Lee Perry (P), Sharon Clarke (Helston), Chris Tremaine (P), Critical Paramedic Alex Sanders-Page, Lottie Clark



Community/ Events Officer, Joe Locke (H), George Scott (Helston Chairman), Tony King (H), Josie Locke

(Helston Vice Chairwoman) and Kevin Adamson (Plymouth Chairman).

Below left are Helston branch shipmates stepping out, Members of Helston Branch also attended the Falkland Dinner on the 19 June at the WOs, Senior Rates & Sergeants Mess at HMS Seahawk. President WO Mark Swift welcomed GOH C/Sgt Wayne 'Rocky' Roberts RM Rtd who gave a great speech on 'Sharing the load down South'.

A table was set and a candle lit for those still on patrol. A roll call was read by mess members of the ones who didn't return, including the three Falklanders who lost their lives. Veterans were asked to stand as their names were read out.

Lest we Forget paid for the veterans' meal of lamb, and also for rum for the tot for the toasts.

A good night was had by all an evening full of emotions & memories.



Above: Members of Helston Branch after the Armed Forces Day parade in Plymouth- "We made it round in step!"

Right: Helston members at the Falklands Dinner. From left, Joe Locke, Joe Morton, Josie Locke, George Scott and Tony King.



LEE-ON-THE-SOLENT and STUBBINGTON Branch

The RNA National Conference in Salford proved to be a weekend full of laughter, pride, friendship and more than one unexpected moment. Of course, no memorable weekend story would be complete without a little drama, writes S/M Karen Webb, Branch Secretary of Lee-on-the-Solent and Stubbington Branch.

I arrived looking forward to meeting fellow shipmates, sharing stories and enjoying a memorable occasion.

What I had not quite anticipated was finding myself playing matron to my Dad, (Soapy, aka Paul Watson, the Area 3 Chairman), who somehow managed to turn a Conference weekend into a family outing, a comedy sketch and something close to a Naval incident report, all rolled into one!

The weekend began on Friday with a welcome pint, some proper scan and a meet-and-greet with fellow shipmates. A warm atmosphere, plenty of laughter and the kind of good-hearted banter that makes RNA gatherings so special.

In the early hours, the ship appeared to roll for Soapy – quite an achievement, considering we were nowhere near the sea and the only waves in sight were probably in his pint and tot of rum.

One bump, one table and one dramatic crash to the floor later – helped along, perhaps, by a rum-induced fog – he somehow forgot to mention the incident until we were already on our way back to Portsmouth. Once safely ashore, however, it became clear that the story was far from over.

Humour aside, this was also a deeply proud and emotional weekend for me, watching Soapy receive his President's Commendation for:

- More than 30 years of service to the RNA
- Establishing a charity concert which he began more than a decade ago, which has raised thousands of pounds

■ and many years of dedicated support to his Branch, the Area RNA and to Central Office. This was a moment I will never forget. To see the respect, warmth and affection shown to him by fellow shipmates was incredibly moving, and it made me immensely proud to stand there not only as an RNA member, but as his daughter. The weekend brought home to me, in the most personal way, what the seven Cs of the RNA's core values truly mean: community, connection, commemoration, care, compassion, companionship and celebration.

My thanks go to our Chairman, S/M Andy Christie, and to the Central Office for their support in making it possible for me to accompany Soapy at the last minute.

By Saturday evening, we were dressed for the gala dinner – Soapy proudly back on chief stewarding duties: smartly dressed, slightly overexcited and ready for action.

He spent part of the evening swanning around with Captain Bill, who was preparing to sail off on his Arabian adventures, while also being handed the highly-prestigious job of official minder to Commodore Mark Slawson.

Naturally, Soapy took to the appointment with great seriousness, giving



it his best Norman Wisdom-style, "Yes, Mr Grimsdale!" before setting course for a fantastic night of drinks, food, laughter and dancing.

The only real challenge of the evening was trying to find the heads, which turned into a full-scale Naval expedition. Compass bearings were considered, search parties were nearly formed, and by the time I found them I felt I deserved a medal, a tot of rum and a sit-down!

On Sunday morning, shipmates formed up on parade – a truly magnificent sight. The standards, medals and sea of blue stood proudly together, each carrying its own story of service, friendship and remembrance. There was a real sense of pride in the air – not just in the uniforms and colours, but in the bond shared by everyone there, standing as one RNA family.

Early Monday morning, as the cock crowed and common sense finally reported for duty, there was confusion, a thumping headache and the dawning realisation that an eleven-hour detour to Queen Alexandra Hospital was required.

Thankfully, Soapy was given the all-clear – no broken bones, just one spectacular bruise, slightly dented dignity and another story firmly added to the family archive.

Looking back, the weekend really did prove what the photographs already showed – Soapy and I are, without doubt, two peas in a pod. From the laughter and mischief to the pride, stubbornness and shared love of the RNA, it was a weekend that captured us both perfectly.

I certainly inherited the sense of humour, the love of shipmate company and the ability to turn an ordinary weekend into a story worth telling. Salford gave us memories to treasure, a few tales to dine out on, and one more reminder that family, fellowship and the RNA go hand in hand.



PORTLAND Branch

National Conference might be one of the highlights of the year for RNA branches, but Portland shipmates took it in their stride as they swept through a busy summer calendar.

Conference closed on Sunday 14 June, and just two days later half-a-dozen Portland shipmates attended a "short but poignant" service marking the 71st anniversary of the loss of submarine HMS Sidon, an event led by the Dorset Branch of the Submariners Association.

Sidon sank on 16 June 1955 alongside depot ship HMS Maidstone in Portland Harbour with the loss of 13 lives as the result of an explosion in a highly-volatile experimental torpedo.

One of the attendees at the service was Gill Dash, whose father Surg Lt Charles Rhodes died through suffocation while rescuing sailors from the stricken boat. Surg Lt Rhodes was



posthumously awarded the Albert Medal for his actions on the day, and Gill, who was just a baby at the time of the accident, regularly attends the services proudly wearing her father's medal.

Ten members of the branch attended a short service at the HMS Foylebank Memorial on 4 July. At 1100 S/M Bob Featherstone piped the Still followed by the Carry On after a minute's silence. S/M Dusty Miller then read out the Naval Ode.

This was followed by Up Spirits and the toast 'We shall remember them'.

Dusty and Bob are pictured at the memorial in the first image (left), with the rest of their Branch shipmates joining Dusty for the second (below – Bob took the picture!).

From left, S/M Mike Howard, S/M Karen Miller, S/M Ginge Sarsfield, S/M Dusty Miller, S/M Dodge Howes, S/M Pete Shoesmith, S/M Lynne Rimell, S/M Ben Cartwright and S/M Nige Rimell.

Anti-aircraft ship HMS Foylebank was a converted merchantman that was attacked in Portland Harbour by a force of 26 German Junkers Ju 87 (Stuka) dive bombers on 4 July 1940, which were planning to cripple what

was regarded as a threat to their attacks on Allied coastal shipping. Foylebank shot down two aircraft but the eight-minute assault killed 176 of her ship's company of almost 300 and left her badly damaged. She sank the following day.

One of the ship's company, AB Jack Mantle, was killed at his anti-aircraft gun, but was posthumously awarded the Victoria Cross for his actions in defending the ship from while dying from his wounds.

Returning to Portland Branch's busy summer, the following day a party enjoyed a day at Hampshire Cricket Club's Utilita Bowl stadium for Vitality Blast 20-20 Cricket - two entertaining games included a 19-run win by the home team against the Kent Spitfires. Pictured from left to right at the stadium are S/M Lynne Rimell, S/M Bob Featherstone, S/M Steve Skerman, S/M Doc Foster, S/M Vaughan Nelson, S/M Roger Fullbrook, S/M Dusty Miller and S/M Dodger Howes.

And Portland shipmates were amongst the group which visited Central Office for an Open Day in the middle of July – see **pages 1,3 and 4** for more a report. And the pace doesn't slacken as

branch members look towards late summer and the autumn.

An RNA coffee morning is booked for Saturday 15 August at Easton Methodist Church Hall, and more than 30 people have signed up for an away weekend at Daish's Hotel at Shanklin on the Isle of Wight from Thursday 8 to Monday 12 October.

The annual Trafalgar Night Dinner will be held at the Masonic Hall on Saturday 24 October, and the 2026 programme finishes with a Christmas Social at the same venue on Saturday 5 December, with the ever-popular Steve Williams Disco.





BODMIN Branch

The Bodmin Branch of the Royal Naval Association held its annual summertime BBQ event this year.

Hosted by Shipmates Fiona and Gary Hawkey, over half the Branch members attended for an afternoon in the sweltering sunshine.

Hands to Bathe duly called, the paddling pool provided lots of fun for little ones and with plenty of shade for older ones, the venue backs onto the famous Bodmin and Wenford Heritage Steam Railway, which was unfortunately not running that day.

A full barbecue menu and salads were served up followed by a Cornish cream tea of scones, jam and cream were

served but unfortunately, the age old question of jam first or cream first raised its head and was not settled once and for all.

Bodmin Branch is open to all serving and former serving members of the Royal

Navy and any others who feel affiliated and align to the RNA ethos. Please feel free to get in touch, the shipmates would make you feel more than welcome. They meet on the first Friday of every month at Bodmin Bowls Club at 7.30pm.



Wandering Lauries
18 July 2026

SPALDING Branch

At the end of July Spalding Branch member S/M Charles Giles celebrated his 104th birthday at Halmer Court Care Home, surrounded by his friends and fellow shipmates. S/M Charles Donald Malcolm Fergus Giles was born in 1922 and joined the Royal Navy at the height of World War 2 as an AB.

After training he was assigned to HMS Bleasdale, a Hunt-class destroyer, pennant number L50.

One day, Charles heard of the vacancy on board for the Navigator's Yeoman. Not knowing what it entailed, he asked around and found that it was working with ship's plans and charts.

"I can do that," he thought, "it's better than scrubbing the decks." And he must have been quite good at it, because the ship always got to where it was supposed to be...

Bleasdale took part in Operation Jubilee in Dieppe, which provided critical lessons that influenced the success of future operations including D Day.

The destroyer was slightly damaged by enemy gunfire during the escort of the landing craft, but she subsequently resumed her patrol missions in the English Channel.

On the night 5 and 6 June 1944 Bleasdale escorted the J10 Convoy to Juno Beach. As dawn broke on D Day, she participated in the bombardment of the beach with other ships of Support Force Echo, part of the protective shield around the entire Juno convoy system.

She then acted as escort until September, minding warships and convoys that travelled to England to refuel. The following year Bleasdale deployed to South-East Asia to participate in Operation Zipper, off Malaysia. She went on to participate in the armistice ceremony after the Japanese surrender at Port Swettenham, before sailing off the Indian coast.

When Charles left the Royal Navy, wishing to keep his

Naval ties, he joined Ramsgate Branch of the RNA, working his way up within the Branch to become President, then in 2016, he was presented with Life Membership, prior to moving to the Spalding area and placing himself on HQ (now Lanyard) Roll.

Spalding Branch was alerted to Charles when invited to his 103rd birthday party, after which Charles decided that he would like to become a member of the branch.

In February this year an application from Charles was submitted for the Legion d'Honneur, although at this time the medal has not yet appeared.

Charles was Guest of Honour at both Spalding's 2025 VJ Day Commemoration and 2026 D Day Commemoration at Spalding World War Memorial, laying RNA wreaths on both occasions.

Pictured below: being extremely experienced in such matters, Charles gives instruction to care home manager Ewa Drzewicka, on exactly how the Birthday cakes should be cut.



RAYLEIGH Branch

On Saturday 18 July, RNA Rayleigh Branch marked its 40th anniversary with a special mess dinner at Saxon Hall in Southend-on-Sea, Essex. The evening paid tribute to the Branch's founding members, particularly Frank Paxton, whose vision and dedication helped establish the branch in 1986. Recognition was also given to the wives and families of Royal Navy veterans, whose fundraising efforts enabled the purchase of the Branch standard. Appreciation was expressed to the Branch chairmen and committee members who have given their time and leadership over four decades. The evening started with welcome drinks and then, once called to dinner, Branch Standard Bearer S/M Brian Dobinson marched on the standard. During the evening, Branch Chairman S/M Mike Sandbrook presented a bouquet to S/M Cherry Ablitt in recognition of her unwavering support over the past 40 years (pictured top right). Cherry joined the branch in 1986 with her late husband, S/M Brian Ablitt, a Royal Navy veteran. Vice Chairman SM Brian Dobinson presented a bouquet to the chairman's wife, S/M Trina Sandbrook, for her continued support of the branch, particularly through her organisation of Gangway and quiz nights, which have become an important part of Branch life. The Chairman then presented a bouquet to Mrs Kate Everett, recognising her long-standing contribution as a Royal Navy wife. The Branch was also honoured to

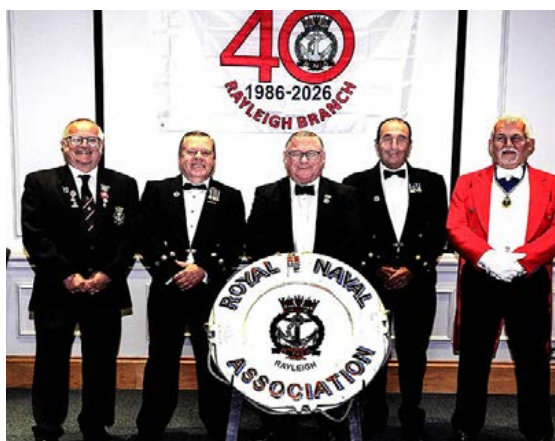
welcome the Mark Francois, Member of Parliament for Rayleigh and Wickford, who delivered an excellent speech. Mark, a member of Rayleigh Branch, is the son of a Royal Navy D-Day veteran.

Also in attendance was S/M Jon Everett, Welfare and Wellbeing Coordinator from RNA Central Office, accompanied by his wife Kate (pictured below left).

Jon gave an inspiring address, highlighting the importance of comradeship, welfare, and the continued strength of the Royal Naval Association.

Rayleigh Branch meets every other Wednesday evening at the Royal British Legion in Rayleigh.

In the photo (below) with the buoy, from left to right, are: Vice Chairman Brian Dobinson, Chairman Mike Sandbrook, MP Mark Francois, Membership Secretary Ken Benson and Toast Master Martin Jukes.



WANSBECK Branch

On 6 July Wansbeck Branch members attended a 44th Anniversary celebration meal at the Half Moon pub at Stakeford, near Ashington.

The branch was formed on 5 July 1982, not long after the end of the Falklands Conflict.

The 17 members and guests who attended enjoyed a good meal with the usual appropriate toasts, followed by a raffle.

The number included a good mix of full and associate members as well as their guests.

On the following day, several members the funeral at Blyth

crematorium of one their shipmates, Maureen Silver Dyer, a former Wren who died in June at the age of 85.

The service was also attended a dozen veterans and the Wansbeck Branch standard, along with members of Maureen's family who had travelled from Scotland in the north, and Hampshire and Berkshire to the south.



Maureen's son Martin added his thanks to all those who had turned out for the occasion.



Wansbeck branch donated an anchor-shaped wreath (pictured right) to go with the family flowers, and the coffin was draped with the White Ensign. There was a Guard of Honour, including the veterans, while family members looked on. The hearse bearing the coffin was preceded Branch member carrying the standard. Refreshments after the service were at the Commissioners Quay Inn at Blyth, and the Branch Secretary thanked the veterans who attended, some of whom had to go to another funeral elsewhere else the same day.



CAERPHILLY Branch

A group of 16 members of Caerphilly Branch had an amazing afternoon playing ten-pin bowling followed by a meal in the town. Pictured are the bowlers/diners.



TORREVIEJA Branch

In true military spirit and dedication to the ethos of Armed Forces Day (AFD), some 40 UK veterans and civilians came together in solidarity to honour our UK Armed Forces, both serving and veterans and their families.

The joint Torre Vieja Branch (RNATB) and the local Levante Veterans Group (LVG) event took place on 27 June at San Pedro del Pinatar.

Although unable to have a full Parade of Standards, it still upheld the combination of pageantry and socialising in that familiar UK military service style by incorporating an impressive display of Standards, flags and bunting.

It was a joyous and spectacular event and demonstrated what is a 'true coming together' to honour and show support for our Forces.

The 'icing on the cake' was the exceptional high standard of culinary and service from venue manager Akash and his staff, along with their willingness to accommodate the 'paraphernalia' to deck out the venue appropriate to the occasion. The event commenced with Branch Chairman Tony Jenkins welcoming everyone and talking about AFD. Following this was an amazing AFD poem, devised and delivered by Pastor Phil Molloy.

RN submarine veteran Steve Hemingfield then delivered the Submariners Prayer, to mark the Silent Service's 125th anniversary this year. Branch Vice Chairman Graham Rhodes led the Toast in true Royal Navy tradition, while all were seated: The ceremony concluded with Pastor Phil Molloy presiding over Grace. After the sumptuous three-course meal with beverage came the traditionally boisterous raffle, conducted by S/Ms Kim Hemingfield, Kath Marks and Tom Patterson.

Following the Branch Chairman's



heartfelt thanks to all those that had had a hand in staging the event, Jean Heald made a short speech and on behalf of the Levante Veterans Group proposed that the AFD Raffle collection was given entirely to the Branch fund, and the Levante Veterans Group residue fund of €200, which she was currently holding, was given to Geoff Youngs for the San Jose Obrero Orphanage, which was unanimously agreed by all. An extraordinary event then took place where the Restaurant Manager, Akash, on behalf of all the staff, gave €20 to be split between the Branch fund and the San Jose Obrero Orphanage – this unprecedented gesture received a huge round of applause from all. This then led into the last stage of the event where all were able to spend some time milling around, socialising and (for those RN veterans, affectionately known as Old Sea Dogs) the chance

have a session of swinging the lamp – for the uninitiated, that translates as telling some sea stories of their time in the Royal Navy. Eventually everyone hauled anchor and sailed away to their home port, pledging to do it all again next year.



WANTAGE Branch

Wantage and Grove Branch recently had the privilege of helping Shipmate Gus celebrate his 101st birthday at his care home. Lt Cdr Kev Morrison and WO2 Nick Deakin were joined by Deputy Lieutenant Jim Sibbald, himself an RNA Associate Member, to present Gus with a birthday card and a selection of small gifts. Residents and staff gathered around the dining table to mark the occasion, taking turns to share stories about Gus and explain why he is such a valued and respected friend within the home. The celebrations were made even more memorable by Gus's love of a spontaneous sing-song, as he treated everyone to some impressively high notes in classics such as Edelweiss and Daisy Bell (Daisy, Daisy). Gus also entertained his guests with several fascinating dits from his Royal Navy service during World War 2.



He recalled sailing to the Far East via the Cape of Good Hope, carefully avoiding enemy forces in Burma, before eventually returning home through the Suez Canal.

While stationed in Naples during 1943–44, he witnessed the most recent eruption of Mount Vesuvius and recounted how he once found himself confined to barracks after going 'fishing' with a hand grenade! Following his wartime adventures, Gus returned home and joined HMS King George V before finally receiving his demobilisation suit.

The birthday celebrations concluded with Gus cutting his cake using the Deputy Lord Lieutenant's ceremonial sword before they all enjoyed a small tot to round off a thoroughly enjoyable afternoon.

On behalf of the members of Wantage and Grove Branch and the wider Association, we wish Gus a very happy 101st birthday and thank him for his service, his stories, and his enduring good humour. Fair winds and following seas, Gus!



FOLKESTONE Branch

At the Folkestone Branch Meeting in July, held at Cheriton Bowls Club, two long-standing Associate Members of the Branch, Shipmates Ann Nicholson and Lynn Hatton, were both presented with Certificates of Appreciation by the Branch Chairman, S/M Derek Smith.

They were also presented with their new Member's ID cards, with their pin badges to follow.

Ann (pictured below left) had joined the Branch with her husband in July 1997 and is always at the forefront when volunteering is required. Lynn (right) had joined with her husband in June 2004 and when he was voted onto the Branch Committee as Branch Secretary in February 2007 she took on the role of Branch Welfare Officer, a position she continues to hold to this day. Both recipients are also an integral part of our Branch Annual Trafalgar



Day Service held in Folkestone "Fisherman's Church", St Peter's, overlooking Folkestone Harbour. Cheriton Bowls Club is a community building which plays host to not only the RNA Folkestone Branch but also the Cheriton and Morehall Branch RBL and a local Bridge Club as well as other community groups, such as a Ladies Knit and Natter Group, and is also a safe environment for Tai Chi classes.

WATERLOOVILLE Branch

As the new Branch Secretary, S/M Kay Wallace took the opportunity of the recent National Volunteers Week to give thanks to each and everyone of Waterloooville Branch's wonderful volunteers. A 'post a day of thanks' was placed on the Waterloooville Branch Facebook page giving special thanks to individual teams. A poster display was also made for all those attending the club throughout the week. At a recent monthly meeting members got together to celebrate with food and sweet treats (always a winner) and a personal message from Kay and the Chairman. "Our club is incredibly fortunate to have an amazing network of volunteers who carry out so many different roles, helping to support the day to day running of the club," said Kay. "Whether their contribution is seen every day or happens quietly behind the scenes, everyone of them plays an important part in making our club what it is. "If you are on Facebook you may have seen our 'seven days of volunteer appreciation' posts. "We also have a 'Give Thanks' volunteer display board in the foyer which celebrates those who give their time so generously. "That leaves me one final thing to say – thank you for your time, your commitment, your enthusiasm and your willingness to help whenever needed. "Volunteers are the heart of our club and we are extremely grateful for everything you do" Waterloooville Branch meets on the first Wednesday of every month at the Jubilee Business Centre in Aston Road.

WALLASEY Branch

Sam Ditchfield and Tony Boswell, completed the Wirral walk on 7 June, raising £836 for the Wallasey RNA club. They said they met some interesting people along the way, all walking to support different charities. They completed the walk in just over four hours and would like to thank the members of the club, friends, family, and workmates who sponsored them – without the support and kindness of these people, they would not have been able to raise so much money. Sam got blisters on one of her feet halfway through but carried on and completed the walk because of the good cause involved. They feel Wallasey Branch provides great support to the local community and feel it's a privilege to be able to help in any way they can to assist the club to give this support.



DORCHESTER Branch

Veteran and Service teams from across Dorset gathered at Dorchester Branch's annual Charity Skittles Tournament, raising funds for RNRMC. Teams from Dorchester, Weymouth and Portland Branches, the Fleet Air Arm Association, the Royal British Legion and sponsor Drumgrange Ltd battled down the alley in good spirit. The winners were a hybrid team of six Dorchester RNA players with one each from Drumgrange and the



RBL. Drumgrange, a Portland-based defence and technology firm, generously sponsored the evening with a £500

cheque. The raffle proceeds added to the total raised which, after expenses were deducted, amounted to £561.78 which included a donation from the sponsors, moving the branch toward its £1,000 target for the year. Pictured above are Richard Fagan of Drumgrange presenting the £500 sponsorship cheque to Dorchester Branch Treasurer S/M Pat Knight and Chairman S/M Jim Armstrong.



They are pictured with the T-shirts they were wearing as they believe this is a strong message, not only to the veterans and serving members of the Armed Forces, but also to the wider community.



OBITUARIES

S/M IDRIS WYNNE WILLIAMS

Idris Wynne Williams was born and raised in Bangor, North Wales. After leaving school, he joined the Royal Navy, undergoing basic training at HMS Ganges in 1962 before moving on to HMS Raleigh.

His first ship was HMS Anzio, a Landing Ship Tank (LST) – a specialised amphibious vessel designed to carry tanks, vehicles and troops directly onto beaches. During this time, he served from HMS Rooke in Gibraltar and later from HMS Jufair in Bahrain.

Idris then returned to HMS Sultan in Gosport where he trained as a Marine Engineering Mechanic.

He subsequently served on HMS Orion, HMS Tenby (*Idris is pictured right on board the ship*) and HMS Leopard before returning to UK shore

establishments, where he was promoted to PO.

Following a spell at Faslane, Idris served on the survey ships HMS Hydra and HMS Hecate, before a final seagoing appointment on HMS Triumph.

Idris left the Royal Navy in 1978 with the rate of POMEM.

After leaving the Royal Navy, Idris spent 17 years working as a fitter for Stagecoach before becoming a maintenance engineer at the Royal Victoria Infirmary in Newcastle, where he remained until his retirement.

During his Naval service, while his ship was docked in Malta, he met Mary, who was from the North East. They

married in 1977 and settled in Newcastle to be close to Mary's family, where they continued to live, looking after their many cats and spending time with their grandchildren. Idris continued to live in the same house following the sad loss of Mary who, after 46 years of married life, passed away in March 2013.



Around 2011, Idris joined Tyne Branch. A quiet but friendly gentleman, he was well liked by his fellow shipmates and was one of the younger members of the '44 Club', a group made up mainly of stokers, most of whom were born in 1944. Although poor health prevented him from attending Branch meetings in recent years, he remained in regular contact with several shipmates. Idris died peacefully on 27 June. He will be remembered with much affection by his shipmates at Tyne Branch, and will be greatly missed by his family and friends.

More than 20 Tyne shipmates, accompanied by the Branch Standard, joined Idris's family and friends at his funeral (*pictured left*).



S/M MIKE SEAWARD

On 20 July, Torbay Branch bid farewell to long-time Shipmate Mike Seaward, who passed away peacefully after a battle with several medical conditions. Mike had been Vice President of the Branch until recently when he stepped down.

Mike was born on 24 November 1943 in Torquay, the second of five children. Growing up in Torquay, his early life was tough and his family fondly remembered him as a bit of a tearaway. He spent much of his school years in a Barnardo's home in the New Forest, where he remained something of a rebel, getting into mischief, and playing cricket – although those years shaped him positively.

At the age of 16 he went straight from Barnardo's into the Royal Navy. While on leave, Mike returned to Torquay in uniform and met his future wife Irene. They married in July 1965. At his father's funeral, Mike's son remarked on his mother's incredible belief that she could tame the rebellious boy who enjoyed a drink and spent his days sailing around the world... For Mike, the Navy was his first love.

He faced some early 'challenges' with the Regulating Branch, but gradually overcame them.

After training as a Writer at HMS Ganges and Pembroke, his first seagoing ship was HMS Ausonia, a converted Cunard liner serving as a submarine support ship during his time on board.

Mike served on several ships, including HMS Hermes and Fearless. He also spent two years in Singapore on a married accompanied draft. Additionally, he served in shore establishments such as HMS Nelson in Portsmouth and BRNC Dartmouth. There he met shipmates with whom he would later reunite at Torbay Branch.

After leaving the Royal Navy, Mike worked for the NHS at Torbay Hospital, and after retirement, he became a Magistrate in Torbay for more than a decade, taking him full circle from the rebellious kid and young man to a role in making sure that law and order and fairness happened in his town.

Throughout his 25 years in the Royal Navy, Mike forged many friendships and achieved the rank of Chief Petty Officer Writer. Some of his former shipmates were able to wish him 'Fair Winds and a Following Sea' at his funeral in Torquay. Shipmate, rest easy. Someone else will balance the ledgers and pay the wages.



S/M DOUG PIDDINGTON

Newport (South Wales) Branch have announced the sad news that founder member S/M Doug Piddington has crossed the bar a couple of weeks short of his 94th birthday.

Doug had the distinction of being the Royal Navy's last Chief Sailmaker and served in many ships, including the Royal Navy's last, largest and fastest battleship, HMS Vanguard. He was awarded the Naval General Service Medal, with the clasp for 'Malaya'.

He also received the GSM (1962) with two clasps, one of which was for 'Radfan' while serving on board light fleet aircraft carrier HMS Centaur – quite a rare award for Naval forces. In December 1963, Centaur had gone to the aid of the Greek cruise liner TSMS Lakonia that had caught fire near Madeira.

Centaur's helicopter helped to recover the victims of the tragedy, which claimed the lives of 128 passengers and crew.

As 'Sails', Doug sewed the makeshift shrouds which held the bodies until they were disembarked at Gibraltar on Christmas Day.

This was a memory which stayed with Doug all his life.

Doug was a founder member of Newport Branch back in 1996 and served as Chairman for 18 years.

During this time, he showed amazing commitment to building the membership. He was also instrumental in getting a pub named after Newport's only Victoria Cross winner – Lt Cdr J W 'Tubby' Linton, Commanding Officer of submarine HMS Turbulent.

Without fail, Doug was always at the forefront of the Poppy Appeal every single year.

He sorted and delivered the collecting tins and sundry paraphernalia to numerous locations around Newport.

He worked hard to ensure there was enough support and encouragement for his volunteer shipmates.

And this was all the more remarkable as he was the full-time carer for his late wife, who was a wheelchair user; Doug also organised their involvement in the Rotary Club Raffle. He had a fabulous rapport with the local supermarkets, which allowed shipmates to pitch their table in their lobbies.

Because of Doug's total commitment and encouragement, they often raised considerable funds for the Branch.

Doug always showed a keen interest in our local Sea Cadets, visiting them regularly and often presenting them with donations from Branch funds for

necessary equipment for their group. Doug was a compassionate individual who made a point of always visiting any Naval veteran who was unwell and, considering the average age of the group, he had his work cut out for him!

He often collected less mobile shipmates in his own car and brought them to the meetings just so that they could enjoy the social aspect of the group.

A cheerful and determined character, Doug was angling for a lift to the Branch's latest get-together only two days before his passing.

In a nutshell, Doug Piddington was a very much admired and appreciated member of Newport Branch; rarely absent from their meetings, to which he always brought humour and a positive input.

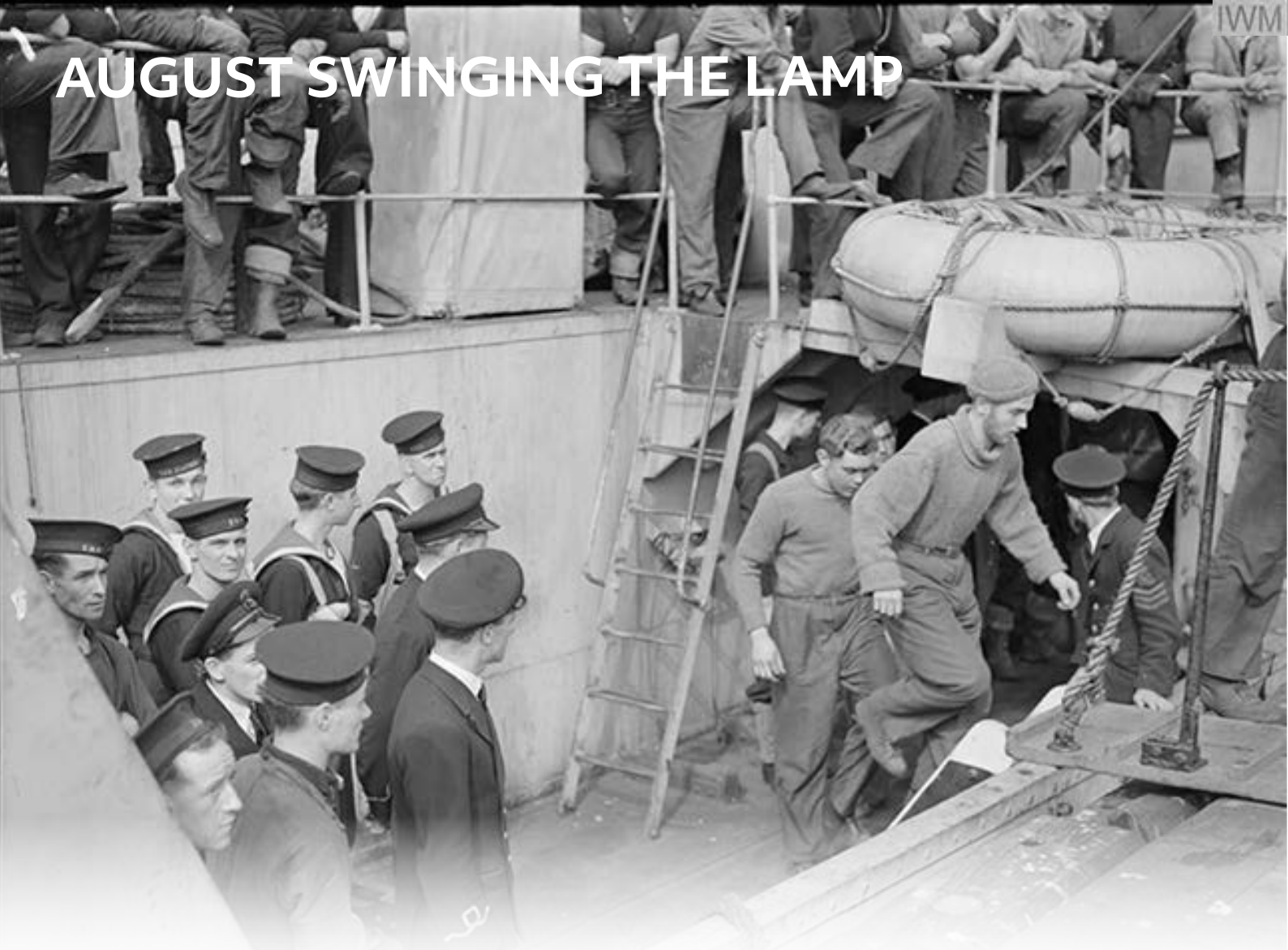
He will be greatly missed.

Branch members extend their deepest sympathy to his two sons and their families.

Stand at ease, Shipmate. Your duty is done.



AUGUST SWINGING THE LAMP



German sailors captured when their submarine U-379 was sunk are pictured disembarking from Flower-class corvette HMS Dianthus in Liverpool in August 1942. Image from the Imperial War Museum collection: © IWM (A 11937)

'Swinging the Lamp' events are drawn, by permission, from the definitive Naval history reference book *The Royal Navy Day by Day*, written by Honorary S/M Lawrie Phillips and published by The History Press (www.thehistorypress.co.uk). It is currently available online for around £65 new (search ISBN number 978-0750982665)

Flower-class corvettes were, in many ways, remarkable ships.

They were designed to be cheap escorts, specifically for East Coast convoys – bigger, and better armed than Naval trawlers, but not as powerful or fast as frigates or destroyers.

The concept was finalised in the months before World War 2 broke out, and such ships were intended to be built at smaller shipyards around the country, allowing large numbers to be produced quickly.

The basic design was created by the Smiths Dock Company on Teesside, and was a development on their 700-ton whaler *Southern Pride*; she was taken up by the Admiralty early in the war but was wrecked off Sierra Leone in June 1944.

The Flower-class was a success story – almost 300 were built, chiefly for the RN and Royal Canadian Navy. And they proved far more capable than as expected

of them – they had a long range (up to 3,500 nautical miles) so were heavily used for the crucial and wide-ranging Mid-Ocean Escort Force, and as such were at the heart of the Battle of the Atlantic at the most difficult time for the Allies.

The downside was that they were notoriously uncomfortable ships, especially the original vessels, before modifications were made during the build programme.

They rolled prodigiously, and were always wet – water poured in through hatches, they were cursed with condensation issues, and even the heads added to the problem – they were simple pipes open to the sea, so were always liable to allow a jet of freezing seawater to enter the ship in rough seas.

They were also slow – at 16 knots, they would generally be outrun by U-boats if they didn't strike swiftly, and if they investigated a contact there was always the risk that they would not be able to catch up with their convoy.

During the course of the war 36 Flower-class ships were lost, 22 of them to U-boat torpedoes. But they were responsible – either alone or in joint actions – for more

Continued on page 45

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

than 50 Axis submarines, one of them being U-379. This particular boat was commissioned in late November 1941, and spent several months in a training programme before undertaking its first war patrol in July 1942 as part of the 1st Flotilla.

So in the first week of August 1942 U-379 was still a very new, but dangerous, 870-ton war machine, which she proved on 8 August by sinking two merchantmen (almost 9,000 tons combined) in Convoy SC 94, inbound from Nova Scotia.

Later the same day, in calm sunny weather south-east of Greenland, she was lying on the surface of the Atlantic with U-176 exchanging information when she was spotted by Flower-class corvette HMS Dianthus, which steamed towards her firing her 4in gun.

The German submarine crash-dived, so Dianthus and Canadian corvette HMCS Chilliwack carried out an ASDIC sweep, which failed to pick up the U-boat. Chilliwack rejoined the convoy but Dianthus remained in the area to carry out a further sweep, and as darkness fell she spotted her prey on the surface once more, attempting to slip away.

As Dianthus steamed in again the submarine managed to dive, but this time a pattern of depth charges forced her back to the surface.

Dianthus attacked with all her guns and attempted to ram the boat, delivering a glancing blow before circling

to ram it three more times.

The U-boat finally sank, taking 40 of her crew of 45 down with her.

Dianthus, which was commissioned seven months before her victim, was part of the C1 group of the Mid-Ocean Escort Force at the time of the sinking, and because she had loitered for so long she was unable to rejoin the convoy. Furthermore, she was running low on fuel, and according to some accounts supplemented her fuel oil with cooking oil and other such substances to ensure she made it back to Liverpool.

After her damaged plating was repaired she continued to escort Atlantic convoys, including the Battles of Convoys ON 145, ON 166, SC 121 and HX 233, completing 322 convoys escorts in total.

She spent the final year of the war on European coastal duties, and decommissioned in May 1947, going on to act as a Norwegian buoy tender under the name Thorslep and a whale catcher (in effect returning to her Southern Pride roots) before she was scrapped in 1969.

Corvette HMS Dianthus docked in Liverpool on 14 August 1942. She bears the scars of her encounter with U-379 on 8 August, when she depth-charged the submarine then rammed it four times, causing it sink with the loss of 40 of its crew of 45. Image from the Imperial War Museum collection: © IWM (A 11949).



LONGCAST

2026

8 August	Area 5 Quarterly Meeting (1300, online)
11 Sept	CONA Conference, Portsmouth
12 Sept	Scottish Area Quarterly Meeting (City of Edinburgh Branch)
19 Sept	Area 4 Meeting (Weymouth Branch)
3 Oct	RNA Uckers World Championships, Royal Maritime Hotel, Portsmouth
8 Nov	Remembrance Sunday
14 Nov	Area 5 Quarterly Meeting
13 Feb 2027	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



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Sea Urchin's Gin	10% to RNA from the sale of each bottle
Navy Strength Gin	Don't forget to tick the box for RNA.
Arctic Convoy Vodka	P&P is free for orders over £40, otherwise it is £4.50.
China Fleet Country Club	Click on the link for offers for Serving and ex-Serving RN and RM
Trinity Insurance	For offers see https://tinyurl.com/ssy8vt5s

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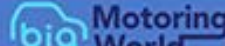
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THE FORCER PROTOCOL

"WHEN THE GUNS GO SILENT, THAT'S WHEN THE BATTLE BEGINS"

Are you

- **A veteran?**
- **Currently serving in the Armed Forces?**
- **Are you supporting a veteran?**

Do you feel vulnerable?

Are you or someone you know likely to be a missing person?



**SCAN NOW FOR
MORE INFORMATION**



OpNOVA



ROYAL NAVAL ASSOCIATION EASTBOURNE

REMEMBRANCE DINNER 2026

FRIDAY, 6TH NOVEMBER, 1900 (FOR 1930)
HYDRO HOTEL, EASTBOURNE,
BN20 7HE

A celebration of our veteran community and their service. Join the Eastbourne community in a spirit of pride, compassion and camaraderie as we honour those who have served. All proceeds will support local veterans.

Dress code: black tie/ formal

To book or for more information contact:
Jen Layzell (jenniferlayzell1933@gmail.com)
or Val Thornton (val_t_1@hotmail.com)

Starters

Smoked Salmon with King Prawns
Gilled Capricorn Goats Cheese
Butternut Squash Soup

Main courses

Ballotine of Chicken
Medio Roasted Sirloin of Beef
Pan-Seared Sea Trout

Desserts

Tiramisu
Passion fruit tartlet
Chocolate Mousse

3 courses: £43 for RNA members (£48 non-members)

2 courses: £35 for RNA members (£40 non-members)

Please share any specific dietary requirements when you book



HELP for
HEROES

SO, YOU'RE LEAVING THE MILITARY?

We can help with your 'what next'

- Welfare advice (including social care, employment, benefits, debt, and more.)
- Mental and physical health support
- Grants and financial guidance
- Courses to support your wellbeing
- Community and sports activities

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helpforheroes.org.uk/get-help

Call: **0300 303 9888** (Mon - Fri 9am-5pm)



“

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