

SEMAPHORE CIRCULAR



Pictures by S/M Nigel Huxtable

QUAYS TO SUCCESS

Much was promised – and much was delivered as the RNA National Conference came to the North-West.

City of Salford Branch, with support from Area 10, dedicated the weekend in Greater Manchester to their much-loved member Steve Caulfield, who crossed the bar in April last year, and they certainly did their old shipmate proud.

From the lively Meet & Greet on Friday evening at Craftbrew to the formality of the Drumhead Service on the dockside on Sunday morning, the weekend had all the elements of the classic Conference programme, with some extras thrown in to make the whole thing even more memorable.

Fine summer weather – thankfully a warm spell between two heatwaves – helped, as did the spectacular location around Salford Quays, once a bustling port and now a centre for arts, high-tech business restaurants and entertainment.

It seemed an appropriate choice, given that the Association combined business (with a dash of high technology), eating and entertainment and art over the course of three busy days. A National Council meeting on Friday was the first item on the weekend programme, in preparation for the Annual General Meeting the following day.

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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 7 August, and the deadline for material is 1000 on Wednesday 5 August. Branch Notes will next be published on Friday 10 July, Semaphore Shorts on Friday 17 and 31 July, with a members' email on Friday 24 July.



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Shipmates from across the country met up at the Craftbrew cafe/bar on Friday evening, serenaded by an Elvis impersonator, and there may have been the odd sore head as shipmates went back to their hotels to prepare for Saturday. The AGM was held in the Lowry, an arts centre which showcases the talent of one of Manchester's most famous sons, the artist L S Lowry – members of the National Council and RNA officials are pictured below before the start of the event.

Most famous for his simplistic 'matchstick men' paintings, those shipmates who took advantage of the chance to browse the galleries would have discovered another side to Lowry, who also painted moody portraits and seascapes.

The Conference and AGM began at 0930 sharp when the National Standard was marched on, and Conference was opened by Deputy National President S/M Mark Slawson –

the National President, S/M Vice Admiral Duncan Potts, was unavailable as he was working overseas.

Opening prayers were said by the Chaplain of the Fleet, the Rev Dr Mark Davidson, after which S/M Mark introduced a video message from S/M Vice Admiral Potts, who looked back at the Association's 75th anniversary year, which he deemed a great success, culminating in the Fundraising Concert at Portsmouth Guildhall, featuring the Band of HM Royal Marines Collingwood, the Fisherman's Friends, and the combined RNA Community Choirs from Portsmouth, Plymouth and Scotland.

S/M Admiral Potts noted that the Association had reached the 25,000 member mark, bearing in mind that only a few short years ago that figure was below 10,000. He said that it feels like the RNA is in rude health.

Looking forward, the National President said S/M Mark had done a terrific job in terms of governance and the new Royal





Charter, strongly supported by RNA Head of Governance S/M Nick Purkis, but said it was now important that the Association moves on to implementation.

There were thanks for two members of staff leaving shortly after Conference concluded – Membership Secretary S/M Sara Field and General Secretary/CEO S/M Bill Oliphant, who has been with the RNA for more than seven years.

S/M Admiral Potts said he had the highest regard for what Bill had achieved, and the strategic vision that saw the RNA not only come through Covid but to strengthen the service the support it offers to members.

Both Sara and Bill were later awarded Life Membership.

S/M Mark then thanked City of Salford Branch for organising the weekend – with special thanks to S/Ms Peter Barlow, Rebecca Waters, Kev McAllister and Tim Pike, National Council Member for 10 Area – and also acknowledging the support given by other branches and the wider 10 Area family.

There was a welcome from the Deputy National President, who introduced Sara Field's successor as Membership Secretary, former WO1 Caterer S/M Jon Boreham.

A final thank you went to AW Ship Management for sponsoring elements of the Conference weekend, including lunch for

delegates.

After the reading of a patronal

message from King Charles and a letter of support from Portsmouth South MP Stephen Morgan, the Deputy Vice President introduced two guest speakers.

The first was Cllr Robin Garrido, the Ceremonial Mayor of Salford, who welcomed delegates and observers and gave a summary of the City of Salford's development over the past century and its links with the Royal Navy and the maritime industry.

Cllr Garrido was followed by Cdre Tristram Kirkwood, the Royal Navy's Naval Regional Commander for Wales, Western England and the Channel Islands, who updated Conference on the current state of the Royal Navy.

Before the AGM itself began S/M Mark pointed out that two shipmates in the room were part of the RNA's Dragon Boat crew which was taking part in the Chinese Dragon Boat Festival on Salford Quays over Conference weekend.

He also informed shipmates that there were a number of people who were making use of streaming technology to watch proceedings remotely online, including members of





Malta Branch, who were given a round of applause. The National President's Address was delivered by S/M Mark, who said he had visited many Areas in the past year, and that through the dedication and commitment to one another by members, the Association was in a strong position. He reflected on the activities over the past year, bringing shipmates together in the RNA way. The Army v Navy fixture at Twickenham had been very successful, with 1,000 tickets sold through the Association (all topped off by winning for the second year running). He referred to our growing membership – now over 25,000 – and the importance of the Welfare and Wellbeing aspect of the RNA, particularly when we can intervene

'upstream' with peer-to-peer support which can prevent a problem becoming a need for further action or benevolence. That 'peer-to-peer support' is exactly what the RNA does so well, S/M Mark observed, through chatting with oppos and looking out for one another. S/M Mark said we need data to prove to our funders that we are meeting our targets, which is why it is important to keep on top of reporting to Central Office, enabling us to reassure funders that we are doing what we promised we would do. S/M Mark spoke of the changes that were coming, many by necessity in an organisation that was first formed after World War 2. The main point was the formation of a Board of Trustees,

responsible for governance and strategy, while a Members Operating Board of National Council Members will oversee the running of the organisation. A draft of the updated Royal Charter should be ready for Branches to vote on at a special meeting, possibly in November and held online. S/M Mark also said that the Association was looking into ways of helping Branches keep going when they struggle to find the required number of officials, perhaps through the formation of informal groups. He also pointed out that while modern communications platforms allow Association members to stay in touch with each other easily, there are dangers as well, and shipmates should take care when going online lest the RNA's reputation





is affected.

He also stressed that governance was an essential part of how the RNA operates, and while some see it as an administrative burden, it is there to make sure we are on the right side of the law – if a Branch finds there are discrepancies, or an issue that they cannot resolve, they should seek guidance and assistance through the Association hierarchy, calling on Central Office if necessary.

The President's Awards for recruiting and Gift Aid Returns this year went to:

- Sword of Honour: **11 Area**
- Briggs Dirk: **Cardiff Branch**
- Briggs Rose Bowl: **Torbay Branch**
- Overseas Certificate: **Japan Branch**
- Tasker Bowl: **4 Area**
- Sherwood Memorial Sword: **Eastbourne Branch**

The first President's Commendations were also awarded at



Conference:

- S/M Brian MacKenzie
 - S/M Les Yeoman
 - S/M Soapy Watson
 - S/M Bob Cumming
 - S/M Ian Irvin – former RNA National Treasurer
 - S/M Andrew Johnson – the driver who diverted his train into Huntingdon station when a knifeman stabbed several passengers last November, allowing emergency services to attend to victims and apprehend a suspect.
- Head of Governance S/M Nick Purkis announced that there were 70 delegates in attendance, and reiterated that Branches must ensure they get their Returns to Central Office right, as all charities are under intense scrutiny, and any issues that arise over incorrect procedures or money spent incorrectly could reflect badly on the Association and lose us support – if in doubt, consult Central Office was the message.
- National Council nominees were unopposed, so the following were returned: Dennis Potter (Area 2); Andy Christie (Area 3) with Mel Chumberley as Deputy NCM; Warwick Belfitt (Area 4); Diana Sadler (Area 5); Paul Harris (Area 9); Paul





Stephenson (Area 12) with Robert Buchanan as Deputy NCM.

The minutes of the 2025 AGM were accepted without comment, and National Treasurer S/M Peter Nicholls reported that he had seen nothing of concern in the 2025 Annual Accounts, noting that a deficit had been anticipated in order to fully exploit the opportunities during our 75 anniversary year.

S/M Peter pointed out that a property fund had been set up long ago as a contingency in case a new Central Office location was needed, but with the RNA now settled in Portsmouth Naval Base and the need to move looking unlikely, alternative uses for the fund are being considered, although it is currently invested and attracting interest.

The National Council Report was presented by National Chairman S/M Andy Christie.

S/M Andy started with a list of thanks, including personal thanks to Bill Oliphant and Sara Field.

He thanked S/M Mark for his address ("20 minutes of gold..."), his colleagues on the National Council, to the City of Salford organising team, and to the Chief Executive of RNRMC for their continued support.

He finished the list by thanking members of the Central Office staff for all their efforts, including S/M Jon Everett's work on Welfare and Wellbeing, such as creating the Funeral Support Guide.

S/M Andy said advances had been made with Governance (big thanks

GIVE US YOUR VIEWS ON CONFERENCE

So, the National Conference at Salford Quays may be over, but we're already looking ahead to 2027 and planning to make the gathering in Durham every bit as good as the 2026 version – and you have a role to play in that.

First and foremost, we'd like to thank everyone who attended the Salford event, as well as the dedicated volunteers from City of Salford Branch and Area 10 who worked so hard to deliver a welcoming, enjoyable and memorable weekend for shipmates from across the Association.

From the Annual General Meeting, presentations and formal ceremonies to the social events and opportunities to reconnect with old friends, Conference is an important part of the Royal Naval Association calendar.

Every year, we aim to build on what has come before – and that's where you can help. Whether you attended in person or joined us via the livestream on Zoom, we would really value your feedback.

We'd like to know what you enjoyed most, what worked well, and whether there are any aspects of the event that could be improved.

You might have ideas for new activities, suggestions for the programme, or thoughts on anything we could add, change or remove to make future Conferences even more valuable for our members. Your feedback will play an important role in shaping future National Conferences and ensuring they continue to meet the needs of shipmates across the Association.

Please take a few minutes to complete our short feedback form by following the Microsoft forms link [here](#).

Remember, no observation or suggestion is too minor to be considered.

We look forward to hearing your thoughts.



to S/M Mark, S/M Nick and Central Office's Governance specialist Kate Aldous).

He said that there was plenty of thought going into fundraising initiatives as well.

S/M Andy said that more than £12,000 has been raised towards the initial target of £15,000 to repair the Naval Service Memorial at the National Memorial Arboretum in Staffordshire, allowing work to proceed.

However, he urged Branches and members to continue fundraising for the upkeep and maintenance of the eye-catching and colourful glass-and-stone memorial.

There were no National Council motions of urgency, so delegates were asked to consider the single Branch motion of urgency, in which Plymouth Branch proposed to host the 2028 AGM/Conference weekend in the city on 16-18 June, under the auspices of Area 4.

The Branch said that the Crowne Plaza Hotel would be the base for accommodation, a reception, the AGM, and the gala dinner, while a ceremony would be held on Plymouth Hoe.

Alternative venues are being considered, and the China Fleet Country Club at Saltash could also provide accommodation as well as host the RNA golf competition.

With no comments for or against, the motion received unanimous support.

With no Council motions, a single Branch Motion was next for discussion, with Shrewsbury Branch proposing "that the National Council undertakes a comprehensive review of the volume and complexity of administrative tasks currently required from branches and members, with the aim of simplifying these processes to better support volunteers – particularly those of senior age or with limited digital confidence."

National Chairman S/M Andy said that the National Council had been considering ideas on simplification as part of the overall governance overhaul, and that strand of work blends into the Shrewsbury proposal.

Those delegates who commented were generally in favour of a review of the administrative burden, and the motion was carried unanimously.

S/M Bill Oliphant said it was an important decision, as it gives the National Council and Central Office a mandate to undertake the task.

The Central Charities Fund Conference Raffle was then drawn, with first prize (£500) going to M Hague (Skipton) second prize of £300 to E Mitchell (Harwich) and third prize (£200) to T Potter of Londonderry.

S/M Roslyn Hastie-Murray updated delegates of plans for the 2027 Conference in Durham, and while plans are still being firmed up the date is set for 4-6 June, the AGM will probably be in the historic Durham Miners Hall and the gala dinner at the Radisson Blu

hotel on the banks of the River Wear.

Sunday's parade will feature the Palace Green and members will join the morning service at Durham Cathedral.

S/M Anthony Boddrell spoke of how the online element of the AGM had gone, saying there had been up to 25 participants, and that Malta and Plymouth Branches had sent their congratulations on the initiative.

S/M June Coburn had also been in touch, saying that she was very touched that her late husband S/M Bob had been remembered, and sending her congratulations to S/M Richard Shenton who was the first recipient of the Bob Coburn Memorial Cup at the recent National Standard Bearers competition.

With the playing of the National Anthem, the National Standard was handed over to the new National Standard Bearer S/M Martyn Evans and marched off, with the AGM closing at just before 1.15pm.

Shipmates were able to spend the afternoon observing the Dragon Boat racing which was taking place right outside the Lowry, while others took advantage of the boat trips around Salford Quays or used the generous offer of free Metrolink tram and Bee Network bus transport for RNA members to explore a little further afield.

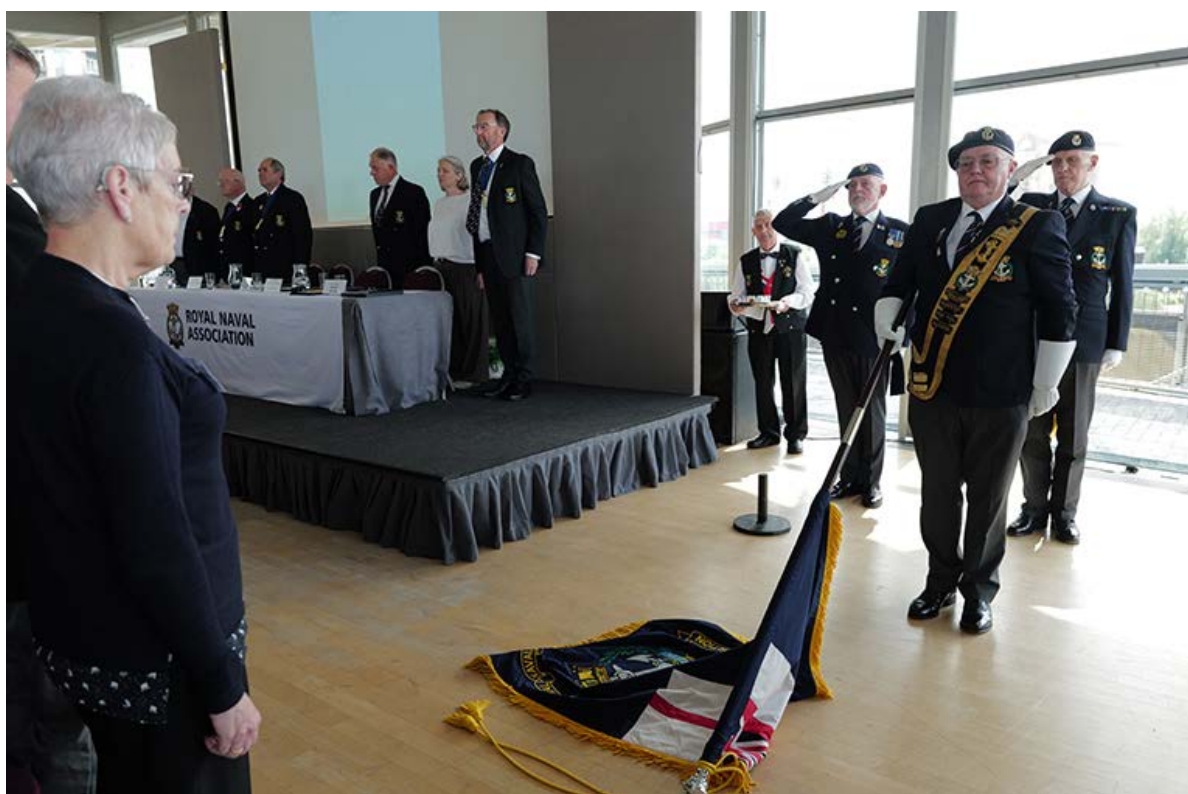
The evening's Gala Dinner was staged at the impressive Imperial War Museum North building, just across the water from the Lowry, where diners were treated to a display by the RMA Corps of Drums and an audio-visual presentation by the museum.

There was also a presentation on the Royal Society of St George, a chance for the Ceremonial Mayor of Salford to further explore the links between Salford and the maritime community, and the opportunity for personal thanks by and to those leaving the Association.

S/M Mark revealed to diners that the RNA Dragon Boat had won its first race, came second in the second, 4th in the third race and finished the day ninth overall out of 45 entries.

The weekend finished, as is traditional, with a parade and service, on this occasion a Drumhead Service beside Dock 10 on Salford Quays.

Over to you, Durham...



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CHAIRMAN'S CHAT

Dear Shipmates,

Hope you are all well and in fine fettle despite it being Harry Redders. Summer has arrived with its 'heat bubbles', so stay in the shade, make sure you slap plenty of Factor 50, and if you can install air-conditioning I'd recommend doing so!

So, to this month's Dit.....

Sadly, we have had to say farewell to General Secretary Bill Oliphant and Membership Secretary Sara Field, who are moving on after several years. Their significant contribution and commitment will be a huge miss to the RNA. We wish them every success and good luck for the future. In recognition, the National Council presented at Conference a thoroughly deserved award of RNA Life Membership to them both. BZ Shipmates Bill and Sara.

For those Shipmates who were unable to attend the Annual Conference which was held in Salford on 12-14 June you missed out on a brilliant RNA occasion! Please see below a shortened summary of a top Conference weekend.

■ Friday witnessed the Meet and Greet with well over 150 Shipmates in attendance and held in our own pub! Where else would Shipmates want to be on a Friday night in Salford!

It even included a dance and singalong from Elvis and Sam the Salford Branch Leading Cat – it was one of those evenings.

■ Saturday was the AGM, held in the Lowry Theatre, and in the evening the Gala Dinner in the IWM (North).

■ The AGM followed the annual format and was Chaired by DNP S/M Mark Slawson as NP S/M Duncan was unable to attend. S/m Duncan launched the AGM with a short introductory video from Brazil! In attendance was Cdre Kirkwood and the Chaplain of the Fleet S/M The Reverend Mark Davidson.

■ A small ceremony was conducted for the handover of National Standard Bearer to S/M Martyn Evans. BZ and thanks to S/M David Corrigan for carrying the National Standard and representing former National Standard Bearer the late S/M Steve Champion during the handover ceremony.

■ Two Motions were proposed:

Motion 1 - that the Conference in 2028 be held in Plymouth, which was unanimously agreed.

Motion 2 – In summary, from Shrewsbury Branch that the National Council investigate 'ways and means' of assisting Branches in reducing administration relating to financial and general governance, which could make life much easier. This motion was also unanimously agreed.

■ Saturday Evening – the Gala Dinner was held in the amazing setting of the Imperial War Museum (North). Much revelry, with Shipmates enjoying a three-course meal, large quantities of refreshments and a smashing Raffle.

■ Sunday - Shipmates gathered in the BBC Plaza for a Drumhead service led by the Chaplain of the Fleet and attended by many Shipmates led on parade by the excellent Manchester Police Band.

On behalf of all Shipmates, our sincere thanks go to S/Ms

Peter Barlow and Rebecca Waters from City of Salford Branch, plus many unheralded Shipmates from City of Salford and Area 10 Committee for all their commitment and efforts in organising this outstanding Conference. You must be extremely proud to have delivered such a superb weekend for everyone who attended.

Thank you and BZ!

BZ also to Aldershot Branch for representing our Association at the National Armed Forces Day in Aldershot, despite being overwhelmed by Percy Pongo! There were over 1,000 on parade with 120 veterans and 23,000 visitors to the AFD and 6,000 on Community Day. Aldershot Chairman S/M Mick Mills said "they struggled to give away Pussers rum!

"It must have been an Army town or just too hot on the day!"

A couple more issues you will be interested in.....

First, the Naval Service Memorial – Shipmates, thank you so much for your donations which continue to roll in, and I will report on this in detail shortly. We have now raised enough to carry out the repairs and install the 'seals' which will protect the Memorial.

As I stated at Conference, I would really appreciate further donations so that we can raise

enough funds to enable us to take the Arboretum's offer to provide insurance in perpetuity.

I am sorry to report that it is somewhat disappointing that out of our 207 Branches only 20 have donated to date.

I am sure we can do a 'little bit' better, remembering that this is our Memorial! Any ickies are most welcome...

Finally, to sign off: BZ to all Branches for the response to forwarding Annual Returns on time – your time and effort getting these correct is really vital and appreciated.

Come on England (Oh I forgot Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland too!)

Best Wishes

Andy



IN FLANDERS FIELDS – THE ST NEOTS BRANCH PILGRIMAGE

Members of the **St Neots and District Branch** recently returned from a five-day visit to Ypres in Belgium, enjoying a memorable trip that combined remembrance, military history and good company. Travelling in one of the RNA's minibuses, the group crossed from Dover to Dunkirk before making the short journey into Belgium.

Based in the centre of Ypres, they were ideally placed to explore the many battlefields, memorials and cemeteries that make the area one of the most significant sites of remembrance anywhere in the world.

Rather than attempting to visit every well-known landmark, the itinerary was designed to allow shipmates to take their time and appreciate the places they visited.

While famous locations such as the Menin Gate naturally featured prominently, the group also sought out smaller and less-visited sites, many of which proved equally moving.

One of the highlights was a visit to Naval Trench Cemetery, where shipmates laid a wreath in memory of the sailors and Royal Naval Division personnel who fought and died on the Western Front. The visit provided a poignant reminder of the sacrifices made by Naval personnel far from the sea.

The group attended the Last Post Ceremony at the



Menin Gate, an experience that remains as powerful today as it ever has – the ceremony takes place at 8pm every evening, and has done so every day since it started on 2 July 1928.

The ceremony was suspended in Belgium during its occupation by the Germans in World War 2, but the ceremony itself continued daily at Brookwood Military Cemetery in Surrey.

On the day that Allied forces began to liberate Ypres, on 6 September 1944, the ceremony was resumed at the Menin Gate.

Standing alongside visitors from around the world, shipmates reflected on the service and sacrifice of those whose names are inscribed on the memorial – almost 55,000 Commonwealth troops with no known grave who died in the Ypres Salient in the Great War are commemorated on the Menin Gate. Away from the formal acts of remembrance, there was also plenty of opportunity to enjoy the unique atmosphere of Ypres itself. The city's historic market square, cafés and restaurants provided welcome opportunities to relax and share stories after each day's visits. A key aim of the trip was to avoid rushing from one location to another. Most sites were within a short drive of the town, allowing shipmates time to explore, reflect and, where possible,



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visit places of particular personal interest.

This more relaxed approach helped make the experience enjoyable as well as informative.

By the end of the week, shipmates had visited a wide range of locations connected with World War 1, paid their respects at numerous cemeteries and memorials, and strengthened the friendships that are such an important part of Association life.

The trip was widely regarded as a great success, providing an opportunity not only to learn more about the history of the Ypres Salient, but also to remember those who served and sacrificed, while enjoying the companionship of fellow shipmates.

■ For more details and guidelines on using the three RNA minibuses – which were recently supported by a £30,000 grant from the **Veterans Foundation** – see page 25.





UCKERS AFICIONADOS BATTLE IT OUT FOR WELSH HONOURS

Burnham seems to be a name on everybody's lips at the moment.

No, we are not talking politics – the RNA is a politically-neutral organisation

We are referring to Michael and Maria Burnham, who are the newly-crowned Welsh Open Uckers team champions

The tournament returned in style at Builth Wells Rugby Club, bringing together players and supporters from across the Naval family for a day of fiercely-contested competition, friendship and plenty of laughter.

The tournament attracted 16 teams from across the UK, including competitors from Essex, Rhondda, Torfaen,

Wrexham, Monmouth and the South Wales Submariners Association.

Players represented every corner of the Naval community, from stokers and submariners to Royal Marines, Fleet Air Arm personnel, wives, sweethearts, Associate Members and even a serving member.

After a series of closely-fought matches, the **Welsh Open Uckers Team Championship** was won by the Burnhams, from Essex, whose determination and skill saw them emerge victorious from a highly-competitive field.

Finishing as worthy runners-up were Mary Shipton and Karen Hannet, representing the Black Dukes from Monmouth, who pushed the final right to the wire, needing just one final roll to bring a counter home.

The **Welsh Open Uckers Singles Championship** was equally dramatic.

In a tense final between Tim Hannet and Maria Burnham, both players were left needing just one piece to reach home.

After a gripping contest, it was Tim Hannet who secured an epic victory to claim the Welsh Open Uckers Singles title.

Throughout the day, players enjoyed the camaraderie and good humour that have long been hallmarks of the traditional Naval board game.

Many matches were decided by the narrowest of



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margins, with fortunes changing on a single roll of the dice.

The event also included a special moment when Area 7 Chairman S/M Graham Warner presented organiser S/M Dave B with Life Membership of the RNA in recognition of his service and commitment.

The celebrations continued into the evening with a performance from the Lower Deckers shanty group, who entertained the crowd with two hours of sea shanties, encouraging plenty of enthusiastic audience participation.

A grand raffle rounded off the day, with many attendees heading home with prizes and memories from what was widely regarded as one of the most successful Welsh Open Uckers Tournaments to date.

Plans are already under way for the 2027 tournament, and after the success of this year's event, it promises to be another occasion not to be missed.

COULD YOU RULE THE (UCKERS) WORLD?

The Welsh have new champions – but are you good enough to stand like a colossus across the entire Uckers world?

The World Uckers Championships 2026 will be staged in Portsmouth this autumn and you are invited to put your name forward for this prestigious competition.

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 – this is an event for everyone.

Register Your Interest

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!





THANK YOU FOR YOUR SERVICE

Tens of thousands of people came together in Aldershot and across the country to mark Armed Forces Day, the annual national moment to thank the people who serve and have served in the UK's Armed Forces.

More than 230 Armed Forces Day events took place across the UK as communities from every part of the country marked the occasion.

This included the main celebrations in Aldershot – the historic home of the British Army – which were attended by Defence Secretary Dan Jarvis. The event saw a spectacular parade of Armed Forces personnel and military

bands from the Royal Navy, Royal Marines, British Army and Royal Air Force.

Three military parachute display teams – the British Army Red Devils, the Royal Air Force Falcons and the Royal Navy Raiders – dropped into the main arena.

While in Aldershot, the Defence Secretary announced that the 2027 Armed Forces Day national event will take place in Southport on Merseyside. He also celebrated the Armed Forces' powerful role in creating opportunity for young people from every background.

"Armed Forces Day is an extraordinary opportunity for our nation to come together to thank the people who keep this country safe, and all those who support them," he said.

"It's an honour to join the celebrations in Aldershot alongside thousands of people to pay tribute to the exceptional courage and dedication of all our personnel. "Southport already hosts the largest Armed Forces event in their region, and as a community that knows about resilience and coming together, it is fitting that they will





host the 2027 national day.”
Chief of the Defence Staff Air Chief Marshal Sir Rich Knighton said: “Armed Forces Day is about more than a parade or a flypast – it’s about the bond between those who serve and the society they protect.”

“In Aldershot today that bond was on full display, and I’m proud of every service person who took part.” Significant AFD events with a Naval flavour took place in Portsmouth and Plymouth – most of the pictures on these pages by RNA photographer S/M Nigel Huxtable (Portsmouth) and the MOD (Plymouth) show these events.

Find out more about Armed Forces Day at www.armedforcesday.org.uk



WELLMEREN SIGNED UP FOR BEATING RETREAT DISPLAY

The internationally acclaimed Wellermen will join this year's Massed Bands of HM Royal Marines Beating Retreat, bringing their distinctive sea shanty sound to one of the nation's most spectacular displays of military music and pageantry.

Taking place on 16 and 17 July on Horse Guards Parade, Beating Retreat will feature more than 200 Royal Marines musicians, the precision drill of the Corps of Drums, a Royal Navy Guard of Honour and the moving Naval Sunset ceremony.

Audiences will also enjoy a special guest appearance from The Wellermen, whose modern take on maritime music has earned them a global following. Known for reviving traditional sea shanties for a new generation, the group has introduced millions of people around the world to Britain's rich maritime heritage.

Named after the 19th Century supply ships of the Weller brothers, who were amongst the earliest settlers of southern New Zealand, the Wellermen folk group sprang from the TikTok sea shanty trend of the Covid lockdown period which

came to be known as ShantyTok.

That trend started with a viral version by Scottish postman Nathan Evans of a New Zealand ballad/sea shanty – 'Soon May the Wellerman Come' – about the crew of a whaler anticipating the arrival of the Wellerman with supplies, including rum, from overseas.

All proceeds from the Beating Retreat event will support the work of Royal Navy & Royal Marines Charity and RMA - The Royal Marines Charity, helping to provide lifelong support to serving personnel, veterans and their families.

Speaking of the event, a statement from The Wellermen said: "Our journey with The Wellermen has always been about keeping maritime storytelling alive for a new generation.

"Joining the Massed Bands of HM Royal Marines for Beating Retreat feels like a perfect full-circle moment, connecting traditional folk music with centuries of Naval pageantry.

"We are incredibly proud to be part of such a historic display and to celebrate Britain's rich maritime heritage while supporting the vital work of the Royal

Navy and Royal Marines charities."

Maj Steve Green, Director of Music at the Royal Marines Band Service, said: "Music has always played a central role in celebrating the Royal Navy's history and traditions, and we're delighted to welcome The Wellermen to Beating Retreat this year.

"Their passion for maritime music and storytelling makes them a wonderful addition to the programme, and we're looking forward to creating a memorable evening for everyone attending."

The Massed Bands of HM Royal Marines Beating Retreat is one of the Royal Marines' most iconic ceremonial events, showcasing military musicianship, precision drill and centuries of Naval tradition in the heart of London.

Set against the backdrop of St James's Park, the event culminates in the stirring Naval Sunset ceremony, creating an unforgettable experience for audiences. Tickets are available from £17 to £45, with seated, special access and wheelchair-accessible options available. Click [here](#) for tickets.

LANDMARK PROJECT FOR CHINA FLEET CLUB

A landmark £500,000 programme of works will transform the playing experience at one of the South West's most celebrated parkland courses, cementing China Fleet Country Club's position as the premier golf destination on the Devon and Cornwall border.

China Fleet Country Club, the multi-award-winning destination leisure and golf club situated in Saltash, Cornwall, has announced its most ambitious course investment programme to date. The initiative is named Project 32 as it is hoped to complete it by 2032.

Dean Bennett, Managing Director of the club, said: "Project 32 represents one of the most significant investments we have made into our golf course since it first opened.

"This is a long-term commitment to quality, and it reflects our absolute confidence in the future of China Fleet Country Club. "We are building something that our members, our visitors and the wider golfing community in the South West can be genuinely proud of for decades to come."

The programme encompasses three major strands of development: a comprehensive renovation of 63 bunkers across the championship parkland course, the installation of a new extended buggy path serving nine holes, and the introduction of state-of-the-art robotic mowing technology supplied by Echo Robotics.

Working in close partnership with specialist contractor Durabunker, the club's golf and course management team has conducted a meticulous, hole-by-hole assessment of every single bunker on the course.

Each bunker will be individually reconstructed and relined,



using locally-sourced china clay sand.

Due to the phased approach, disruption will be minimal, with bunkers completed one by one throughout the duration of the works.

The second major element of Project 32 is the creation of a new dedicated buggy

path, extending access across nine holes – a significant development in terms of year-round playability.

In challenging weather conditions, buggies and course machinery have historically been unable to travel on certain areas of the course without risking damage to the playing surface and causing health and safety issues. The new path will improve accessibility for golfers, assist course operations and extend the number of days per year golf can be played. The third element of Project 32 is the acquisition of robotic mowers from Echo Robotics. Capable of operating day and night and in all weather conditions, the machines will maintain the course's playing surfaces throughout the year.

These investments form part of a broader £2.5 million refurbishment in recent years, reflecting the long-term ambition of China Fleet Country Club to remain a leading leisure, golf and wellness destination in the UK.

The club was officially opened on 1 June 1991 and is set within 180 acres on the west bank of the Tamar. Owned and operated by China Fleet Trust, a military charity whose origins stem from the original China Fleet Club in Hong Kong, the club serves both serving and former Armed Forces and their families, as well as a wider membership and visiting guests.

<https://www.china-fleet.co.uk>



ASSOCIATION CHOIR HELPS CELEBRATE PORT ANNIVERSARY

Members of the RNA Choir were delighted to be part of celebrations marking the 50th anniversary of Portsmouth International Port, taking part in a well-attended open day last month.

The event welcomed thousands of visitors from across the local community, offering a unique opportunity to find out more about the ferry and cruise liner port's day-to-day operations while celebrating five decades of achievement and service.

Throughout the day, the RNA Choir entertained visitors with a selection of

songs, helping to create a warm and welcoming atmosphere for people of all ages.

Their performances were well received and reflected the strong and enduring ties between the RNA, the city of Portsmouth and its rich maritime heritage.

One choir member said: "It was a real privilege to be part of such an important milestone for the port. "The support from the public was fantastic, and it was wonderful to represent the RNA and share in the celebrations with so many people from the local community."

The anniversary forms part of a wider programme of events taking place throughout the year, recognising Portsmouth International Port's important role not only as a key transport hub, but also as a valued part of the community.

The RNA Choir's involvement is another example of the Association's commitment to supporting local events and bringing people together, while celebrating the Naval connections and shared heritage that remain at the heart of the organisation.

If you would like to join an established RNA choir, or start a new branch in another part of the country, please email wws@rnassoc.org

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](#)

CARS ON OFFER

Explore the July offers from Forces Cars Direct with your exclusive discounts – including the new Toyota bZ4X Touring with saving of £18,253 and the new design of the Cupra Born with an equally impressive £10,426 off.

Their friendly helpful team are on hand to help you choose the right car for you. See the latest offers on their display poster here, and also see their specials here: <https://www.forcescarsdirect.com/special-offers/monthly-offers>

HONOURING THE HEROES OF NORMANDY

On 6 June 1944, thousands of Allied sailors, soldiers and airmen embarked on one of the most significant military operations in history.

D-Day marked the beginning of the liberation of Nazi-occupied Europe and changed the course of World War 2.

RNA standards and members across the country marked the occasion of the 82nd anniversary of the world's greatest amphibious assault – including at the D-Day Stone on Southsea Seafront, as featured here.

The photos on these pages are courtesy of S/M Richie Farman, of the **Portsea and Portsmouth Branch**.

The RNA remembers all those who served during Operation Overlord and honours the sacrifices made by a generation whose courage secured our freedom. Among them were RNA members whose personal stories continue to inspire us, and some of whom told us their stories, including **S/M Roy Harrison**, **S/M Peter Seaborn** and **S/M Vera Brett**.

As the number of surviving D-Day veterans grows ever smaller, preserving their stories becomes increasingly important.

Their experiences remind us that victory was achieved not only by those who stormed the beaches, but also by the sailors protecting convoys, the Wrens supporting operations ashore, and the countless men and women who worked tirelessly behind the scenes.

The RNA remains committed to ensuring that the service and sacrifice of the D-Day generation is never forgotten. On this anniversary, we remember all who served, all who sacrificed, and all who helped secure the freedoms we enjoy today.

People like Leonard Gunner, who crossed the bar in



September 2024, and who was a member of the Royal Naval Association member, from Walton-on-Thames. Shortly before he died Leonard recounted how, just two days after his 19th birthday, he directed fire to protect the troops landing on Gold Beach.

Leonard ended up in a shell-scape on Gold Beach because he was so seasick when on the water that he was sent ashore to become a wireless operator. Leonard said: "The first time I went to sea I was seasick, and you can't be a good radio operator with a bucket

between your legs!

"I didn't find my sea legs though. That's why I joined Combined Ops and ended up on the beach.

"We went over on the Empire Crossbow – I was on the Naval Landing Party 1533.

"There were about eight of us wireless operators placed along the beach. "We were told to dig a hole and stay low. We had Marines with us, who were there to protect us, and I had my Webley pistol if I got into trouble.

"For security we only had a call-sign and frequency for the ship we were directing – we didn't know exactly which one we were communicating with, but I think mine was the Black Prince.

"Messengers from the Army ran back to let us know where the fire was needed, and we communicated this back to the ships so that they did not fire on our own troops."

Leonard remembers someone shouting 'Watch out, here come the Luftwaffe!', but there were only two of them, which strafed the beach but did little damage.

"All I can remember is how noisy it was," said Leonard.



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"I was 19 and full of gung-ho. I was apprehensive, but at the time I didn't think of the danger – it was just an adventure.

"Well, not until the Messerschmitts flew overhead..." After the initial landing, on the afternoon of 6 June, Leonard moved to give signalling support for the building of the Mulberry Harbour.

This structure was built in strict secrecy in yards and factories around the UK.

Within hours of the Allies taking the beachheads, the concrete sections were towed to Normandy and placed in position off Omaha and Gold Beach to form prefabricated harbours, though one was wrecked in a storm just two weeks after D-Day.

After this, Leonard went up to Antwerp with the Canadians to establish a radio station to enable reporting back to the Allied Naval Command in Paris.

When he was conscripted at 18 years old Leonard felt that it would be an adventure. He remembers being excited about helping because the German's were bombing London.

He had been in the Home Guard and was learning to be an engineer.

On being called up, he was allocated to the Royal Navy and spent 26 weeks learning how to operate the radios, becoming fluent in Morse code. They trained in Douglas in the Isle of Man and Ayr in Scotland.

Leonard said: "We had to be fast with Morse code – we

had to do 150 words a minute, so you were practising constantly.

"We also had to have a pocket full of sharpened pencils in case they broke whilst you were writing down the messages.

"I went aboard an American ship once and each operator had a typewriter in front of him and headphones on. The messages came through in words – it was so far in advance of what we had. I was quite jealous."

Leonard was one of 24,000 British, American and Canadian troops men who took part in the D-Day landings on the 6th June 1944. He asked that we remember those men who did not return.



TAILORED SUPPORT – FOR EVERY PART OF YOUR LIFE

If you've served in the Royal Navy or Royal Marines and are finding things difficult since leaving the Service, you are not alone – and support is available to help you move forward into civvy street.

Through **Walking with The Wounded**, supported by a grant from **Royal Navy & Royal Marines Charity** (RNRMC) and **Greenwich Hospital**, specialist Support Care Coordination professionals are on hand to help veterans navigate challenges relating to relationships, housing, finances, wellbeing and more. Whether you are mentally, socially or physically affected by your Service

or transition, this support is designed to help you take the next step forward in a way that feels manageable, personalised and focused on your individual needs.

How can Support Care Coordination help?

If you come forward for help, you will be supported by a dedicated Care Coordinator who will take the time to understand your situation, listen to your concerns, and work with you to build a practical plan of support. This plan may include mental health support, employment guidance, welfare advice, or wider wraparound services depending on your circumstances. Because many veterans initially seek support for employment or welfare issues but are also experiencing mild to moderately severe mental health difficulties, Support Care Coordination ensures these challenges are addressed together rather than in isolation. The aim is to reduce barriers, simplify access to support, and ensure you have someone alongside you as you navigate your next steps. Together, you'll look at what's happening across every significant area of life and build an honest picture of both your current needs and where support could make the biggest difference.

By looking at the whole picture rather than a single issue, Care Coordinators can identify challenges that may be connected. For example, difficulties finding work may be affecting confidence and wellbeing, while financial pressures may be impacting housing stability or relationships. This holistic approach helps ensure veterans receive the right support at the right time, without having to repeat their story to multiple organisations or navigate complex systems on their own.

A joined-up pathway of support

Support Care Coordination is often the first step in a wider journey of support for veterans and their families following transition to



civilian life. Once a Care Coordinator has a full understanding of your needs, they can work with colleagues across Walking with The Wounded to build a tailored

support plan.

This means you are not limited to a single service but can access different types of support as your needs change over time.

Depending on your circumstances, this may include:

Head Start programme – one-to-one private therapy for veterans experiencing mild to moderately severe mental health difficulties, including anxiety, depression and PTSD.

■ **Op Courage** – specialist NHS veterans' mental health support delivered in partnership with the NHS Veterans' Mental Health Service.

■ **Employment support (IPS model)** – helping unemployed veterans experiencing mental health challenges move into and sustain meaningful employment.

■ **Regional Hubs (Northeast/Northwest)** – providing access to accommodation support, welfare advice and employability services for veterans who need practical help to regain stability.

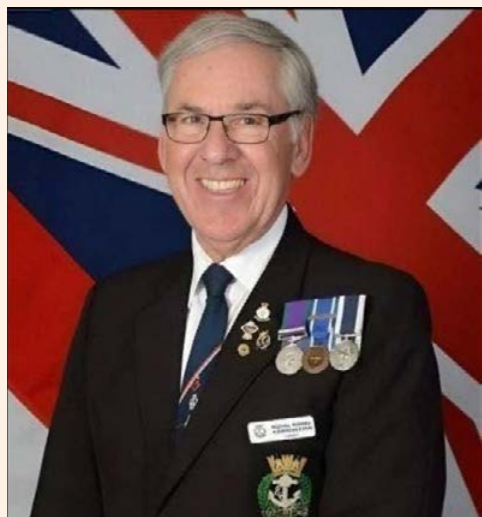
Therapists, employment advisers and Care Coordinators work together to provide holistic, coordinated support. This ensures that mental health, employment and welfare needs are not treated in isolation, but addressed in a way that reflects real life after service. This approach enables veterans to receive ongoing, flexible support as they transition and rebuild their lives in civilian society.

Need support?

If you're a Royal Navy or Royal Marines veteran and feel you could benefit from support, help is available.

Whether you're struggling with your mental health, employment, finances, housing, relationships or wider wellbeing, Walking with The Wounded can help you access the support that's right for you.

Find out more or ask for help today:
<https://walkingwiththewounded.org.uk/ask-for-help/>



MEDAL FOR RNA MENTOR

Congratulations to S/M Terry Whitty on being awarded the BEM in the King's Birthday Honours – recognition for his outstanding dedication to supporting members of the Naval community. As Lead Mentor in the RNA's HMS Raleigh Mentoring, Terry has devoted countless hours to helping recruits navigate the challenges of training, providing guidance, encouragement and a steady hand when it is needed most. His commitment to mentoring and supporting others has made a real and lasting difference to the lives of many young sailors as they begin their careers. Former RNA General Secretary Bill Oliphant said: "Terry's award is thoroughly deserved, he has helped and inspire countless young sailors at the start of their careers. He embodies the spirit of the RNA, and we are immensely proud to see his dedication recognised with a British Empire Medal."

SADDLE UP FOR WELLBEING PROGRAMME

Royal Navy families are being offered the chance to take part in a unique five-day wellbeing programme with HorseBack UK, helping to build confidence, strengthen relationships and create lasting memories together. Running from 3–7 August and 17–21 August in the stunning surroundings of Royal Deeside in Scotland, the Family Week combines equine-assisted learning with a range of outdoor activities designed to support wellbeing, resilience and teamwork. Founded by former Royal Marine Jock Hutchison, HorseBack UK has supported more than 700 members of the Armed Forces community since 2009.

Through working with horses and

taking part in shared challenges, participants develop confidence, communication skills and self-awareness in a relaxed, supportive environment.

The week focuses on working alongside horses from the ground, with no previous horse experience required.

Families will also enjoy activities including bushcraft, archery, nature walks, arts and crafts, treasure hunts, games and visits to local attractions, while staying together in shared accommodation.

HorseBack UK's programmes have helped participants improve their wellbeing, relationships and confidence, with many reporting

lasting positive changes long after completing the course.

This is an opportunity for Royal Navy families to step away from the pressures of everyday life, reconnect with one another and enjoy a rewarding week in the Scottish countryside.

For more details of the course, accommodation, a kit list and what you can expect, you can download full joining information using [this link](#).

HORSES FOR COURSES

Greenwich Hospital has awarded a three-year grant of £177,729 to the Armed Forces Equine Charity to expand its Active Recovery programme and strengthen support for serving and former RN personnel and their families. The funding will enable the charity to further develop and extend the reach of its Active Recovery course modules for veterans, while providing dedicated support for serving RN personnel undertaking recovery duty.

The Armed Forces Equine Charity delivers inclusive and transformative support to members of the Forces community facing a range of challenges, including mental health difficulties, loneliness, addiction, and physical injury.

Through structured interactions between humans and horses, the charity helps individuals build confidence, improve wellbeing, and support their recovery and rehabilitation.

In addition to its equine-based programmes, the charity delivers a wider welfare and wellbeing offer through its community hub, café, and heritage trail located alongside the Tidworth equestrian centres. These services support the wider Forces community, including children and young people, families, older veterans, and those living with long-term health conditions or disabilities.

This grant reflects Greenwich Hospital's ongoing commitment to supporting the wellbeing, recovery, and long-term resilience of serving and former RN personnel and their families. The charity supports a network of equestrian centres delivering sport, recreation, and welfare opportunities for serving personnel, veterans, and

their families.

Through these centres, individuals can build confidence, develop new skills, and reconnect with purpose – whether through competition, participation, or time spent with horses. By working closely with partner organisations, they ensure a joined-up approach that supports each person's journey and ambitions.

For more on the charity use [this link](#).



GO LEARN

FREE ONLINE TUTORING

for serving Royal Navy families

Funded by  GREENWICH HOSPITAL
enhancing the living, work since 1666

Managed by  Naval Children's Charity

Delivered by  mva Tutors



RACE ACROSS THE UK

START: DARTMOUTH FINISH: INVERNESS

TUESDAY 6TH - FRIDAY 9TH OCTOBER 2026

EVENT CAPACITY: 30 TEAMS OF 2

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

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

ENTRY FEE:

£300

FUNDRAISING

TARGET:

£1,500

* per person

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



The Royal Navy and Royal Marines Charity is a company limited by guarantee registered in England and Wales (no. 4047294) and is a registered charity (no. 1137794) and Scotland (SC044849).

WHY TAKE PART?

PUSH YOUR LIMITS

SUPPORT YOUR NAVY FAMILY

CREATE STORIES YOU'LL TELL FOR YEARS

Every mile you cover helps change lives.

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

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

Team Sea Dust, 2025



JON JOINS CENTRAL OFFICE TEAM

Welcome to Jon Boreham (JB), the RNA's new Membership Support Manager.

Jon joined the Royal Navy in February 1984 after finishing school at the age of 16.

On completion of Basic Training at HMS Raleigh, Jon did his Chef training at St Omar Barracks, Aldershot, before taking up his first draft at HMS Osprey Portland. Seven months later he joined his first ship, aircraft carrier HMS Illustrious.

In the following years Jon was drafted to variety of ships, shore bases and air squadrons, including carriers HMS Invincible and Ark Royal, Type 22 frigate HMS Brave, Type 42s HMS Manchester and Nottingham, Type 23s HMS Richmond, Somerset and Marlborough and 845 NAS.

Jon has also held positions as a Cookery Instructor at the School in HMS Raleigh, Wardroom Mess Manager at both Heron and Excellent and the Senior Leadership Officer at the Leadership Academy at HMS

Collingwood. Climbing the ranks, Jon was promoted to WO1 in 2008 and had assignments as the RN Trauma Risk Manager Instructor, Practitioner and Team Leader, spending time at sea with HMS Astute and helping many people after tours of Afghanistan and other trauma-related events.

Jon found this particularly rewarding and gave valuable insights into the mental attitudes and issues Servicemen and women face on a day-to-day basis. Jon also served as the Branch Manager for the RNR in Navy Command HQ, Whale Island, before taking up his final position to Captain Naval Recruiting where he established and successfully ran the RN's first Rejoiners and



Retention Team.

Jon left the service in March 2022 and took up life as a Commercial Gardening Maintenance Manager, where he grew the business by 30 per cent.

Jon is married to Lisa and has three grown-up daughters and one stepdaughter who is a Leading Naval Nurse. He also has four grandchildren with number five on the way. Jon lives in Gosport and his passion is keeping as fit as he can, but he also has a real passion for American Football, following the Miami Dolphins from 1983 when the

game first came to the UK.

Jon has one main hobby and that is cake decorating for events such as HMS Queen Elizabeth and Prince of Wales commissionings, rededications, D-Day 75 and, most recently, the Royal Navy Submarine Service 125th Anniversary held in London.

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, currently located in Plymouth, Manchester and Portsmouth, for use by shipmates.

The minibuses are a great asset to us all and we are proud to offer this membership benefit. We are also extremely grateful to RNA volunteers who manage the minibuses regionally, including bookings.

To book a minibus, the contact details are:

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

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

Portsmouth – Central Office – ams@rnassoc.org – 023 92 723747

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



PENSION ERRORS 'FAIRNESS' PLEA

The **Forces Pension Society** has called for a fair and proportionate approach to Armed Forces pension overpayment cases after growing numbers of veterans reported being asked to repay substantial sums resulting from administrative errors.

FPS Chief Executive Maj Gen Neil Marshall said cases arose from policy errors and miscalculations relating to pensions sharing on divorce, early departure payments, guaranteed minimum payments, guaranteed income payments and National Insurance adjustments.

That could result in a double hit – there could be an attempt to recover overpayments while future payments are also scaled down.

Retired pensioners who have already adjusted their lifestyle to match pension income could find it difficult to adjust to the new regime.

And while the Society recognises the principle of recovering taxpayers' money that has been overpaid, they also believe it is wrong that the scheme administrator who has made the error should attempt to recover the money from members who have acted in good faith.

The Society is supporting affected members by helping them understand pension calculations, challenge decisions where appropriate and use the Armed Forces Pension Scheme complaints process.

Veterans who disagree with an overpayment decision can raise a formal complaint through the Armed Forces Pension Scheme's Internal Dispute Resolution Procedure (IDRP), which allows pensioners to request

detailed calculations and challenge potential maladministration or incorrect information. Cases can also be referred to the Pensions Ombudsman if concerns remain unresolved.

We continue to raise concerns with the Ministry of Defence and other

stakeholders, calling for greater transparency and a more consistent and coherent approach for pensioners affected by official errors.

The Society is celebrating its 80th anniversary this year.

For more on the FPS use [this link](#).

YOU CAN ENJOY PEACE OF MIND WITH HEALTHCARE DESIGNED AROUND YOU

HMCA Private Medical Plans for members of the RNA – healthcare designed around you so you can enjoy peace of mind. **Join today and receive £150 off your first-year subscription or a £100 Amazon Gift Card.**

HMCA understand that true wellbeing is about more than just medical treatment. It's about choice and feeling supported and their members are at the heart of everything they do.

Whether you're making an enquiry, joining them, or submitting a claim, they are there to support you every step of the way.

With no age limit and guaranteed acceptance, HMCA offers flexible medical plans to suit your lifestyle.

And because 90 per cent of their claims are processed on the same day, you are free to focus on what matters most.

Your choice includes:

- Access to the hospital and specialist of your choice;
- Support from enquiry through to claim by their professional customer services teams;
- No medical examination;
- Treatment time that suits you;
- Claims settled promptly;
- Transfer and save or start today. **90**

per cent of members surveyed saved money by transferring to HMCA.*

Your choice of plans:

- Medical Plans;
- Cash Plans;
- Dental Plans;
- Plus Plans with 24/7 GP Advice Line, including video consultations and private prescriptions.

As a family-owned business since 1978, HMCA prides itself on its personal and friendly approach. All customer service, from enquiries to claims, is handled in-house at their UK-based head office.

For further information and quotations contact HMCA by telephone on 01423 799949 or visit <https://www.hmca.co.uk/rna>

*Based on data provided by members who joined HMCA between 1 January 2025 and 30 June 2025.

HMCA/S PLC (trading as Hospital and Medical Care Association, HMCA and HMCA Members) which is authorised and regulated by the Financial Conduct Authority (FRN:307587). HMCA/S PLC is a company registered in England, company number: 01362094, registered office: Beech Hall, Knaresborough, North Yorkshire, HG5 0EA.

Why choose HMCA?

- > Guaranteed acceptance
- > 90% of people saved money transferring to HMCA
- > Your choice of hospital and specialist
- > All calls answered by a team member
- > Exclusive premiums for membership groups



£15BN BOOST FOR DEFENCE

Britain's Armed Forces has been allocated £15bn in investment to fund key equipment and technology.

Prime Minister Sir Keir Starmer announced that the Defence Investment Plan will be backed by £298 billion of investment across the next four years, including £15bn of additional spending on top of last year's Spending Review.

It will see an increase in defence funding from £54 billion a year under the previous government to almost £80 billion a year by 2029, and will see the UK's defence spending increase to 2.7 per cent of GDP.

This means the proportion of GDP spent on defence will now be higher than at any time during the last 30 years by the end of this decade, and puts the UK on track to meet NATO's defence spending targets by 2035. The spending uplift will also create nearly 60,000 extra direct and indirect UK industry jobs by the end of the decade, taking

forecasted defence spending-related jobs supported in the UK to more than half a million.

Key funding includes:

- More than £63bn billion over the next four years to strengthen the UK's nuclear deterrent and to fund Dreadnought and SSN-AUKUS submarines, a new warhead, and other crucial nuclear work.

- Over £5 billion for the next four years to fund a drone transformation for our Armed Forces. As part of this, £650 million will deliver inexpensive expendable autonomous systems including drones and uncrewed ground vehicles to rapidly enhance the lethality of the Army, Commando Force and Special Forces.

- Investment in Directed Energy Weapons, upgraded Sea Viper for Type 45 destroyers, expanded counter drone systems, and build a new Integrated Air, Space and Missile Defence Operations Centre.

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

ARE YOU WILLING TO HELP THE ASSOCIATION?

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

A will doesn't just save your loved ones time, money, and stress. It's also an opportunity

to be part of something bigger. By including a gift in your will, you can help support the Royal Naval Association and make a meaningful difference to shipmates for generations to come.

That's why we've partnered with expert estate planners Octopus Legacy to offer you the chance to write or update

your will for free, online, over the phone, or in person with one of their professional will writers or solicitors. We cover the cost of wills up to £150, meaning you can write a simple will at no charge, or receive a discount on a will with trust.

For more information, click [here](#).



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

**ONCE
NAVY
ALWAYS
NAVY**

royal-naval-association.com

In partnership with
octopuslegacy

SHOP ONLINE AND HELP US RAISE FUNDS

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

easyfundraising turns your everyday online shopping into **FREE** donations when you use them to shop with more than 8,000 retailers such as eBay, John Lewis & Partners, Argos, ASOS and Booking.com. Retailers then make a small donation by way of saying 'thank you', and easyfundraising gives those free funds to the cause. If you would like to get involved, please register using this link – just click **here** to sign up, and once you've raised your first donation, easyfundraising will give the RNA a £1 bonus donation!

There are no catches or hidden charges and the Association will be really grateful for your donations.

GIZZETS AVAILABLE

Our lanyards and pin badges are available from Central Office - call 023 92 723747. Our online shop is in the process of redevelopment.

AWARDS DEADLINES

The application process for the English Veterans Awards closes on 17 August, and the awards ceremony will be held at the De Vere Cotswold Water Park on 1 October – for more details follow **this link**.

UPCOMING MEETINGS

Assoc Management Committees:

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

Fri 7 August (Zoom 0900)
Thurs 15 Oct (Zoom 1800)

FACs (finance):

HELP US WIN CHARITY DRAW SHARE

The RNA is calling on members, supporters, friends and families to help secure vital funding by nominating us in the Movement for Good Special Draw.

The draw will award £5,000 donations to charities across the UK, and with your support, the RNA could receive funding to help continue its work supporting serving personnel, veterans and their families throughout the Naval community. Nominating takes just a few moments. Simply visit the **Movement for Good nomination page** **here** and search for The Royal Naval Association, using our full charity name – look for our charity number 266982 in the left-hand column.

Every nomination increases our chances of receiving funding that can make a real difference to the lives of those we support. Thank you for helping us spread the word and support the Naval family.

The nomination window is open until this

Sunday (5 July), and is designed to help charities who deliver ongoing activities or services that clearly strengthen, support, or enrich a community and contribute to its overall wellbeing.

You must be over 18 to nominate, and each entrant is allowed one nomination per eligible charity.

Twenty winning charities will be drawn during the week beginning 6 July and announced on 10 July. Check **this page** to see who the lucky winners are.

Movement for Good is run by Benefact Group, a family of specialist financial services businesses owned by the Benefact Trust charity. Through the programme, available profits from the Benefact Group are donated to support charities and good causes across the UK and Ireland.

To find out more about Movement for Good and Benefact Group, visit **https://benefactgroup.com**.

FIRESIDE CHATS GO MONTHLY

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.

First up next Monday (6 July) is a talk on the great Naval clash of World War 1, the Battle of Jutland in 1916, which will be given by Ralph Dodds.

The following month, on 3 August, David Griggs will deliver a talk entitled 'Capt Cromie – Honoured Amongst Strangers'.

And on 7 September our very own Bill Oliphant, the recently-departed General Secretary of the RNA, 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 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**



YOUR INSURANCE PARTNER

Enjoy the following member benefits:

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

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



ROYAL NAVAL ASSOCIATION



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



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

Trinity Insurance Services Ltd

www.talktotrinity.com

hello@talktotrinity.com

HELP FOR HEROES IS THERE FOR YOU

Is your time coming to an end in Service? Whatever this looks like for you then Help for Heroes can be there to support you with your transition into civilian life.

H4H offer a wide range of support services as well as guidance, including case management support (which helps with but is not exhaustive to housing, employment, benefits, debt management, signposting to other organisations pertinent to other welfare issues or concerns).

They also help with clinical needs, mental health support, grants, online wellbeing courses, and engagement with Community Development activities.

The minute you're discharged they can engage with you and begin your journey, helping you transition from Service to civilian life and help you feel supported and not on your own. H4H want every member of the Service community to feel they have someone who can support them through the minefield

of practicalities that can be daunting for individuals after Service.

Here is the link to the H4HGet help page: <https://www.helpforheroes.org.uk/get-help/>

MARY ROSE HISTORY FESTIVAL

The Mary Rose Trust is launching its first History Festival this month in Portsmouth to raise vital funds.

'Six Queens, One King and His Ship' takes place on the weekend of 18-19 July, exactly 481 years since the ship sank in the Solent.

The Festival brings together expert Tudor historians to talk about Henry VIII's queens, there is a dinner and a service at Portsmouth Cathedral.

For details and ticket prices use [this link](#).

Are you:

Ex-forces?

Eager to travel more this year? ✓

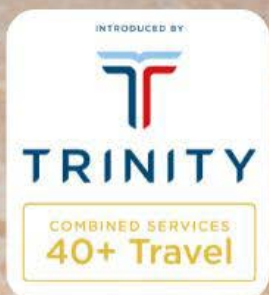
Tired of rising insurance costs? ✓

You could make a saving by

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

Get A 30 Second Quote

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



BE A WINNER WITH THE RNA LOTTERY

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

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

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

PUTTING US ON THE MAP

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

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

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

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

Any feedback to the Comms team please.

GET YOUR SLOPS HERE

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

SPORTS AND COMRADESHIP GROUPS

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

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

Choir – Jon Everett: wws@rnassoc.org

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

Cricket – Mark Smith : Markmiff1962@gmail.com

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

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

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

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

ONLINE REFERRAL FORM FOR VETERANS

A new online form is now available, making it easier and quicker to refer to Veterans Services, who provide information, guidance and welfare support to those who have left or are transitioning out of the Armed Forces.

The form offers a simple and secure way for veterans, serving personnel, and those supporting them to request assistance and supporting guidance.

It removes the need to download and complete paper or PDF forms, allowing referrals to be submitted directly to the Veterans Services team, who will build and manage your case. Most referrals can be completed in just a few minutes if you have the relevant information to hand.

This may include contact details for you or the person being referred, such as a telephone number, address, Service number, National Insurance number, and date of birth. If you have not served, you can still make a referral – just provide the details of the serving person or veteran you are supporting.

What happens next?

Once submitted, your referral is sent directly to the MOD's Veterans Services Triage team. They will review the information and classify the need before

arranging the most appropriate support, including contact from a Case Manager where needed.

Other ways to refer

Existing referral routes, including downloadable forms, remain available.

However, the new online form is the quickest and easiest option for most users.

Amongst other issues, Veterans Services can help with:

- Mental health and wellbeing
- Physical health and rehabilitation
- Drug and alcohol misuse
- Training, education and employment
- Housing, accommodation and relocation
- Finance, debt and benefits
- Family or relationship breakdown
- Access to local, regional and national supporting agencies
- Advice on state benefits and help with applications.

Start a referral

You can access the online form and find out more about Veterans Services here: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/get-help-from-veterans-services>

Royal Naval Association Lottery



Win up to £25,000

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



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

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



GET TO KNOW YOUR AREA WELFARE & WELLBEING OFFICER

As Royal Naval Association Branch Welfare & Wellbeing Officers, we all want to provide the best possible support to our shipmates and their families, *writes RNA Welfare and Wellbeing Co-ordinator Jon Everett*. One of the simplest ways to strengthen that support is to build a good relationship with your Area Welfare & Wellbeing Officer (AWWO).

Too often, contact is only made when a welfare case arises.

Whilst that is perfectly understandable, getting to know your Area Welfare & Wellbeing Officer before you need their help can make a real difference.

A quick phone call, email, or chat at an Area event can help establish a working relationship that will prove invaluable in the future.

Your AWWO brings a wealth of knowledge and experience to the role.

They can offer advice, guidance and support on a wide range of welfare and wellbeing matters, help you navigate procedures and reporting requirements, and assist with signposting to other organisations when specialist support is needed. Most importantly, they are there to support you. No Branch Welfare & Wellbeing Officer is expected to deal with every situation alone.

If you have never spoken to your Area Welfare & Wellbeing Officer, why not pick up the phone and introduce yourself?

You don't need to have a welfare case to discuss. A friendly chat over a brew can help you understand the support available and start building a relationship that could prove invaluable in the future.

After all, it's much easier to ask for help from someone you already know than from a

stranger.

You could also consider inviting your AWWO to visit your branch and speak to your members.

Whether it is a regular meeting, a social gathering, or a welfare-focused event, it gives members the opportunity to learn more about the support available through the RNA whilst helping to strengthen links between Branch and Area welfare teams.

Building strong relationships across the welfare and wellbeing network allows us to share good practice, learn from one another's experiences, and ensure that support is delivered consistently across the Association.

What works well in one branch may benefit another, and regular communication helps us all provide a

better service to our shipmates.

The Royal Naval Association's welfare and wellbeing network is built on teamwork.

The stronger our connections with one another, the stronger the support we can provide to those who need us most.

If you have not yet made contact with your Area Welfare & Wellbeing Officer, there is no better time than now.

A simple introduction today could make all the difference tomorrow.

If you would like to follow up on this, please do contact me at Central Office – my email address is wws@rnassoc.org

Remember – welfare is a team effort, and your Area Welfare & Wellbeing Officer is one of your greatest assets.

CHANCE TO LEARN MORE ABOUT THE RIPPLE POND

The RNA Welfare & Wellbeing team is pleased to share details of an upcoming information and networking session being hosted by The Ripple Pond, a charity dedicated to supporting the families of Armed Forces personnel and veterans living with Service-attributable physical or psychological injuries.

Professional Information and Networking Session

Date: Wednesday 8 July

Time: Midday

Cost: Free of charge

This interactive online session is designed for professionals who work with members of the Armed Forces community, including serving personnel, veterans and their families.

Attendees will gain a greater understanding of The Ripple Pond's services, the support available to family members and carers, and the referral pathways available for

those who may benefit from their assistance.

The session will also provide an opportunity to connect with other professionals working across the military charity and welfare sector, fostering collaboration and shared learning.

About The Ripple Pond

The Ripple Pond supports adult family members of Armed Forces personnel and veterans who are affected by life-changing physical injuries, mental health conditions or service-related illnesses.

Through peer support and shared experiences, the organisation helps families navigate the challenges that can arise when caring for or supporting a loved one.

Register Your Interest

Those wishing to attend can register via The Ripple Pond's website: <https://www.theripplepond.org/networking>

PROPOSED CHANGES FOR COHABITING COUPLES

What you need to know!

I wrote in the May Semaphore Circular that there are currently no rights for cohabiting couples.

On 5 June 2026 (and perhaps well-timed following the recent Circular article!) the government published a consultation paper, **A Fairer End to Relationships**, setting out possible reforms to the law affecting unmarried couples who separate.

You can read full details of the proposals in the consultation document at <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/a-fairer-end-to-relationships>

Please note – the consultation period ends at 11.59pm on 14 August 2026. These proposals are not yet law. However, they give a strong indication of the changes that may be introduced – and the impact could be significant for many couples.

A new legal framework for cohabiting couples

The government is proposing a new system that would give certain cohabiting couples financial rights when they separate.

Key features include:

- 1 The rules would apply automatically, unless you choose to opt out
- 2 Courts could make financial orders, including:

- Property adjustments
- Lump sum payments
- Pension sharing
- Maintenance (in limited cases)

Unlike divorce, the starting point would be that each person keeps what they legally own.

The court would only step in where needed to meet basic financial needs.

Who would be covered?

You could fall within the new system if

Knights

you are living together in a committed relationship:

- Without children: typically after three years of living together
 - With children: there may be no minimum time requirement
- This means even relatively short relationships – particularly where children are involved – could qualify.

What does this mean in practice?

These proposals are designed to improve protection for people who currently have limited rights when relationships end.

However, they could also have unintended consequences which could lead to more complex and potentially intrusive disputes.

- You may face financial claims from a partner even if assets are in your sole name

- The concept of a 'committed relationship' is not clearly defined

- Courts may need to consider personal aspects of your relationship

The opt-out option

It is proposed that couples will be able to opt out of the new framework. To do this, both parties would need to complete a formal written agreement, provide full financial disclosure and seek independent legal advice.

While this protects fairness, it may also make opting out time-consuming and costly.

In reality, many couples may take no action – and therefore be covered automatically.

Is it really just about 'needs'?

Although the new system is described as 'needs-based', the



scope may be wider than expected. The court could take into account the following factors, which could increase uncertainty and lead to more disputes about what is considered 'fair':

- Housing and financial needs
- Income and pensions
- Health or disability
- Sacrifices made during the relationship (for example, giving up work to care for children).

What about existing agreements?

At present, arrangements such as Declarations of trust and Cohabitation agreements can offer clarity about ownership and financial intentions – see my May Semaphore Circular article for more information on these documents!

It is currently unclear how these would be treated under the new system. There is a risk that the proposed framework could override or complicate these arrangements.

Time limits for claims

The proposals include a two-year deadline to bring a claim after

Continued on page 34

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.

CHANGES FOR COHABITING COUPLES

Continued from page 33

separation.

This could create pressure to take legal action quickly and lead to disputes about when a relationship has actually ended.

Will this simplify the law?

Not necessarily. Current disputes between cohabiting couples are dealt with under property law (Trusts of Land and Appointment of Trustees Act 1996, TOLATA).

This would still exist alongside the new system. As a result, there may be:

- One regime for married couples
- A new regime for qualifying cohabitants
- Existing property law for others

This could make the legal landscape more complex, not less.

There is a risk of further confusion as many people already believe in the concept of 'common law marriage' – which does not legally exist.

Introducing automatic rights for some cohabitants may reinforce this misunderstanding, leading people to

assume they have rights they may not fully understand.

What should you do now?

Although these changes are not yet in force, it is sensible to start thinking ahead.

You may wish to:

- Review how your property and assets are owned
- Consider entering into a cohabitation agreement
- Take legal advice if you are moving in together or separating

Taking early steps can help protect your position and reduce uncertainty if the law changes.

The proposed reforms aim to create greater fairness for cohabiting couples.

However, they also introduce potential risks, uncertainty, and complexity.

If implemented, they could significantly change your legal position – even if you are not married.

□ If you would like to discuss how these proposals may affect you, please get in touch.

Knights have a specialist team of

family solicitors who are able to assist. I am an Associate in the family team at Knights and my husband is a Royal Navy Veteran. I come from a military family and have a little girl who is 2!

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

www.linkedin.com/in/emlounicholas

emma.nicholas@knightsplc.com

STEERING IN A NEW DIRECTION

For many veterans, leaving military service can bring unexpected challenges. The camaraderie, structure and sense of purpose that defined daily life can suddenly feel distant, leaving some feeling isolated or uncertain about what comes next.

For veterans supported by Turn to Starboard, stepping aboard a yacht can become the start of a new chapter.

Turn to Starboard uses sailing as a powerful tool to support personnel who have been medically downgraded, veterans and their families.

Through therapeutic sailing programmes and accredited Royal Yachting Association (RYA) training, participants can improve their wellbeing, build new skills and reconnect with others who share similar experiences.

The charity supports veterans facing a range of challenges, including poor mental health, social isolation, difficulties transitioning to civilian life, and barriers to employment. Sailing offers more than just time on the water; it creates opportunities for personal growth, connection and renewed purpose.

A grant from RNRMC is helping support the running costs of one of the charity's newest training yachts for one full year, and we continue to work with them on upcoming projects.

See <https://www.turntostarboard.co.uk> for more details on the charity.

FUNERAL GUIDE 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>

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://mrnwidows.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

BRANCH NEWS



FORTH VALLEY Branch

Members of Forth Valley Branch visited HMS Stirling Castle on 9 June and attended the ship's Commissioning Ceremony which took place three days later in Grangemouth/Forth Docks.

Representing **Scottish Area** the shipmates were much impressed with the organisation on the Commissioning Day – BZ to the Ship's Company.

The former offshore support vessel will serve as the mother ship for autonomous minehunting systems, helping to protect UK waters with cutting-edge technology – you can catch up with their progress in the official Royal Navy website [here](#).

The ship's Commanding Officer and good number of the Ship's Company attended the Stirling Armed Forces Day on 13 June, when Forth Valley Branch had their Standard in the parade.

The sailors acquitted themselves well on the parade and the locals had never seen so many sailors in what was always regarded as a Army garrison city for the Argylls.



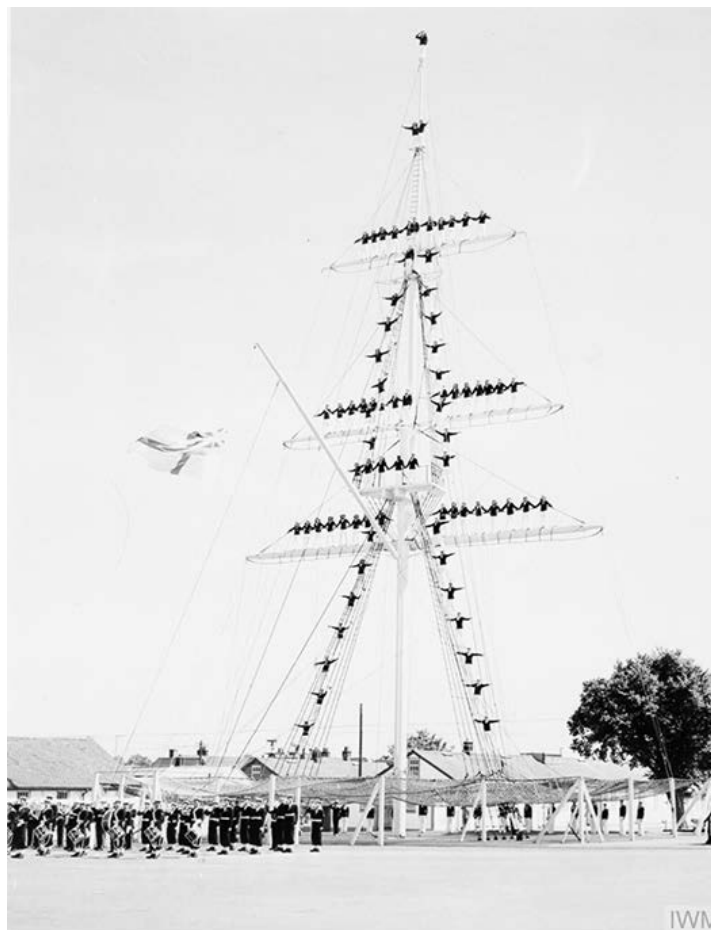
RUSHDEN and DISTRICT Branch
Members of the Rushden & District Branch enjoyed a fantastic visit to the HMS Ganges Museum and the Naval War Memorial in Shotley, Suffolk.

It proved to be an informative and insightful day, giving the 14-strong group a deeper appreciation of the young boys who began their Naval careers at the training establishment and the challenges they faced.

S/M Keith Turner (below) joined HMS Ganges in 1968, and rumour has it that Keith wasn't always the model new entrant – one can only wonder how many times he found himself at the defaulters' table... It is now 50 years since Ganges closed, a fact reflected in the Ganges Museum which is open at weekends between 11am and 4pm until Sunday 25 October. For full details see <https://hmsgangsmuseum.com>



Pictured right is the mast-manning ceremony at HMS Ganges. On top of the 143ft mast is Junior Seaman Alan Ferguson, who was the last 'Button Boy' to perform the feat at Ganges. Image from the Imperial War Museum collection © Crown copyright reproduced under delegated authority from The Keeper of Public Records. Image: IWM (HU 87137)



SKIPTON Branch

A member of Skipton Branch has celebrated his 102nd birthday. S/M Eddie Shipley volunteered for the Royal Navy at the age of 18 in 1942, signing on as a Hostilities Only recruit. After undertaking basic training at HMS Raleigh in Torpoint, S/M Eddie continued training at HMS Drake in Plymouth before being drafted to

Black Swan-class sloop HMS Starling, which under the command of fabled submarine hunter Capt Johnnie Walker became the most successful U-boat killer of the war, sinking 14 boats. Starling was also involved in Arctic convoys and supported the D-Day landings in June 1944. After Germany was defeated, Eddie was sent to the Far East, where he

ended up assisting the Hong Kong police force restore order after Japanese occupation. Returning to the UK in 1946 to be demobbed, Eddie also served a short period in the Merchant Navy. He celebrated his birthday with daughter Lorraine and some 25 shipmates from Skipton Branch at The Railway pub.

BRIDLINGTON Branch

On 6 June Bridlington Branch members, veterans, friends and family got together at a beach hut on Bridlington's South Side to commemorate the D-Day Landings of 1944.

The group observed a minute's silence and raised a glass to absent friends and those who paid the ultimate sacrifice. Shipmate Pat WAAF kindly opened her doors, her drinks cabinet (a lot of it donated over many get-togethers) and her scran cupboard to the 20-plus branch members who attended.

At first the weather was inclement but that didn't deter their enthusiasm, aided by S/M Pete Bolton who provided the musical entertainment, joined now and then by one or two other crooners. Eventually the rain let up and the event continued until around 5pm.

It was then that the group discovered that the open gazebo **did** have sides but S/M Pat WAAF decided that they would spoil the view so didn't let on...



PORT PHILLIP BAY Branch

Harry 'Fingers' Thacker, an RNA Life Member at Port Phillip Bay Branch and an HMS Ganges Association member, has celebrated his 95th birthday.

Harry joined the Royal Navy in 1947 at HMS Ganges as a boy entrant, qualified at the RN School of Cookery (as it was then called) in HMS Pembroke (Chatham), and then went on to see service in the Hong Kong-based Far East Fleet, which included HMS Consort, HMS London and HMS Black Swan, which were involved in the famous Yangtse Incident featuring HMS Amethyst. Later, Harry also saw active service in Korea after which he volunteered and served in various RN submarines.

So why is Harry nicknamed Fingers? Anyone who shakes hands with him will know why!

To celebrate his birthday members of the Victoria Australia branch of the HMS Ganges Association gathered at the Frankston Naval Memorial Club with RNA shipmates for a celebratory lunch in his honour.



CARMARTHEN Branch

Members of Carmarthen Branch enjoyed a Cheese and Wine party to celebrate the Official Birthday of King Charles on Saturday 20 June at the Dairies Club in Carmarthen.

As well as shipmates, Carmarthen Town Mayor Cllr Russell Sparks also attended the event.

Llanelli Branch's offer of the use of their rum tub (above) was gratefully taken up by the Carmarthen shipmates.

Pictured above left is S/M Sally Griffiths, the wife of the Carmarthen Branch Secretary, propping up the bar, while Carmarthen Town Mayor is welcomed by Branch President S/M Capt Edwin Atkinson RN (Ret'd), picture top right along with Branch Secretary S/M Don Griffiths.

Cllr Sparks also has the title of Admiral of the Port of Carmarthen.

Pictured left and below are shipmates enjoying the cheese and wine buffet, while pictured below right are the Mayor, Cllr Sparks, with Branch Chair S/M John Jones and Branch Secretary S/M Don Griffiths.



Salisbury Branch

On Tuesday 23 June Salisbury Branch donated a cheque for £445 to the Royal National Lifeboat Institution (RNLI). The money was raised by means of a raffle at the Branch's Trafalgar Night function last year. Salisbury Branch Chairman S/M John Mussell handed over the cheque to Mr Matthew Sykes, the Chair of Salisbury, Wilton and District RNLI Branch, watched by shipmates from the RNA. The Salisbury RNLI branch is a very active one, covering South Wiltshire and parts of Dorset.

They have close links with their nearest RNLI lifeboat station at Mudeford, on the mouth of the River Avon, which runs through Salisbury.



FOLKESTONE Branch

On 14 June two Folkestone Branch members, both SAM holders, laid a wreath each at the town's War Memorial; one for the South Atlantic Medal Association, the other for the Type 21 Association, to mark the 44th anniversary of the Falkland Islands Liberation Day in 1982.

They were joined by Town Mayor Cllr Jacqui Meade, who laid a wreath on behalf of the town and supported by the Branch Standard Bearer, S/M Stephen Shaw as well as family and friends.

LICHFIELD Branch

Shipmates who attended the recent HMS Tamar Reunion have thanked members of Lichfield Branch for the hospitality they extended to their visitors.

The Tamar group were impressed by the effort that went into decorating the room appropriately, and providing a tot (or three) of rum.

The group had a good start to their day with a visit to a local Breakfast Club, then enjoyed a tour of the National Memorial Arboretum by Cdr Simon Brown RN (Retd), who was Senior Officer Hong Kong Squadron and CO of HMS Plover in the 1990s and so shared the group's love of Hong Kong.



WALLASEY Branch

Wallasey Branch invited the Mayor of Wirral to a BBQ held to mark Armed Forces Week, and Cllr Mary Jordan enjoyed an afternoon chatting to shipmates, including Associate Members, and the local community. The Mayor also joined shipmates for the blessing of the Stone. S/M Kevin Cosgrove, Branch Chairman, conducted a

short service remembering shipmates past and present. The day wouldn't have been possible without the help of Karen Price, Ena Antrobus and Brian Antrobus, who were the force behind the BBQ, which was a great success. Thanks go also to Vicky Price, Kerry Dunne (who was in charge of the bar), Kevin, and Branch Secretary Barry, who organised tables and chairs outside. BZ to all!

LISKEARD Branch
On Sunday 23 August Liskeard Branch will be exercising its Freedom of Liskeard by marching through the town to the War Memorial, where a short service of remembrance will take place. The parade will then return through the town and back to the Cattle Market. The parade will set off from the Cattle Market at 1345, with the service of remembrance at the War Memorial scheduled to take place from 1400 to 1430. If you are free that day, please do come along.

ROSYTH and WEST FIFE Branch

Twelve shipmates of the Rosyth and West Fife Branch gathered for a special lunch event in Dunfermline – all had served in Rosyth-based Type 12 frigates HMS Yarmouth and/or Plymouth of the 6th Frigate Squadron during the late 1970s and early 1980s.

Many of those attending had served together in those 'sister ships' during the Cod Wars in Icelandic waters, in the Falklands War or during later deployments to the South Atlantic.

S/M Jim Houghton provided a splendid backdrop for the gathering in the form of his very impressive, large and beautifully-made scale model of HMS Yarmouth which he built himself over the course of four years – see the picture above.

The event organiser, S/M Glen MacDonald, said: "We all have much in common and it was great to get together, to reminisce about old times in Yarmouth and Plymouth and to share our memories and stories of old friends and runs ashore, remembering both the good times and the not so good times.

"We had a thoroughly enjoyable lunch together – the company was good, and there was much laughter, fun and craic around the table.

"As we get older, our thoughts turn more and more to our previous service in the Royal Navy, and I think events like this are important and very much in line with one of the RNA's main objectives – to foster camaraderie amongst RN veterans."



OBITUARIES



S/M FRANK IRELAND

Family, friends, members of the Naval community and veterans came together to pay their respects to Francis 'Frank' Ireland, who crossed the bar at the remarkable age of 106. Frank's funeral was attended by 74 people, including family members, representatives from local organisations, church members and veterans who wanted to honour a life of extraordinary service and dedication. The strength of support from across the Naval family was evident throughout the day. Following a call for assistance, a young representative from HMS Ceres attended the service, while Bugler James from HMS Caledonian delivered a moving performance that added to the dignity and solemnity of the occasion. Members of the RNA travelled from Wrexham to attend with their standard. Three of the attending members had themselves served during the Falklands Conflict, demonstrating the enduring bonds that connect generations of veterans.

A standard bearer from the Royal British Legion in Leeds also attended, joining others who considered it a privilege and an honour to pay their respects. In a particularly poignant moment, veterans in the congregation were invited to join fellow servicemen 'on the brow' as part of the farewell. Those who stepped forward spoke of the pride they felt in being included in the tribute to a fellow veteran. Frank's family described the funeral as both emotional and uplifting, taking comfort in the support shown by so many people. They expressed their heartfelt thanks to everyone who helped make the day possible and ensured that Frank received the send-off he deserved. The gathering served as a powerful reminder of the respect afforded to those who have served their country and of the lasting camaraderie that exists within the Naval community. Thanks to the efforts of veterans, serving personnel and supporters from across the UK, Francis Ireland was given a farewell befitting a life well lived and a remarkable 106 years.

S/M PETER EDMONDSON

S/M Peter Douglas Edmondson crossed the bar peacefully in hospital on 6 June at the age of 80. Peter was the beloved husband of Barbara, and a much-loved Dad, Grandad, brother-in-law, friend and comrade. He will be deeply missed by all his family and friends. Fair winds and flowing seas – may he rest in eternal peace. A service to celebrate Peter's life will be held at Charnock Richard

Crematorium, Preston Road, Charnock Richard, Chorley PR7 5JP on Friday 10 July 2026 at 11.30am.

The request is for family flowers only, please.

Donations, if desired, would be gratefully received to benefit Parkinsons UK via the following link: <https://peter-douglas-edmondson.muchloved.com/> or sent c/o the funeral directors – Neel Buckley Funerals, 6 Liverpool Road, Penwortham, PR1 0AD, tel: 01772 744700.

S/M MAUREEN DYER

It is with much sadness that Wansbeck and District Branch report the Crossing the Bar of one of their branch members, Maureen Dyer.

Maureen was a former Wren and had been a branch member since 1995. She died on 16 June aged 85. She was a regular attendee at Branch meetings until 2023, when she had a bad fall while out walking one night.

Following hospitalisation for quite a while, she was admitted to a care home at Newbiggin-by-Sea because with the onset of dementia living on her own was not advisable.

During her time at the care home she has had a number of falls.

She was visited regularly by Branch Secretary S/M Derek Wilkinson, as well as by her daughter Lesley from Berkshire, and her son Martin, who lives in Scotland near Glasgow. Lesley died last year, and Martin could only visit occasionally due to work commitments.

On S/M Derek's last visit, on the day before Maureen died, she was in palliative care.

Her son Martin was there when Derek arrived, and said that he had been sent for to attend as she was deteriorating fast.

During her service in the WRNS from 1958 to 1961 Maureen had served at HMS Dauntless (the Wrens training establishment near Reading), HMS Harrier (a radar research and training establishment in Pembrokeshire) and HMS Dryad (home of the Royal Navy's Maritime Warfare School, at Southwick to the north of Portsmouth), where she met her husband-to-be, S/M Len Raymond Dyer, to whom she was married to for more than 60 years.

Sadly S/M Len, the previous Chairman of Wansbeck and District Branch, died in 2022.

Maureen is the fourth member of the Branch to cross the bar this year, sad times indeed.

Maureen's son Martin had to return to work this week, but was planning to return to Ashington to make arrangements for Maureen's funeral. Further information about the funeral will be promulgated when known – it is expected that Branch members will attend the funeral, along with remaining family members.

JULY SWINGING THE LAMP

HMS Trollope. Image from the Imperial War Museum collection: © IWM (A 25644)



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

On 6 July 1944 Britain had endured almost five years of war, and although the tide has turned against the Germans – the Allies were pushing their foe back in the Battle of Normandy and the Battle of the Atlantic had tipped in favour of the convoys – there was still much fighting to be done and many lives were still being lost around the world.

Scanning through the comprehensive records of www.naval-history.net, we can get a snapshot of what the war demands of the Royal Navy, which at this point had just about reached its wartime peak of more than 870,000 men and women.

This force benefited tremendously from advanced technology, both in terms of sensors (particularly radar and asdic, or sonar) and weapons, but death toll was still a significant risk – with major operations such as the Normandy Landings contributing to a death toll of nearly 10,000 in 1944 for the Senior Service, 835 in July alone. Thursday 6 July was not a particularly summery day in the UK. The country had been swept by a series of fronts over the summer bringing rain and strong winds – the weather that delayed D Day by 24 hours and caused much damage to the Mulberry Harbours in late June. This Thursday was generally cloudy and wet – sunshine was in very short supply this month, though temperatures were around average.

With the Royal Navy's focus being the support of the

Normandy Landings and the break-out of Allied troops into the hinterland and beyond, the three ships lost on this day were all on the southern shore of the Channel. HMS Magic was a Catherine-class minesweeper of 900 tons, built in October 1943 in the United States by the Savannah Machine and Foundry Co in Georgia and transferred to the Royal Navy.

On the night of 5-6 July Magic was in the so-called Trout defensive line, minor ships moored bow to stern at the eastern end of the beach landing area, providing a defence against enemy forces operating from the as-yet unconquered port of Le Havre.

That night an unusual craft was spotted threading its way through the defensive cordon – a tiny Neger vessel (essentially a converted inert G7e torpedo acting as a launch vehicle for a full-armed 1.7-ton twin slung beneath it with a control craft and cockpit attached to the top). This craft was one of 26 that ventured out of Le Havre that night, sinking Magic with the loss of 26 lives and sister-ship HMS Cato, in which a further 25 men died. Only nine of the Negers made it home.

A third loss on the same day more than doubled the death toll, though the circumstances of her loss were a cause of confusion, with some reports stating the ship had run aground.

Captain-class frigate HMS Trollope had been launched in Massachusetts in November 1943 and transferred from the Americans to the Royal Navy in January 1944. She was put straight to work on Channel escort duties, and played her part in the Normandy Landings on 6 June.

But exactly one month later, in the early hours of the

Continued on page 42

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

Continued from page 41

morning, the 1,400-ton ship was fatally damaged to the north of Arromanches-les-Bains, in the Gold Beach sector.

Naval-history.net asserts that the ship was struck by torpedoes from a German E-boat near the cliffs of Cap d'Antifer, causing the frigate to break in two, and this is probably the reason for confusion.

The forward section of the ship floated clear but was deemed a hazard to other shipping so was sunk by Allied forces.

The stern section was towed to Arromanches, where it was run aground to allow the surviving members of the ship's company to be rescued. A total of 64 of their shipmates died in the attack.

Another death on 6 July was that of a Leading Stoker from Fairmile D motor torpedo boat MTB 666, which had been severely damaged in an encounter with German patrol forces off Ijmuiden on the Dutch coast on the night of 4-5 July.

Brian Sleath had been taken prisoner during the course of the night, but died of his wounds less than two days later while still in captivity.

Other men who lost their lives that day included another Leading Stoker at the submarine base in Dundee, HMS Ambrose (illness), an AB in carrier HMS Begum, which was ferrying aircraft and carrying out patrols in the Indian Ocean, a Leading Stoker who died of an illness while serving in veteran training vessel HMS Dalhousie in India, a Canadian Assistant Cook who died at a naval establishment in

Thunder Bay, Ontario, two men attached to HMS Victory who died of illnesses, as did an Ordinary Seaman in HMS Neptune, while a Royal Marines Captain of 46 Cdo RM was killed while serving in Normandy.

While the vast majority of Naval deaths on that Thursday were in the Channel and North Sea, there was still plenty of activity in other theatres of conflict on 6 July 1944.

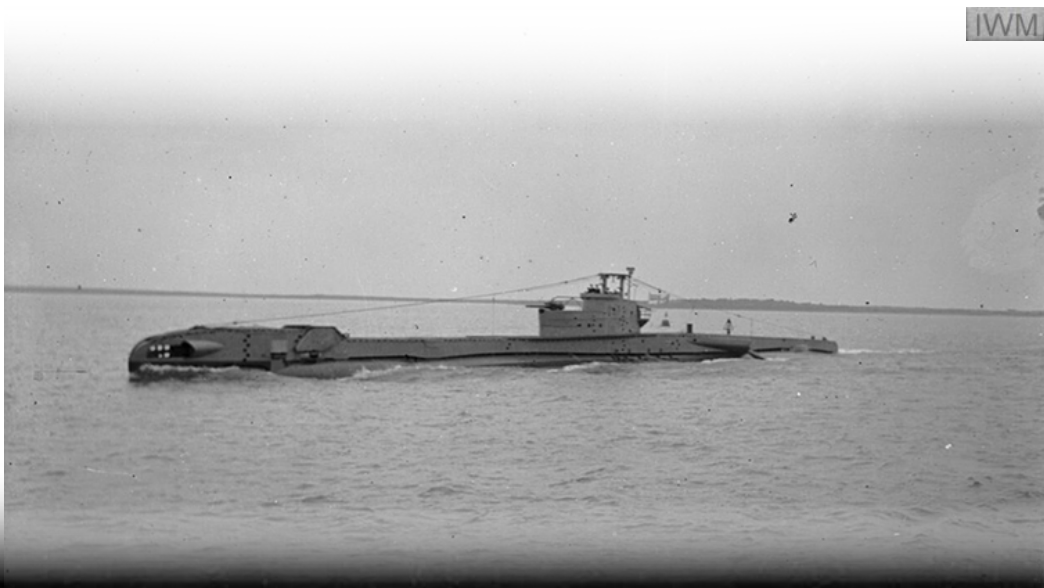
For example, aircraft carrier HMS Victorious, having arrived in Colombo, Ceylon (now Sri Lanka) a few days earlier to join the Eastern Fleet, spent the day preparing for operations in the Indian Ocean – later that month she was engaged in the Operation Crimson attacks on airfields in Sumatra in company with carrier HMS Illustrious and cruiser HMS Phoebe.

While vessel losses were inevitable as the war raged on, new craft were being added to the Fleet.

On 6 July 1944 Colossus-class aircraft carrier HMS Theseus rattled down the Fairfield slipway at Govan on the Clyde, while T-boat HMS Trump was commissioned at Barrow-in-Furness.

Her ship's bell now resides in the United States – it was presented to President Donald J Trump by King Charles at a state dinner in the White House in April this year

HMS Trump. Image from the Imperial War Museum collection: © IWM (FL 3478).



Light fleet carrier HMS Theseus floodlit at Trieste in 1952. Image from the Imperial War Museum collection: © IWM (A 32386)

LONGCAST

2026

4 July	HMS Collingwood Open Day
8 August	Area 5 Quarterly Meeting (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



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Jen Layzell (jenniferlayzell1933@gmail.com)
or Val Thornton (val_t_1@hotmail.com)

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Main courses

Ballotine of Chicken
Medio Roasted Sirloin of Beef
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Desserts

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