

# SEMAPHORE CIRCULAR



## RNA BOARD MEETING

A 71-year-old amputee veteran was among the group taking to the waves in North Devon as part of a surfing event designed to reconnect people from across the Naval community.

Held in Westward Ho!, the event was organised through the RNA's Thriving Together programme. Veterans, serving personnel and women from the wider Naval community travelled from across the UK to attend, including from areas where there is little Naval community presence or support nearby.

Many arrived alone, without knowing anybody else there. By the time they left, plans were already being made to meet up

again at some time in the future.

Surfing lessons were delivered by North Devon Surf School, with women aged between 26 and 71 taking part.

Among them was Mary King, who served in the Women's Royal Naval Service and is an amputee.

Mary said: "It was a fully inclusive weekend. The surfing was great. It was good to get back to it, as I haven't been able to do it for a long time. It was absolutely awesome fun."

For many attending, getting in the water was only one part of what made the experience meaningful.

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■ For those interested in following the Annual General Meeting online on Saturday 13 June, we will publish the link to the livestream in an email to members early next week. For more details of the Conference weekend see page 16.

**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 3 July, and the deadline for material is 1000 on Wednesday 1 July. Branch Notes will next be published on Friday 12 June, Semaphore Shorts on Friday 26 June, with a members' email on Friday 19 June.**



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One attendee, Abbie, joined the RNA six months ago after being out of service for nearly 12 years.

This was the first activity she had attended through the organisation.

She spoke about how valuable it was to spend time with women who understood Service life and the adjustment that comes afterwards. Conversations naturally moved between Naval life, motherhood, careers and the realities of transition after leaving the Armed Forces.

Some of those attending had joined the Royal Navy at just 16 years old. After years spent in such a close community, leaving the Service can feel isolating, particularly for those living away from Naval towns and cities.

Women from different generations and backgrounds quickly found common ground, supporting each other both in and out of the water. What started with introductions on the first evening ended with new friendships, shared memories and plans to stay connected.

The event was partly funded through the Afghanistan Veterans Fund, which supports projects that improve wellbeing and mental health for veterans who served in Afghanistan and other recent conflicts, along with their families.

The funding has been disseminated by Royal Navy & Royal

Marines Charity on behalf of the Armed Forces Covenant Fund Trust Afghanistan Veterans Fund at the request of the Office for Veterans' Affairs.

Activities like this help create lasting connections for women within the Naval community, particularly for veterans who may no longer live near military communities or support networks.

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**Find Semaphore Circular online at**

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# NAVY RULE AT TWICKENHAM

More than 1,000 RNA members joined us at the Army v Navy rugby match at Twickenham at the beginning of May – and they helped make a memorable event even more special.

One of the highlights was celebrating an incredible milestone with S/M Betty Withers, who joined us just one day after her 101st birthday (see right), and what a fabulous way to mark the occasion.

Branches from far and wide made it a big day out – pictured on page 7 is the party from Waterlooville Branch – and the exclusive RNA bar (the largest at Twickenham, it is said) proved both popular and successful.

There was a bonus for some shipmates, with a glittering array of goodies available in an Association raffle – the list of winners is on page 7.

And last, but definitely not least, there was the rugby itself.

The men's team had set it up nicely by comfortably beating the RAF a couple of weeks earlier at Franklin's Gardens (aka the cinch Stadium) in Northampton. Defending their status as Inter Services Champions, the Dark Blues conceded an early penalty, then set about their opponents, scoring three tries to lead 21-6 at the break.

An early RAF try in the second half failed to ignite the



contest, with the Navy hitting back with two quick-fire tries to put them out of sight.

By the final whistle the Senior Service had rattled up 47 points, with the RAF limited to two unconverted tries and two penalties.

The RN women's team were on the defensive from the start of their match, with the RAF cruising to a 17-0 lead after the first quarter.

By half-time that lead had stretched to 24-0, but the RN spoiled the RAF's clean sheet by notching a converted try, ending the game 36-7 – a very similar result to 2025. So it was on to the Twickenham decider for the men's team.

Cheered on by the large RNA contingent, this time it was the Royal Navy that got off to a flyer, dotting down behind the line for a converted try with less than a minute on the clock.

That was followed by two more Navy tries, but the Army finally got their act together and put some points on the board through a converted try of their own.

The team in red came under further sustained pressure, with the Navy breaking their defence once more, though the Army managed to double their score just before the break – the Navy were looking comfortable at 26-14. That cushion rapidly disappeared in the opening exchanges of the second half, with the Army notching two quick tries, one converted, to a solitary penalty for the Navy, leaving the game in the balance at 29-26.

Nerves were settled slightly by a further Navy try to stretch their lead to ten points, but back came the Army with two quick tries of their own to tie the game at 36-36 with just minutes remaining.

With memories of 2024's last-gasp win by the Army still fresh in the memory, the Royal Navy dug deep and set up a maul from a lineout close to the Army try line. And it was a player in dark blue who emerged from the maul with ball in hand, touching down to secure a thrilling



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41-36 victory and ensuring their first back-to-back championships for the first time in more than 50 years. The RN women's team had a challenge of their own to address when they faced their Army equivalents after the men's match.

Having been thumped 96-0 the previous year, it was a chance to show that the squad was heading in the right direction – and to that extent, they succeeded.

With the Army opening their campaign to claim a fifth consecutive title, it was no surprise that they raced to an early lead, notching four tries in the first 20 minutes, going on to establish a 38-0 advantage at the break. The red tide continued to batter the Navy's defence in the second half, with the Senior Service failing to cross the tryline while shipping a further 40 points to end the match at 78-0.

For those who like to plan well ahead, the date for next year's Army v Navy double-header at Twickenham is **Saturday 1 May**, with the RAF matches around two weeks before that.

## RAFFLE WINNERS

The RNA Army & Navy Raffle winners have now been confirmed, with prizes generously donated by partner organisations. With almost 5,000 tickets sold, the raffle received strong support from the Royal Naval community, alongside valued commercial partners and attractions across the UK.

The RNA would like to thank all participants and all those who donated prizes for their continued support and helping make the raffle a success. A light-hearted moment occurred during the final stages of the draw when a representative from Park Holidays UK was found to have drawn their own prize! In the spirit of fairness, the prize was redrawn.

### Winners:

**Prize 1:** Weekend stay for two at the Union Jack Club, London: Anthony Morris

**Prize 2:** Chivalrous dress watch (£495), donated by William Wood Watches: David Sloggett

**Prize 3:** Queen Elizabeth II funeral print by Fraser Scarfe, donated by Thales: William Wilson

**Prize 4:** Brewery tour for two at Powder Monkey Brewery, Gosport: Dania Saddler (Green 745)

**Prize 5:** Two night stay for four + Adventure Golf at China Fleet Club: Gavin Brechany

**Prize 6:** Private charter on an F8 for up to 12 people at Portsmouth Historic Dockyard: Andrew Bowen

**Prize 7:** RNA clothing bundle, kindly donated by Simply Print Wales: Martin Rushent

**Prize 8:** Overnight stay for two with dinner and breakfast at the Royal Maritime Hotel, Portsmouth: John Armitage

**Prize 9:** 3-4 night off-peak holiday (Gold two-bedroom accommodation, sleeps up to six)

Park Holidays UK: (Redraw) Lesley Roffey

**Note:** Redrawn after an initial ticket was drawn by a Park Holidays UK representative who was later excluded from the prize in line with fairness rules.

**Prize 10:** RNA clothing bundle from Ray Pullen Embroidery: Sean Connochie

For any questions please contact [admin@rnassoc.org](mailto:admin@rnassoc.org) or 023 9272 3747





# SHIPMATES MEET THE TEAM AT CENTRAL OFFICE OPEN DAY

The Royal Naval Association welcomed shipmates and partners from **Rayleigh, Torbay, Corby, Lee-on-the-Solent and Stubbington** Branches to Central Office last month for a special RNA Open Day.

The visit gave attendees the opportunity to meet the Central Office team, hear an update from National Chair Andy Christie (on the left of the picture right), and spend time reconnecting with fellow shipmates while sharing plenty of dits and good company throughout the day.

The event highlighted the strong sense of comradeship that continues to sit at the heart of the RNA, bringing together members from across several branches to strengthen connections and learn more about the work being carried out nationally.

The day concluded with a private harbour tour, generously provided



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by long-time RNA supporters SERCO, offering visitors a memorable experience around Portsmouth Harbour. A huge thank you goes to everyone who attended and helped make the day such a success, including Paul Stone, Chair of Area 3, Area 3 President Soapy Watson, Kate and Steve. The RNA remains committed to supporting shipmates, preserving Naval heritage and fostering friendship across the Naval community.



# MILESTONE FOR MENTORS

The RNA Veteran Mentors at HMS Raleigh have marked 18 years of continuous service supporting new entrants to the Royal Navy, providing encouragement, resilience, and guidance drawn from lived experience and lifelong Naval values.

For nearly two decades, RNA mentors have supported recruits through the challenges of Phase One training, offering understanding, perspective, and reassurance at some of the most demanding moments of their early Naval careers.

For the current team of 14 mentors, the role is regarded not simply as volunteering, but as one of the most rewarding forms of service they have undertaken.

Over the years, the programme has continued to evolve, with increasingly high training standards, expanded responsibilities and a growing focus on structured support.



Today, six mentors are qualified Level 3 coaches, enabling the team to combine professional coaching techniques with operational experience gained throughout their Naval careers. RNA Veteran Mentor Lead Terry Whitty said: "Being part of the RNA mentoring team at HMS Raleigh is one of the greatest privileges of my life.

"We don't just guide recruits through training – we help them find confidence in themselves at the very moment they need it most, and that stays with them long after they leave the gate."

While the anniversary itself fell on 5 May, the Passing Out Parade and Veterans Day on Friday 8 May at HMS Raleigh provided an opportunity for mentors past and present, including one of the original mentors S/M Roger Grace, to come together and mark the occasion.

As the programme enters its 19th year, the mission remains unchanged:



standing firm, guiding quietly and making a difference where it matters most.

The RNA is currently recruiting mentors. Further information can be found on page 34 of May's Semaphore Circular – the link is [here](#).



## WARRIOR PROGRAMME BRINGS CONTROL

Serving personnel, veterans and their families can face unique challenges, from the demands of Service life to the lasting impact of past experiences. Through funding from the RNRMC, members of the Naval community are being supported to move from overwhelm to ownership through **the Warrior Programme**.

The Warrior Programme is a structured personal development course designed specifically for the military community, providing practical tools to help individuals regain control, build confidence and create lasting positive change.

Through RNRMC funding, eligible members of the Naval community can access the programme at the point they need it most, ensuring they are not facing challenges alone but are supported to take meaningful steps forward.

Rebecca Gallimore, Co-ordinator for Serving Personnel Army/Royal Navy at



the Warrior Programme, explains the impact: "You start looking forward as opposed to looking back. Letting go frees the space and energy to focus on what you really want."

Participants begin with a foundation course, delivered either as a three-day residential or a series of online sessions, followed by 12 months of ongoing support to help embed new skills into everyday life.

Charlotte Cole, co-founder and CEO of the Warrior Programme, said: "The transformative part is the foundation course, where people learn the techniques and make real shifts." The programme focuses on helping individuals release unhelpful patterns, set clear goals and build healthier boundaries, supporting them to thrive

both personally and professionally. Crucially, the support is designed to create lasting independence.

"We teach you, you do it – and then you keep doing it. The 12 months are about getting it into the muscle memory," Charlotte Cole added.

RNRMC is committed to funding projects that deliver meaningful, long-term impact for the Naval community. By working in partnership with the Warrior Programme, the charity is helping individuals build resilience, improve wellbeing, and take positive control of their future.

Participants report a wide range of benefits, from improved confidence and clearer communication to better sleep and reduced stress. The impact is often felt not just by individuals, but by their families and wider support networks. Support is available to serving personnel, veterans and family members, united by a desire to move beyond past challenges and build a stronger future.

# COPYRIGHTS AND WRONGS...

This is intended as general guidance for those officials and members of the RNA who publish or post material onto the Internet or social media, for example via a website, Facebook, X, Instagram or similar platforms, or in printed circulars, newsheets and the like.

It does not set out to explain the law pertaining to copyright in detail, but to highlight some issues that may affect members and branches of the RNA, as with any other organisation. It is important to understand that by copying and using material (such as images) that you found online or in other publications onto your website, social media pages or your own publication, you may inadvertently fall foul of copyright laws.

The vast majority of images (which includes photographs, drawings, paintings, diagrams, cartoons or other such illustrations) that you find online or in publications are likely to be protected by copyright as artistic works unless it is explicitly stated otherwise.

Therefore you must always exercise caution when considering the use of such material – **always assume that you CANNOT use an image unless the image was taken by you or you have permission**, either from the copyright owner or through a specific licence (which can allow free use of imagery in certain circumstances). A copyright symbol (©) does NOT

have to be present for copyright to exist – just because it, or details of the copyright owner, is missing does not mean the image is not protected by copyright.

Copyright does not have to be applied for by the person who creates the image – it is an automatic right once the material is created (such as a photograph having been taken). There is no public or government register of copyright in the UK, so tracking down the copyright owner can be a tricky business – but failing to do so could result in an unwanted bill.

And remember that an image from another country, perhaps on a foreign website, could still be covered by copyright through international treaties and conventions such as the Berne Convention, to which the UK, the USA and almost every European state are amongst the 176 signatory nations (<https://www.wipo.int/treaties/en/ip/berne/>).

Just because an image appears on another website/social media page or publication does NOT automatically mean it can be used freely – the other website may have sought or gained special permission, or paid a fee, to use the image or item, or that website may itself be in breach of copyright, so you must satisfy yourself that you are not doing the same.

There is a widespread belief that

if an image is published online it is therefore in the 'public domain' and thus can be freely copied and used – this is NOT the case.

And the fact that the RNA is a charity, a not-for-profit organisation and a veterans' organisation is no protection – copyright owners may sometimes charge lower fees for the use of their material by not-for-profit groups, but that would still mean there are fees to be paid.

Even if you are not seeking to make money out of the use of an image, if you use it without the permission of the copyright owner you could still be liable to legal action and/or a claim for lost revenues.

You can, generally speaking, use your own images without problem, or those of a branch member (so long as they have explicitly granted permission for the picture to be used). However, you will likely breach copyright if you take a picture of someone else's image, painting etc – that could put your image in breach of the original copyright.

And do not think you can hide behind the anonymity of the Internet – it is relatively easy for agencies to automatically trawl for the illegal use of images online, whether on a web page, social media post or in a newsheet placed online as a pdf. Once spotted, copyright infringement is a civil matter, not criminal, which has a lower burden of proof – balance

of probability rather than beyond reasonable doubt.

If you have breached copyright, you should immediately remove the image in question – that might not be the end of the matter but it will do your case no harm by showing you were willing to act quickly to remedy the situation.

Also remember that there are copyright issues with the use of music online – there may be copyright on the original score, and/or on the recording that you use, even if the original score is out of copyright, so attaching music to a piece of video which you post may also be problematic. For a basic guide from the UK government on copyright on photographs and digital images on the internet please use **this link**.

## 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](#)



# THEY ALL KNOW THE DRILL...

Shipmate Martyn Evans of Paddock Wood Branch has been named the new National Standard Bearer of the RNA following an outstanding performance at the Association's National Standard Bearers Competition held at HMS Collingwood in Fareham.

The highly-anticipated competition brought together standard bearers from across the UK for a weekend celebrating ceremonial excellence, discipline and Naval tradition, with competitors demonstrating exceptional skill, precision and commitment in challenging conditions.

S/M Mike Smyth, the RNA's National Ceremonial Adviser, said: "Events like this showcase the very best of the Royal Naval Association – commitment, resilience, friendship and pride in our Naval traditions. "Despite a number of unexpected challenges across the weekend, the competition was delivered with professionalism and good humour throughout, which says a great deal about everyone involved.



"The standard of competition was exceptional, and it was inspiring to see both experienced standard bearers and newcomers taking part with such dedication. Congratulations to S/M Martyn

Evans on becoming the new National Standard Bearer, and sincere thanks to all the volunteers, judges, organisers and supporters whose hard work ensured another memorable and successful championship."

Apart from the gusty wind, another challenge was the fact that one of the judges, S/M Steve Susans, planned to drive to Collingwood from Kent with not only a competitor as a passenger, but also with competition arena markers, kneeling stool and competitor number badges. Unfortunately his car had a catastrophic breakdown on the M25, and a long wait for assistance was followed by a long recovery back to Broadstairs late on Friday night, ultimately resulting in the loss of a judge and a competitor for the events. The event was successfully delivered thanks to strong support from HMS Collingwood staff and volunteers, with LPTI Jordan 'Sully' Sullivan winning particular praise for coordinating seamless access and operational support throughout the competition weekend.

Awards were presented by Association of Wrens Chair Janet



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Crabtree and RNA Deputy National President S/M Mark Slawson. On completion of the competition participants and spectators retreated to the Court Barn Conservative Club, the home of the **Lee-on-the-Solent & Stubbington (LeeStubs) Branch**, for prizegiving with bar and refreshments. Particular thanks go to S/M Soapy Watson for his usual enthusiastic and exemplary ex-CPO Steward support throughout, plus the backing of his daughter S/M Kate and her husband S/M Steve (LeeStubs branch Secretary and Treasurer respectively) in providing an excellent buffet and tot. The results from a small but impressive field of competitors were as follows:

**The Association of Wrens Shield:**

- Winner: S/M Chris Walker
- Highly commended: S/M Gail Foster.

**The Novices Shield:**

- Winner: S/M Lee 'Fred' Perry (Plymouth Branch, Area 4) This was a particularly outstanding performance as 'Fred' is visually impaired and couldn't see the markers until almost upon them.

**The Chester Cup and new National Standard Bearer:**

- S/M Martyn Evans (Paddock Wood Branch, Area 2)

**The John Cunningham Cup for runner-up and new Deputy National Standard Bearer:**

- S/M Richard Shenton (Worthing Branch, Area 3)

**The A N Other Cup for Third Place:**

- S/M Martin Skeggs (Chatham Branch, Area 2)

**The Bob Coburn Memorial Trophy** – awarded for his indefatigable commitment to RNA standard bearing, both Area 3 and Branch as well as other associations to which he belongs;

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**Chester Cup and new National Standard Bearer S/M Martyn Evans (right) with S/M Mark Slawson**



**Runner up S/M Richard Shenton**



**Third place went to S/M Martin Skeggs**



**S/M Richard Shenton with the Bob Coburn Memorial Trophy**



**Novice entrants S/M 'Fred' Perry (winner, left) and S/M Cheryl Allen**

■ S/M Richard Shenton (Worthing Branch, Area 3).

Finally, S/M Smyth thanked the judges, S/M Tony 'Budgie' Avery (stalwart of RNA standard bearing in every respect) and S/M Barry 'Dickie' Henderson, former WO1 RN and State Ceremonial Training Officer and Type 42 National standard bearer, plus the ever-present RNA photographer, S/M Nigel Huxtable.



# EDUCATIONAL VISIT TO OXFORD PROVED VALUABLE

Members of the RNAMCC (Royal Naval Association Motorhome, Caravan and Camping group) have been off to Oxford for a quick recce, ahead of the upcoming Big Meet Mark V.

Members Ron Fletcher, Dan Beer, Andy Fletcher and more pitched up at Hardwicke in Oxford to check out the venue for the Big Meet on 25 June.

The large clubhouse has passed muster for catering for those that require big televisions for the World Cup, whilst the rest of the site with its beautiful lakefront views will play host to some serious fun time.

For 2026, and the 74 units booked in, the Meet will have a Caribbean or Hawaiian theme, and providing the midges stay away, the rig of the day is expected to prove interesting!

In addition to a great eating place at the Clubhouse there will be a BBQ, charity raffles and prizes, games, tot time, get-togethers for shipmates old, local walks and sightseeing and, as always, dogs are welcome, so plenty of dog walks.

The meet-ups for everyone with a vested interest in camping or outdoor living have proved truly beneficial from a welfare point of view, with the ability for people to talk in a safe setting with likeminded oppos who 'get it'.

Over and over again, people have commented it has been great to see people they have not seen for years and to be in an environment that has lifted their spirits and, for some, given them the chance to try out something new.

This has all been made possible with a financial grant from RNRMC (Royal Navy and Royal Marines Charity), and all are extremely grateful.



**NOTE:** The RNAMCC is not a Branch but a SCG (Sports & Comradeship Group), where only one person in the booking party needs to be a member of the RNA.

The group is also open to people from other Armed Forces, as long as one is a member of the RNA.

Serving or former serving members of the Royal Navy or Royal Marines are invited to join the RNA – there is no joining or membership fee.

Equally, anyone who shares the ethos of the Royal Naval Association and would like to become an Associate Member, please get in touch with your local branch – full details can be found at <https://www.royal-naval-association.co.uk/branches>

Pictured is one of the lakeside views, and (right) the type of stunning van that you might see at one of the Big Meets.



## ARE YOUR BRANCH DETAILS UP TO DATE?

It has now been several months since we tidied up the RNA website, hopefully making it easier for shipmates to find their way around and get to the information they need with a minimum of fuss.

One important element of the website is the directory of branches, which gives details of where and when they meet, a person to contact (usually the Branch Secretary), and sometime recent news stories concerning branch activities.

And while Central Office does keep tabs on all RNA branches in areas such as annual returns, we don't always have the latest information on important details such as meeting venues and which day of the month shipmates tend to get together.

It would be helpful to Central Office, and to the branches themselves, if somebody from each branch could check their entry under the branches directory on the website (<https://www.royal-naval-association.co.uk/branches>) and let us know if anything needs to be amended or updated.

Please contact Central Office via email on [comms@royalnavalassoc.com](mailto:comms@royalnavalassoc.com), using the message line 'Update [name] Branch', eg Update Slough Branch.

Communication is a vital part of the RNA's business, so it is crucial that we make sure potential members, for example, can find what they need to know about a branch straight away – in some ways, outdated information is worse than no information at all...



A CENTURY OF CITY PRIDE

## PARADE DETAILS FOR SUNDAY

Calling all Standard Bearers who are attending the Conference Weekend in Salford and wish to Parade their Area/Branch Standard at the Drumhead Service on Sunday 14 June.

Please arrive from 0930 to form up outside of Dock 10 Bldg. The parade will step off at 0950 and the Drumhead Service will start at 1000 and last approximately one hour at the Waterfront at Media City, adjacent to Dock 10.

Rig for Standard Bearers is RNA No 1s with medals.

# ALL SET FOR A SPECTACULAR WEEKEND AT SALFORD QUAYS

The hard work is all but done, and the scene is set for a spectacular RNA Annual Conference weekend on the waterfront in the City of Salford.

Based around Salford Quays, which arose from the ruins of Salford Docks – part of what was once the third busiest port in the UK – the weekend programme makes the most of what the city has to offer.

The RNA golf tournament at Ellesmere Golf Club starts the ball rolling at 0900 on Friday 12 June, followed by a National Council meeting in the afternoon and a Meet & Greet at Craft Brew (Unit 1, Digital World Centre, Lowry Plaza) from 1830 – the rig is casual pub attire. The detailed weekend programme will be available at the Meet & Greet.

As well as the scenic location on the inland end of the Manchester Ship Canal, Conference planners have secured some iconic buildings for events – the Lowry arts centre for the Annual General Meeting on Saturday (13 June), with the focus switching to the Imperial War Museum North for the gala dinner the same evening – 1900, rig: formal (black tie), ladies equivalent (miniature medals).

The waterfront itself is the setting for the Sunday Drumhead Service adjacent to Dock 10, starting at 1000 (rig: standard bearers and those wishing in RNA No 1s with medals, all others as they see fit), that closes the formal part of the weekend.

The AGM (rig: RNA Number 1s – negative medals – or equivalent) will start at 0930 when the National Standard is marched into the room.

Guests will include the Ceremonial Mayor of the City of Salford, Cllr Robin Garrido.

After the National President's Address, delivered this year by the Deputy National President S/M Mark Slawson, the winners of the President's Awards for Recruiting and Gift Aid returns will be announced.

These will be followed by reports from the Standing Orders Committee, the Treasurer, and National Chairman S/M Andy Christie will deliver the National Council report.

At the time this Circular was produced there were no Council Motion of Urgency, and just one Branch Motion of Urgency – the proposal that Plymouth Branch should host the 2028 AGM and National Conference in the city under the auspices of Area 4, with a proposed date of Friday 16 June to Sunday 18 June.

The proposers state that the event would be centred around the Crowne Plaza Hotel at Plymouth Hoe, with the RNA Golf Competition being hosted at the China Fleet Club in Saltash, which would also be an accommodation site.

No National Council Motions have been registered, and just one Branch Motion, from Shrewsbury.

The motion requests a comprehensive review of the volume and complexity of administrative tasks required of Branch officials and members with the aim of simplifying and clarifying these processes.

The motion states that there is a growing workload that could put off volunteers, particularly the more senior shipmates who may not be as confident with digital technology.

Conference will close in the afternoon with the traditional Central Charities Fund raffle draw, after which the National Anthem is played and the National Standard marched off.

The full agenda is available to download from the RNA website using [this link](#).

■ There will be a Welfare and Wellbeing drop-in session for volunteers attending Conference in Salford after the AGM on Saturday – see [page 32](#) for full details.

■ **Remember that there is free transport for RNA members on Metrolink trams and Bee Network buses in Greater Manchester from Friday to Sunday – but only on the presentation of your RNA membership card as a form of ID.**

■ We are trialling a livestream of the AGM on Saturday, which will make the event accessible to those who cannot travel to Salford (although it is not interactive – it can simply be viewed). The link to access the feed will be emailed to members next week, and please bear in mind that this is an experiment, and may be subject to glitches as we get to grips the technology!

# FANTASTIC NEWS!

## ROYAL NAVAL ASSOCIATION NATIONAL CONFERENCE WEEKEND - CITY OF SALFORD

### FREE TRAVEL FOR RNA MEMBERS

Friday 12th June – Sunday 14th June

Simply show your **Royal Naval Association ID card** and enjoy:

- ✓ Free travel on Bee Network buses
- ✓ Free travel on Metrolink trams



📍 Travel with ease across Greater Manchester  
Including:

- MediaCityUK
- Salford Quays
- Conference venues & events

#### 👏 With thanks to:

- Salford City Council
- Paul Dennett, City Mayor
- The Mayoral Team
- Transport for Greater Manchester



**ROYAL NAVAL  
ASSOCIATION**



**Salford City Council**

Supporting our veterans, families & Guest  
during Salford's centenary year

🐝 Proud City. Proud Service. Proud Weekend Ahead.

# ROYAL NAVY VETERANS ENJOY VE DAY 81 TEA PARTY AT NUMBER 10

The RNA marked the 81st anniversary of VE Day by supporting World War 2 veterans to attend a special afternoon tea at Number 10 Downing Street, in a moving tribute to their service and sacrifice.

Former Wrens Dorothy Walsh and Betty Withers, alongside former sailor Ken Arkell, all met and chatted with the Prime Minister at the party.

Capt Bill Oliphant, General Secretary of the RNA, said: "VE Day is an opportunity for the nation to reflect on the courage, sacrifice and resilience of the generation who secured our freedom.

"It was a tremendous honour for the RNA to support these remarkable veterans in attending such a special event at Number 10.

"Their stories are part of our nation's history and it is vital that we continue to celebrate their service and ensure

future generations understand the legacy they leave behind.

"We couldn't do what we do without the support of other Royal Naval charities, and I would like to extend a special thank you to the Royal Naval Benevolent Trust; Dorothy is a resident at Admiral Jellicoe House in Portsmouth, and we are also grateful for the ongoing support of Royal Navy & Royal Marines Charity."

Dorothy Walsh served as a Wren codebreaker during the war, while Ken Arkell served across multiple Royal Navy ships and shore establishments throughout the conflict.

Betty Withers served on Hayling Island, where she helped prepare and serve what would become the final meal for many Servicemen before the D-Day Landings in June 1944.

The Royal Fleet Auxiliary also played a supporting role on the day, with CPO Mark Amato on hand to assist the veterans throughout the visit.

The engagement formed part of wider national commemorations marking VE Day 81, bringing together veterans, serving personnel and communities across the UK in remembrance of those who served during World War 2.

All pictures inside No 10: Crown copyright. Licensed under the Open Government Licence  
**Grant keeps minibuses moving – p23**



## WHEN MILLY MET LARRY

Milly Luxford from RNA Central Office joined the Naval veterans at No 10 and reported that "Dorothy, Betty and Ken enjoyed a memorable visit, sharing stories from their wartime service and reflecting on the comrades they served alongside.

"After tea, they were welcomed into the historic Cabinet Room, where they took the opportunity to 'set the world straight' in the very space where so many pivotal decisions have been made.

"It was a day filled with pride, laughter, and poignant memories – a fitting tribute to the extraordinary generation who secured peace 81 years ago."

Milly also managed to tick off an item on her bucket list – meeting Larry, the renowned No 10 cat (pictured above).



# TRIBUTE PAID TO WORLD WAR 1 HERO

Members of **Waterlooville Branch** and the HMS Exeter Association were amongst those who attended a Service of Remembrance in Petersfield for Cdr Loftus William Jones, Commanding Officer of destroyer HMS Shark, who died at the Battle of Jutland on 31 May 1916.

The service also honoured all who served at the battle in the North Sea 110 years ago.

Cdr Jones led a division of torpedo boat destroyers into the fray, taking on a squadron of German cruisers, and though his ship was quickly reduced to a hulk, Cdr Jones personally helped continue firing Shark's guns and trying to fix the shattered steering until, with shrapnel wounds and part of his leg shot away, he was too badly wounded

to continue.

He was not amongst the few survivors when the ship finally sank, and was posthumously awarded the Victoria Cross for his actions.

The officer's body was washed ashore several days later in the small village of Fiskebackskill, Sweden, alongside two other victims of Jutland, one of whom – PO Stoker First Class Harry Hughes, who died in destroyer HMS Ardent on 1 June – was born just months before Cdr Jones and less than half-a-mile away in Southsea.

The bodies of the three men were initially buried in the village, but



in 1961 were moved to the Kviberg Cemetery in Gothenburg, where they rest in the Commonwealth War Graves Commission plot.

# CHANGE AT TOP OF HMS RALEIGH

HMS Raleigh marked a significant moment in its history with the transfer of command from Capt J H D Ussher RN to Col Chris Hall RM.

As Capt Ussher departed to take up the appointment of Deputy Director People Training, with promotion to Commodore, he left behind a lasting legacy of leadership, professional development and cultural transformation. During his tenure, he embedded the Compass Leadership Vision and Gyroscope Leadership Mandate, championing the values, resilience and professionalism required to deliver a modern, warfighting Royal Navy, while fostering strong links with the local community and creating opportunities for personal growth across the establishment.

Now in post as CO, Col Hall brings nearly three decades of operational, leadership and training experience. Since

joining the Royal Marines in 1997, he has served on operations in Northern Ireland, Iraq and Afghanistan, commanded at multiple levels, and become the first Royal Marine to lead the RN Leadership Academy. Most recently Head People Support at HMS Temeraire, he assumes command of the Navy's premier training establishment at a pivotal time. Building on the strong foundations laid by his predecessor, Col Hall will lead HMS Raleigh as it continues to prepare the next generation of Royal Navy sailors and Royal Marines for service.

The RNA mentors who support recruits at HMS Raleigh look forward to working closely with Col Hall and supporting his efforts to develop confident, capable and resilient sailors as they begin their Naval careers.



**GO LEARN**

**FREE ONLINE TUTORING**

for serving Royal Navy families

Funded by **GREENWICH HOSPITAL**

Managed by **Naval Children's Charity**

Delivered by **mva Tutors**

# BFBS ESPORTS OFFER IS EVEN BETTER SECOND TIME ROUND



The British Forces Broadcasting Service launched Season Two of the BFBS Pro League in April, following the success of last year's historic inaugural esports competition for the UK Armed Forces community.

The League encompasses all members of the Defence community, including veterans and family members, and there is also plenty of scope for the casual gamer.

Following the breakthrough first season that attracted more than 700 players from across the British Armed Forces community, the BFBS Pro League returned with an expanded esports line-up, adding F1 25 and League of Legends for 2026.

This year's Grand Final will be featuring Rocket League, with players battling through a series of tournaments before the action culminates on Sunday 27 September at the Royal Air Force Museum in London.

The Pro League is designed exclusively as a competitive arena where serving personnel, veterans, MOD civil servants, reservists, members of the UK cadet forces, the bereaved community and immediate family members (parents, children, and siblings) can compete, connect, and represent their defence communities on a national stage.

This year, the BFBS Esports team will be aiming to grow the league significantly, alongside delivering at least four in-person gaming activations across the year.

Adam Waters, Director of AI Culture and Gaming, said: "Season Two of the BFBS Pro League represents a major step forward for esports within the UK Armed Forces community.

"The level of competition we saw during the first season was incredibly

impressive, and this year we're expanding the league with more titles, more opportunities to compete, and even bigger ambitions for the future." Season Two also introduces the BFBS Open Series, a new community-driven tournament format aimed at widening participation and offering a more accessible route for casual gamers to get involved.

While the Pro League caters to intermediate and advanced players, the Open Series is designed for beginner through to intermediate competitors. It will feature stand-alone online events and a vote via the BFBS Esports Discord server to decide which games will be chosen for each tournament, offering players of all skill levels an entry point into competitive esports, supported by a strong focus on safeguarding, including dedicated in-house moderators, a zero-tolerance approach to negative behaviour, and a commitment to supporting a positive competitive environment.

Robert Wylie, Head of BFBS Esports, said: "The Pro League is the flagship competition within BFBS Esports, and bringing it back for a second season is hugely exciting.

"As well as adding two massively popular titles, we want to make sure the esports ecosystem continues to grow, which is why we're launching the Open Series this year.

"It gives more players a chance to compete, gain experience, and be part of the wider defence gaming community." Former Deputy Commander Cyber &

Specialist Operations Command, Lt Gen Sir Tom Copinger-Symes, who has been championing esports across UK Defence, said: "Attending last year's inaugural BFBS Pro League Finals was an exciting experience, and I am very much looking forward to this year's edition.

"The BFBS Pro League is an excellent example of supporting the UK Armed Forces and wider Defence enterprise via esports, which are an increasingly impactful means of developing skills, fostering teamwork, and improving strategic decision-making."

Beyond the competition itself, the Pro League continues to resonate with those who take part. Royal Navy players who attended last year's Grand Final also shared their experiences of competing:

■ LH Daniel Galloway 'Stimple\_Bog': "I can't wait to take place in the Forces' most prestigious and competitive league again – see you at LAN."

■ LET William Stratton 'William200015': "I loved that us as players got the opportunity to play in that sort of scene even though we aren't the best, and I also loved the commentary on the games as it made it feel very professional and I can't wait for the new season."

Building on the success of last year, the BFBS Pro League returns bigger, more competitive and more accessible than ever, as it continues to support esports across the UK Armed Forces community. Players can sign up and find out more at [www.bfbasesports.com](http://www.bfbasesports.com) and you can join the chat community on <https://discord.gg/Qnv3TUeR>

Further information can also be discovered through BFBS Esports YouTube and Twitch with updates being shared across the website, Facebook, X, Instagram and TikTok.

## RNRMC PLAYS CRUCIAL ROLE IN RN ESPORTS

Officers, ratings and their partners gathered to celebrate the Royal Navy Esports awards evening and Inaugural dinner at the Royal Maritime Hotel in Portsmouth.

RN esports has recently become a recognised sport, with more than 800 players at every level, from casual to competitive, and Royal Navy Royal Marines Charity has been instrumental in the development of the sport – as well as supporting the awards evening.

RN esports are all about the immersive gaming world, offering those taking part a chance to connect with players from the RAF, the Army and veterans of the Armed Forces. They have four disciplines: Social gaming, Formula 1 – Competitive, Call of Duty – Competitive, and Rocket League – Competitive,

The Royal Navy recognising esports as a military sport is a

testament to the value of digital skills in modern warfare. It also supports skills development on communication, strategic planning, and can alleviate stress, which are all essential qualities for the military.

The awards evening was a great success. There was a three-course meal served, table gifts to signify the importance of the event, and other entertainment in the form of retro video games, which were well received by all.

Organiser Sub Lt Joshua Hill said: "RNRMC has played a pivotal role in the establishment and ongoing success of RN Esports. It was through their generous initial grant that our association was able to take its first steps towards formation.

"Without this crucial support, we simply would not have reached the position we are in today."



# RACE ACROSS THE UK



**START: DARTMOUTH FINISH: INVERNESS**

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

**EVENT CAPACITY: 30 TEAMS OF 2**

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

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

**ENTRY FEE:**  
£300

**FUNDRAISING  
TARGET:**  
£1,500

\* per person

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



The Royal Navy and Royal Marines Charity is a company limited by guarantee registered in England and Wales (no. 4047940) and is a registered charity (no. 1137940 and Scotland/SC046484).

# 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



# GRANT KEEPS MINIBUSES MOVING

The RNA has received £30,000 in funding from the Veterans' Foundation to maintain and strengthen its essential minibus transport service, which recently enabled World War 2 veterans to attend a VE Day 81 reception at Number 10 Downing Street (see page 18).

The commemorative journey saw RNA minibuses transport two wartime veterans, former Wren Dorothy Walsh and sailor Ken Arkell, into Central London for the historic reception, marking a powerful moment of remembrance and recognition. RNA General Secretary Bill Oliphant said: "We are deeply grateful to the Veterans' Foundation for this generous £30,000 award, which makes such a tangible difference to our membership. "Seeing our World War 2 veterans travel to Number 10 for the VE Day 81 reception was a profoundly moving reminder of why this service matters.

"These minibuses are not simply transport – they are a lifeline that keeps our Naval family connected, active, and included in moments of national significance.

"This funding ensures we can continue to maintain the highest safety standards and sustain a service that so many of our veterans rely upon. We are eternally grateful for the Foundation's support."

Stella Atherstone, Chief Operating Officer at Veterans' Foundation, said: "VE Day 81 is an important moment of remembrance, and we are proud that Veterans' Foundation funding helped ensure Second World War veterans could attend the reception at Number 10 Downing Street.

"The Royal Naval Association's minibus service is a vital lifeline, keeping veterans connected and able to take part in moments of national significance. This £30,000 grant helps ensure that service continues safely and reliably." Former Wren Dorothy Walsh was a codebreaker during the war – her family was unaware of her role for decades after the war. Ken Arkell served in



the Royal Navy in multiple ships and shore establishments during the war. The minibuses are used throughout the year to transport members to welfare events, remembrance services, social gatherings, outreach visits and community activities across the UK.

They are particularly vital for older veterans and those without access to transport, helping maintain strong social connections and participation in the wider Naval community.

The £30,000 grant will fund a structured maintenance and safety programme covering annual MOTs, servicing, preventative maintenance, insurance, roadside assistance and essential repairs.

It will also support the upkeep of accessibility features such as wheelchair lifts, restraints and safety equipment, ensuring inclusive and dignified travel for all users.



## 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 – as demonstrated above – 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](http://www.royal-naval-association.co.uk/mini-bus-hire)



# STAY SAFE IN THE SUMMER HEAT

Assuming that the heatwave in late May wasn't the end of the summer it is worth highlighting some of the risks of extremely hot weather.

According to the NHS, the main risks posed by a heatwave are:

- Not drinking enough fluids;
  - Overheating, which can make other medical conditions even worse;
  - Heat exhaustion and heatstroke.
- Those most at risk include:
- Older people, particularly those over 75 and female;
  - Those living alone or in a care home;
  - People with serious or long-term illness, including heart or lung conditions, diabetes and kidney disease;
  - People who may find it hard to keep cool, such as the bed-bound;
  - People who spend a lot of time outside or in hot places – those who live in a top-floor flat, for example, or the homeless.
- Heat exhaustion occurs when the body overheats and cannot cool down, but if the sufferer can cool down within 30 minutes it does not usually need emergency medical attention.

If that person does not cool down, heat exhaustion can lead to heatstroke, where the body temperature becomes dangerously high and would probably need emergency treatment.

To prepare for hot weather, you should listen out for weather forecasts, and if hot weather is expected plan your day accordingly – shopping, dog-walking and the like should be carried out early in the morning or in the evening, when it is usually cooler.

You should drink fluids regularly throughout the day – water, diluted squash and lower-fat milks are good

choices.

Stay in the shade, or a cool part of the house, when possible, and if you have to go out take a refillable bottle filled with water along with you.

Wear lightweight, loose-fitting clothes, and if you must go out wear a wide-

brimmed hat and apply sunscreen generously and frequently.

This is just a brief guide to coping with a heatwave – for more details, advice and suggestions see the government website [here](#), the NHS website [here](#) and the Age UK website [here](#).

## 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



# SPECTACULAR OPPORTUNITY

The magnificent Massed Bands of HM Royal Marines Beating Retreat will return to London this summer, bringing a spectacular evening of military music, tradition and pageantry to the iconic Horse Guards Parade on 16 and 17 July. This spectacular evening of military music and ceremonial pageantry will see more than 200 of the world's finest military musicians perform in one of the capital's most historic settings, against the stunning backdrop of St James's Park.

Audiences will be treated to a stirring programme featuring the Massed Bands of HM Royal Marines, the precision drill of the 40-strong Corps of Drums, and a Royal Navy Guard of Honour.

The evening will culminate in the moving Naval Sunset ceremony, a tradition rich in heritage that provides a powerful and memorable finale. All proceeds from the event will support the work of Royal Navy and Royal Marines Charity

and RMA – The Royal Marines Charity, helping to provide vital support to sailors, marines, veterans and their families.

Performances will take place on:

■ Thursday 16 July – 1830

■ Friday 17 July – 1830

Both performances will be held at Horse Guards Parade in Central London.

Tickets range from £17 to £45, with seated and special access options available.

Wheelchair tickets include a companion within the same ticket.

Groups of 20 or more can receive a 10 per cent discount using the code BEATGROUP (maximum discount £100).

This historic event offers a rare opportunity to witness the precision, tradition and musical excellence of the Royal Marines in one of London's most impressive ceremonial settings. Tickets are available at <https://tickets.rnrmc.org.uk/navy-beating-retreat/>

## QUICK QUOTE FOR TRAVEL INSURANCE

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

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

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

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

## REQUEST FOR EMAIL DETAILS

Branch Secretaries – 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](mailto: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](http://royal-naval-association.com)

In partnership with **octopus legacy**

## 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.

## 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):

Fortnight ahead(ish) of NC, preferably post AMC

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



Do you have a few minutes to spare to help us help you and your shipmates? It could be very much worth your while... Because it will only take a few minutes to complete the RNA 2026 membership survey, which will enable us to understand all members' views on the RNA and its activities. And for one lucky entrant, drawn at random, there will be a £100 Amazon gift voucher. Completing the survey will help us to deliver more of what members want and need. And if you could all add your email addresses, this would enable us to communicate more effectively with members. To take part in the survey please click this link: <https://forms.office.com/e/wbauj6qJmm>

## SSAFA IS LOOKING FOR VOLUNTEERS

Armed Forces charity SSAFA is looking for volunteers to help ensure their 13 Bridges Challenge runs smoothly in London on Saturday 27 June.

The 13 Bridges Challenge is SSAFA's flagship Armed Forces Day event, bringing together more than 2,000 participants for a scenic ten-mile walk across London's iconic bridges. To make the day a success, they are looking for volunteers to join the SSAFA event team.

You can volunteer any time between 6am and 6pm – let SSAFA know your availability when you sign up, and they will match you to a role that suits you.

Volunteer roles include:

- Welcoming and cheering on participants along the 13 Bridges Challenge;
- Handing out medals;
- Chatting with friends, family and supporters;

- Helping the events team with the set-up before the event, and the pack-down afterwards.

The route for this year sees participants set off from Tower Bridge and finishes in the beautiful surroundings of Battersea Park. If you are interested in volunteering and would like to find out more, use this link: <https://volunteer.ssafa.org.uk/opportunities/111077-event-volunteering-event-volunteer-13-bridges-challenge-2026-2026-03-24?cookieconsent=set>

### TRINITY

## YOUR INSURANCE PARTNER

### ROYAL NAVAL ASSOCIATION

Enjoy the following member benefits:

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

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

**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](http://www.talktotrinity.com) | [hello@talktotrinity.com](mailto:hello@talktotrinity.com)

## RIDING OUT TO RAISE FUNDS

S/M Andrew Thomas is planning to take part in this year's Ride to the Wall (RTTW) in October, and hopes to raise funds for the renovation of the Naval Service Memorial in the National Memorial Arboretum at Alrewas in Staffordshire.

The 2026 RTTW is on Saturday 3 October, and more details can be found at <https://www.rttw.org/index.php> To donate to the Naval Service Memorial repair and maintenance fund, click here.

# FUTURE OF LUDLOW CHURCH'S HISTORIC WHITE ENSIGN SECURED

St Laurence's Church, Ludlow, is delighted to announce that the White Ensign of HMS Ludlow has been formally lowered from its flagstaff and placed into the care of a specialist textile conservator, marking the beginning of its long-awaited rescue. Concern about the ensign's deteriorating condition was most recently raised by a member of the Parochial Church Council in October 2024. The flag, returned to St Laurence's after HMS Ludlow was decommissioned in 1945, has since hung in the church for many decades.

It was originally laid-up following the ship's wartime service and received conservation attention in the late 1990s or early 2000s.

However, by 2007 the Ludlow Advertiser reported that the earlier treatment had failed.

A further assessment in 2016 confirmed the need for urgent remedial work but the church lacked the funds to proceed, leaving the ensign hanging dusty, torn, and increasingly fragile.

In March 2025, a National Trust conservator considered that although the ensign was in a very poor state, it might still be saved if action was taken swiftly. With 2025 marking the 80th anniversary of the end of World War 2, the message was clear – it was now or never.

Under the rallying cry Save Our Flag, in April 2025 St Laurence's launched a public appeal supported by the Shropshire Star, BBC radio, the Tower magazine, Ludlow Cariatid, and other local publications.

The response was remarkable. By August, more than £6,000 had been raised through public subscription.

Donations came from far and wide: from local residents and societies, visitors; a family whose ancestor had served "with the ensign" aboard HMS Ludlow, and even supporters in the United States.

The town's Cub Scouts memorably contributed their pocket money during a tour of the church.

A highly-regarded conservator based in Hereford has since kindly agreed to undertake the work within the available budget.

Although funding was secured in 2025, the church then entered a six-month period of fulfilling the legal requirements of ecclesiastical law governing works on historic church property.

On 18 May at 1400, the White Ensign was lowered and transferred into professional care. The conservation process will begin with a detailed assessment; the timescale is not yet known, but the intention is clear – the ensign will return to St Laurence's for public display, together with the ship's

bell, which remains in situ.

St Laurence's Church extends heartfelt thanks to everyone who has contributed to reaching this milestone.

■ HMS Ludlow began life in World War 1 as American Caldwell-class destroyer USS Stockton, spending the last year of the war on escort duty, mainly around the British Isles.

Placed in reserve after the war, she was reactivated and handed over to the Royal Navy in 1940.

Decommissioned in July 1945, she was beached in the Firth of Forth and used as a target for rocket fire by the RAF.

Parts of the wreckage can still be seen above the waterline at Yellowcraig beach at low tides

## VETERANS AWARDS DEADLINES

**Nominations for the Northern Ireland Veterans Awards close on 30 June, with the final ceremony taking place on 22 October.**

**Use this link to see the categories and access the nomination form.**

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

## TEST YOUR UCKERS CREDENTIALS...

The World Uckers Championships 2026 will be staged in Portsmouth this autumn – but do you think you have what it takes to stand at the summit of the Uckers world?

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](mailto: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!



## COUPLE WIN RECOGNITION

The RNA is immensely proud to see two of its dedicated Shipmates – RNA Scottish Area Secretary Karen Elliot and her husband, RNA Deputy Vice Chairman Stephen Elliot – recognised by Royal Navy and Royal Marines Charity for their outstanding commitment and

service to the Naval community. Their recognition reflects many years of dedicated service, support, and advocacy for serving personnel, veterans, and the wider Naval family through both the RNA and wider charitable work across the sector.

# 100<sup>TH</sup> BIRTHDAY GREETINGS FOR BILL

WO1 Gary Vines, on the right, is pictured presenting a letter on behalf of First Sea Lord Gen Sir Gwyn Jenkins RM to RNA member S/M William (Bill) Clews congratulating him in the week of his 100th birthday. Also in the picture are RNA members S/Ms John Haste and Ron Hargest. William was keen to join the Royal Navy during World War 2 but the authorities had other ideas and sent him down the pits, where he remained until the end of the war. He joined the Royal Navy after the war, serving as a Stoker in HM Ships Euryalus, Implacable, Illustrious and the shore establishments HM Ships Dolphin and Drake, where Bill was a member of the Field Gun Crew. After seven years' service William was discharged but went on to join the Royal Fleet Reserve in 1954, serving in HMS Orion and HMS Rapid. He now lives in a retirement home in Bognor Regis, where John Haste calls in on William and they share their experiences and fond memories of the Mob. Bill still enjoys the odd tot of rum...



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# BE A WINNER WITH THE RNA LOTTERY

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

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

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

Visit [www.RNALottery.co.uk](http://www.RNALottery.co.uk) to sign up.

## PUTTING US ON THE MAP

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

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

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

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

Any feedback to the Comms team please.

## GET YOUR SLOPS HERE

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

# SPORTS AND COMRADESHIP GROUPS

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

American Football – Steve Phillips: [rna.american.football.sig@gmail.com](mailto:rna.american.football.sig@gmail.com)

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

# TRUST CELEBRATES 302 YEARS OF SERVICE

The Women's Royal Naval Service Benevolent Trust (WRNS BT) joined residents, families, veterans and the local community in Beccles to celebrate an extraordinary milestone – a combined 302 years of life from three remarkable World War 2 veterans. S/M Kath Hutton, Branch Secretary of RNA Beccles Branch and Vice Chair of the WRNS BT, attended the event on behalf of the Naval family at a care home honouring former Leading Wrens Laurel MacDonald and Rose McCandless, alongside former Land Girl Angela Ottaway. Laurel and Rose both served as Leading Wren Cooks during the war, working in camps connected to HMS Pembroke.

The celebration brought together family, friends and members of the veteran community, including standard bearers from the RNA and Royal British

Legion Beccles branches.

Residents and guests were also treated to a performance by singing duo the Vibettes, helping create a memorable afternoon of music and reflection.

On behalf of WRNS BT Chair Heather Rimmer, a congratulatory card was sent to the trio, while Kath Hutton presented them with flowers in recognition of their service and remarkable lives.

Kath Hutton said: "It was a real privilege to join Laurel, Rose and Angela, alongside their families and friends, to celebrate such an incredible milestone.

"Between them they represent not only 302 years of life, but also an extraordinary legacy of service, resilience and dedication during the Second World War. It was wonderful to see the local community come together to honour them in such a warm and joyful way."



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



# WELFARE AND WELLBEING

## VOLUNTEERS WEEK – A HEARTFELT ‘THANK YOU’ TO ALL OF YOU

As we mark Volunteers' Week, I want to take a moment to say a huge thank you to every single Welfare and Wellbeing volunteer - past, present and future, *said RNA Welfare and Wellbeing Co-ordinator Jon Everett.*

The work you do, often quietly and without recognition, makes a real difference to the lives of our shipmates and their families. It is work that is built on kindness, commitment and a genuine desire to look after others.

Thank you to those who take the time to send various greetings cards, birthday wishes and “get well soon” messages – they are small acts that mean more than you might ever realise.

Thank you to those who visit shipmates in their homes or in care homes, often travelling many miles to do so, simply to provide company and reassurance.

Thank you to those who support veterans who may be struggling,

offering encouragement, a listening ear, and helping to build confidence and mental resilience when it is most needed.

And thank you to all of you who give up your time so willingly in support of the Royal Naval Association.

Your dedication, compassion and willingness to step forward is what

keeps our welfare and wellbeing support strong.

You may not always see the impact of what you do, but it is there, in every conversation, every visit, and every act of support.

On behalf of the Royal Naval Association and everyone you have helped – thank you!

## THAT'S ALL – FOR NOW...

**The past months have shown continued engagement across welfare and wellbeing activity throughout our Association.**

### **Wellbeing Wednesday**

The most recent Wellbeing Wednesday took place on 13 May, focusing on prostate cancer awareness.

The session helped raise awareness of an important health issue and provided information on support available.

### **Awareness Saturdays – BWWO Training**

The final Awareness Saturday of the current season was held on 30 May. Julie McCarthy, Director of Welfare Operations for SSAFA, joined as guest speaker and delivered a valuable and informative session.

Thank you to everyone who joined the session – I hope you found it useful.

**Both Wellbeing Wednesday and Awareness Saturday sessions will return in the autumn.**

## FUNERAL SUPPORT REFLECTS RNA'S COMMITMENT TO NAVAL FAMILY

Supporting our shipmates and their families at the time of loss remains one of the most important aspects of the Royal Naval Association's welfare work.

From Central Office, RNA Welfare and Wellbeing Co-ordinator Jon Everett has supported around 60 funerals so far this year.

This has included services for World War 2 and Falklands Conflict veterans, as well as both RNA members and non-members.

Alongside this, branches across the Association continue to support shipmates within their local areas, ensuring that wherever possible, someone is there to represent the Association and make sure that pay their respects.

This work goes beyond ceremony.

It reflects our commitment to remembrance, respect, and ensuring that no member of the Naval family is ever forgotten.

It is also about presence, providing quiet support, companionship and connection at what can be a very difficult time for families.

A sincere thank you must go to all shipmates and

branches who step forward to support funerals, often at very short notice.

Your willingness to give your time, travel when needed – sometimes covering long distances – and stand in support of others speaks volumes about the values of the Association.

As one Branch volunteer shared: “When the call comes, we do our best to be there, whether it is planned or at short notice.

“It's about showing respect and making sure no shipmate is ever forgotten.”

## FUNERAL GUIDE IS NOW 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 AND WELLBEING

# NEW SUPPORT NETWORK IS LED BY VETERANS, FOR VETERANS

Combat Stress is developing a new Veterans Recovery Network, bringing together a community of peer support for veterans across the UK, wherever you are on your journey.

Whether you're thinking about starting treatment, focused on staying well, or somewhere in between, this network offers a place to connect with others who understand.

You don't need to be in treatment with Combat Stress to take part – the network is open to any veteran looking for connection, understanding, or a way to take the next step forward, without pressure or expectation.

### What is the Veterans Recovery Network?

Combat Stress is building a nationwide network of in-person peer support groups in local and regional communities for veterans looking to begin or maintain their recovery from Service-attributable PTSD or complex PTSD.

These groups provide safe, informal spaces where veterans can:

- Connect with others who "get it";
- Explore recovery focused topics;
- Share experiences at their own pace.

There's no pressure to talk or share – you can take part in whatever way feels comfortable for you.

### Led by veterans, focused on connection

The network is led by veterans, for veterans.

By bringing people together who share lived experience, it helps make mental health challenges more relatable, reduces stigma and encourages veterans to seek support earlier – reinforcing the message that recovery

# COMBATSTRESS

is possible.

Support within the network is non-clinical and non-judgemental, focused on human connection rather than diagnosis or treatment.

### Upcoming peer support events

Several peer support group sessions are coming up over the next few weeks, offering opportunities to connect in welcoming, informal settings.

Tea and coffee will be available at all locations.

#### Tower of London

Friday 12 June, 12pm–2.30pm

Set in the heart of Central London, this historic landmark offers a unique opportunity to connect while exploring one of the UK's most iconic sites. The session includes a guided tour and free admission.

#### Stirling Castle

Saturday 6 June, 12pm–2.30pm

Located in central Scotland, Stirling Castle sits high above the surrounding landscape and has played a key role in Scotland's history. Attendees will also have free access to the on-site military museum.

#### Carlisle Castle

Monday 15 June, 12pm–2.30pm

Based in the north of England near the Scottish border,

this historic castle has stood for over 900 years. Attendees will have discounted access to the on-site Museum of Military Life.

#### RAF Cosford Museum

Tuesday 16 June 2026, 12pm–2.30pm.

This session at the Royal Air Force Museum in Shropshire offers insight into aviation history, including an overview of the upcoming 2027 exhibition and access to the Cold War exhibition.

### Find out more

If you'd like more information about the Veterans Recovery Network or upcoming peer support groups, please follow [this link](#)..

## DROP IN AT CONFERENCE SESSION

We will be holding a Welfare & Wellbeing Drop-In Session at the RNA National Conference in Salford later this month.

Why not come and say hello – introduce yourself!

The session is designed for Welfare and Wellbeing volunteers who are attending conference.

Jon Everett will be running the informal drop-in session directly after the Annual General Meeting finishes at the Lowry on Saturday afternoon (13 June).

This will be an opportunity to meet in

person and discuss any questions or areas you would like to raise.

Jon will also be carrying out DBS checks during this time.

If you require a DBS, please contact him in advance so he can send you the list of required documents.

Please note that all documents must be original, as the checks will be completed in person.

He will also be available to take photos for anyone wish to have a Welfare and Wellbeing Photo Identity Card.

## BWVO QUARTERLY REPORTING UPDATE

Each Area has now been sent the first of the new Welfare & Wellbeing quarterly reports.

It is hoped these will be shared at Area meetings and across Branches.

The reports highlight the work being carried out by Branch volunteers and the time they dedicate, as well as supporting reporting back to Royal Navy & Royal Marines Charity.

Reporting levels have increased by 60 per cent compared to last year, reflecting stronger engagement and improved visibility of welfare activity.

## WARHEAD PROJECT IS A JOURNEY OF PEACE

Warhead Project UK and the Scotland's Veterans Wellbeing Alliance are currently running SUNRAY TWOSIX, a unique veteran-led wellbeing and awareness expedition travelling the length of the Hebridean Way through Scotland's Outer Hebrides. Using Phillip, a restored 1936 Morris 8 ex-military staff car (pictured right), alongside two support vehicles, the

team is travelling from Loch Lomond through Barra, the Uists, Harris and Lewis, meeting local communities, veterans, support organisations and island residents along the way. SUNRAY TWOSIX is more than a road trip.

It is a moving conversation about:

- Veteran mental health
- PTSD and trauma recovery
- Isolation in rural and island communities
- Suicide awareness and prevention
- Creativity, connection and hope

The project is built around one simple message:

### Share the Light

The team behind SUNRAY TWOSIX are all former Royal Navy and Royal Marines personnel, including two submariners and a Falklands veteran from HMS Plymouth who have each faced their own personal battles after military service. Through friendship, creativity, openness and mutual support, they have found a path forward – and now aim to share that message with others.



Throughout the journey, the team will work in collaboration with Palpa Films to document the expedition and produce a film exploring life, mental health and resilience in some of the UK's most remote communities.

Along the route, SUNRAY TWOSIX will:

- Host informal meet-ups and conversations
- Visit community organisations and wellbeing groups
- Speak with veterans living in remote areas
- Record interviews and local stories
- Create photography, artwork and film content
- Use Phillip as a mobile art installation and conversation starter
- Deliver small presentations and creative activities where possible

The expedition reflects Warhead Project UK's belief that creativity, storytelling and human connection can play an important role in recovery and wellbeing.

### Why the Outer Hebrides?

The Outer Hebrides are among the most beautiful and remote locations in the UK.

While island life offers incredible community spirit, landscape and culture, rural isolation can also present challenges for mental health support, access to services and social connection. SUNRAY TWOSIX aims to listen as much as it speaks.

The project seeks to learn from local communities, understand the realities of island life, and explore how veterans and civilians alike navigate mental health, resilience and belonging in geographically isolated areas.

For more details of the expedition and the wider Warhead Project see <https://www.warheadproject.uk>



## WELFARE CONTACTS

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

# BRANCH NEWS

## BRACKNELL Branch

A total of 25 members Bracknell Branch enjoyed a St George's Day Dinner on 23 April.

Shipmates have continued to invite many interesting speakers at their monthly meetings, covering a wide variety of topics including 'The Boxing Clergyman' and 'From Dreadnought to Scapa Flow', as well as a presentation by the Area 6 Chair, S/M Mike Milne. As usual, Branch shipmates have attended local Armed Forces and Veterans Breakfast Clubs in the area as well as other Area events, including another local Armed Forces Veterans Hub, run by Royal Berkshire Fire & Rescue Service at Maidenhead Fire Station.

The Branch Standard has been paraded at two funerals and, with Bracknell Royal British Legion, at a commemoration for Op Telic in Bracknell Town Centre on Sunday 24 May.

On 21 May, 15 shipmates visited the Historic Dockyard Chatham and had an excellent day on the extensive site. Members are looking forward to another busy month in June, as, hopefully, the better weather will continue.



### **BOLTON Branch**

At the end of April Bolton Branch members were invited by the Royal Society of St George to a St George's Day gala dinner held in Bolton Town Hall.

A very enjoyable evening was had by all.

The branch had a great rugby weekend at the beginning of May, with eight shipmates making the annual pilgrimage to Twickenham.

The use of the RNA bar was brilliant, and the whole experience was made all the better because of a Navy victory. BZ to RNA Central Office for organising the bar.

The branch delayed their May meeting to accommodate the rugby, and when it was held it was made special as two members, S/Ms Phil McDermott and Jan Thomas, were presented with well-deserved Life Membership.

S/M Phil, pictured below, is a Falklands veteran who served in submarine HMS Conqueror during the conflict.

S/M Jan, pictured below right, has been a member of the RNA for more than 50 years, serving as branch secretary and welfare officer, as well as Area 10 welfare officer, in the past.

He has helped start three branches in Area 10 and is still a very active member of Bolton branch.

S/M Jan was also offered, and accepted, the role of branch Honorary Vice President.

At the meeting they also had the pleasure of hosting a member of Bradford Royal Marines Association (who some members



had met in Malta in April), as well as S/M Pete Barlow from the City of Salford branch, who stayed the whole day and left in true matelot style doing the matelot shuffle.

During the meeting, a member of the public came in and presented the branch with an oil painting of a Sea Harrier which was gratefully received – a very kind gesture indeed that will be displayed in their new club once they take residence.



### **PLYMOUTH Branch**

The Plymouth Branch standard bearers, along with other standards, and several members of the Plymouth Branch, turned out once again on 8 May to commemorate VE Day at the Naval War Memorial on Plymouth Hoe.

The branch continued its tradition of wreath-laying at the memorial in honour of those who made the supreme sacrifice.

The Branch Standard was carried by S/M Cheryl Allen, accompanied by S/M Wilf Pickles with the Medical Branch Standard and S/M Derek Atkinson with the ASWI Standard. The bugler was S/M Lee (Fred) Perry. S/M Daryl Cree was the duty padre, with S/M Kevin Adamson taking on the role of Parade Marshall.

Incidentally, the Plymouth Branch standard bearers, along with other standards, and supporters, all travelled to HMS Collingwood in Fareham for the National Standard Bearers competition on the weekend of 8 and 9 May.

The event brought together standard bearers from across the UK to celebrate ceremonial excellence and drill proficiency. Key details from the competition included both training sessions and the formal championship competition, allowing attendees to participate in either or both (see page 12).

Plymouth was represented by S/Ms Fred Perry and Cheryl Allen, who took first and second places (respectively) in the Novice class – BZ to both of them.



#### AREA 4

Area 4 held its quarterly meeting at St Austell Sports & Social Club on 16 May, where the newly-proposed Royal Charter was presented to shipmates from around the South West by Cdre Mark Slawson, Deputy National President.

The proposed updated Royal Charter, which is still a work in progress, is being reworked to reflect modern evolutionary changes and practices, and governance, having been established since 1954. Cdr Richie Turrell, Executive Officer at RNAS Culdrose, was the Guest of Honour and opened the meeting with a riveting presentation about changes to our Navy and how these have impacted on personnel deployed around the globe.

He also updated members on modern aircraft and where they were at the moment and the tasking they are undertaking, outlining how the scaled-down assets more than covered what the assets of days gone by could provide. The meeting continued with thanks being given to S/M Carl Beeson, of **Plymouth Branch**, who has resigned for health reasons, and new Committee member Bob Featherstone being invited on.

In addition, it was reported four key members of RNA's Central Office, based in Portsmouth, are either leaving or have left to take up roles elsewhere. Area 4 wishes them well in their future endeavours.

It was confirmed that Plymouth Branch are proposing to host the RNA National Conference in June 2028 and shipmates were forewarned that it will take a lot of work to host members from all over the country; it was hoped that all Branches

would chip in and help where needed.

The plan is that much of the activity of the Conference will be held at the Crowne Plaza Hotel in Plymouth, with accommodation available there and at the China Fleet Club, Saltash, which is to host the SCG (Sports & Comradeship Group) golf tournament.

Following closure of the meeting, the rum raffle took place, and afternoon tea was served.

Pictured are Cdr Richie Turrell (left) and Cdre Mark Slawson.

**Please note:** Newton Abbot Royal British Legion will be holding their annual Decoration Day Ceremony at Ogwel Cross Cemetery, Old Totnes Road, Newton Abbot at 1100 on Sunday 7 June.

The event remembers 28 members of our own and Allied Forces who are interred in the cemetery.

Those attending are asked to arrive by 1030. Following the service the RBL will serve light refreshments at their club in Marsh Road.

Meanwhile, in Canada, the Royal Canadian Legion Branch in Medicine Hat, Alberta – with which the Newton Abbot RBL is twinned – also carry out a Decoration Day Ceremony on the same

weekend in June each year.

In the ceremony at Medicine Hat, there are 128 graves of British Servicemen who were killed whilst training in Canada during World War 2.

Headstones are cleaned before the day and poppies are placed on all except the front two rows of stones. A short Service of Remembrance is carried out, during which officers of the Royal Canadian Legion, Allied organisations and various civic dignitaries then place poppies on the remaining headstones.

Ex-Forces organisations, cadets and other military organisations are all warmly welcomed to this poignant service in remembrance of our fallen comrades.



#### RHONDDA Branch

Following a briefing earlier this year by the RNA Area 7 President, S/M David Griggs, on the tragic loss of life involving 73 men aboard LCGs 15 and 16 and the six crew manning a rescue boat on 25 April 1943, members of Rhondda Branch moved to join and parade at the annual memorial service held on 25 April at Freshwater West beach in Pembrokeshire.

The memorial service was led by the Revd William Lambert and attended by representatives of the RNA, RMA, local council and emergency service personnel and the staff from the VC Gallery, a veterans and community drop-in hub located in Pembroke Dock where a buffet-get together was held for attendees after the service.

The two Landing Craft Tanks were en route from Belfast in 1943, where they had been converted from LCTs, to Falmouth, but were hit by a severe storm. The delivery trip was also a sea trial to assess the design of the newly-converted vessels, but the result was an accident that cost the lives of 73 men on board, many of them Royal Marines.

They were denied entry to Fishguard Harbour and Milford Haven as they struggled in high seas, and it was off the Pembrokeshire coast that LCG 15 finally shipped so much water into her part-open deck that she sank. Escort vessel HMS Rosemary was alerted and on arrival on the scene launched a small whaler to try to get a line aboard the stricken LCG 16, but the rescue boat was overwhelmed and the six volunteers drowned. Later that evening LCG 15 was also swamped and followed her sister to the bottom of the sea.

A second memorial stands at Thornton Cemetery in Milford Haven, where many of the victims were buried.





**UXBRIDGE Branch**

Uxbridge Branch members held a race night fundraiser on 9 May in aid of the charities supported by the local Mayor, Cllr Philip Corthorne.

The evening was well supported by shipmates and guests of the Mayor – the branch is hoping there might even be a few new members as a result – and on the night they raised a total of £1,280. The Mayor stated that out of all his fundraising events, this stunning total was the largest for one single event.

Bravo Zulu to the race organising team, and thank you to everybody who supported this event.

A special thanks go out to the three members who made individual donations from their own pockets amounting to £180.

Pictured with the cheque (from left) are Treasurer Kate Hughtson, Cllr Philip Corthorne and Branch Chairman Slinger Wood. The second image (above) shows the race team that put it together.



**BRIDLINGTON Branch**

Bridlington Branch's newest committee member, Social Secretary and Web Master S/M Ian (Jack) Blair, has been teaching shipmates how to log on, create new emails and utilise the Microsoft Office programme. He sourced a free Office web programme and a committee programme with free space so they could access Microsoft apps readily and without cost.

The picture (left) shows him with a few shipmates trying to get to grips with the technology - some more successfully than others! The man has the patience of a saint. ..

service to all branch members in the coming months and hopefully this will benefit the wider veteran's community in time.

The Branch has also presented a cheque for £200 to the Bridlington Sea Cadet unit, TS Pathfinder. The unit is one of their chosen charities for this year.

Pictured below right are Branch Secretary S/M Andrew 'Max' Wall, Branch Chairman S/M Martin Jolly and Mr Bob Taylor, the Chairman of the Sea Cadet Unit Management Team. The second image (below left) is of the Bridlington Sea Cadets mustered on parade along with S/MS Sarah Newall, the Branch Welfare Representative, 'Max' Wall, Martin Jolly and Bob Taylor.

The Branch also hopes to offer this



### CHATHAM Branch

Chatham Branch has donated £200 to Medway Sunlight Rotary Club, who generate funding for the Dragon Boat Race which took place on the late May Bank Holiday weekend at Chatham Maritime.

Medway Victory Cadets at Chatham once again took part under the watchful eye of Commanding Officer Trevor Eaton Lt (SCC), cheered on by numerous supporters. The picture below left shows Chatham Branch Treasurer S/M Ray Hadlow presenting the £200 cheque to S/M Bob Curtis, representing Medway Sunlight Rotary Club.



The Branch also reports that shipmate and Honorary Secretary Gary Hammell, Chief PO RN (Rtd) and Lt (SCC) is keeping himself busy.

He is not only instrumental in keeping the Chatham Branch ship administratively secure, but has also been actively involved in being second-in-command of Wigmore and Parkwood Armed Forces & Veterans Breakfast Club for serving personnel and veterans, providing camaraderie and a rather good breakfast once a month at the Queen's Head, Wigmore.

The club celebrated its first birthday in April, with the Mayors of Medway and Dartford, local councillors and some 70 veterans and family members gathering to commemorate the milestone, enjoying some "breakfast, brew and banter".

Pictured far right is Gary with fellow Breakfast Club originators (and new RNA Associate members!) S/M Benjamin Robinson REME (Rtd) and S/M Leigh Stanley RE (Rtd).

Also pictured at the Queen's Head celebrations are the trio with more members – Mick, Leigh, Rумыana, Gary, Tina, Jono, Becky, Benjamin, Jenni and Mat.



### LICHFIELD Branch

At a recent Lichfield Branch meeting at the King's Head (meetings every third Monday at 7pm!) two new shipmates were inducted into the branch, presented their membership cards by Life President S/M Rachel Dawson and branch Chair S/M Dean Lote. Members Paul Savage and Emily-Jayne Wilkes were made very welcome as they formally joined the RNA family.

Shipmates were then treated to a very interesting talk from S/M Richard Stimpson on the subject of Gunnery. Numbers in the Lichfield Branch have now reached 65.

Members are also happy to host visiting reunions to Lichfield and to the nearby National Memorial Arboretum at Alrewas. Last month they were hosting HMS Argonaut, and this month it is the turn of HMS Tamar.

### PORT PHILLIP BAY Branch

Members in the Melbourne area are preparing for the annual Port Phillip Bay Branch Birthday Party, which is to be held on 14 June.

The menu will include at least three hot roasts (beef, lamb and pork, to be precise) with all the trimmings, salads and the usual accompaniments. For Duff there is a selection of apple crumble, pavlova or mud cake.

The branch tradition of Up Spirits by the complimentary issue of either a tot or a sherry will be observed as per usual, and the Loyal Toasts to our Sovereign King Charles III, the Commonwealth of

Australia and Absent Friends will be given. And in case you ever doubted it, partygoers will be invited to grace the dance floor to live music played by the ever-popular duo 'Déjà vu'. Requests (of the polite nature!) are always welcome. Sadly, last month saw the Crossing of the Bar of two well-known Branch function regulars – first Robert (Bob) Dutton, and then, but a short time later, Garry (Gazza) Hermsen.

The heartfelt and sincere condolences of the RNA and the Port Phillip Bay Branch go to Bob's wife Linda, to Garry's daughters, and to both respective families.

### ASHFORD Branch

Ashford Branch has donated a defibrillator to the Elwick Club, the venue for the branch's monthly meetings, for the benefit of all club members and visitors.

The initiative was proposed by Life Member S/M Jim Ashby, reflecting the branch's commitment to supporting the community. Jim's daughter Christine presented the defibrillator to the Club Chair, joined by branch members. The donation will help ensure vital equipment is readily available, providing reassurance and lifesaving support when needed.



### TORREVIEJA Branch

Around 50 members of Torrevieja Branch helped celebrate the 100th birthday of Belgian shipmate Robertus Stoop at a recent branch meeting.

The Torrevieja shipmates paid tribute to Robertus and presented him with a special card while singing 'Happy Birthday', and he received a standing ovation. They toasted him with a tot of rum and his favourite Santiago cake. The event, with a picture, was published in the local newspaper, The Leader, which pleased Robertus very much indeed.

Robertus captivated his shipmates with a potted story of his life, including World War 2.

He was born on 3 May 1926 and in 1948 was called to Antwerp to do military service; he was sent to Germany as an interpreter in Mission Belgium the Belgian Mission within the British Zone.

He moved to Torrevieja in December 1980.

Robertus's second wife, Betty Davies, was English and sadly passed away some 18 years ago.

He was a member of eight choirs in Torrevieja, during which time he sang in concerts in Vienna, Gdansk and three concerts in Switzerland.



In 1998, he was selected internationally to perform in concerts at Harvard University in the United States, and included visits to Boston and New York.

As one can imagine, trying to cram a life story of 100 years into a few words is practically impossible.

Torrevieja shipmates saluted Robertus, paid tribute to his remarkable life, and joined in wishing him, in his own words, "many more happy birthdays".

### CHARD Branch

Members of Chard Branch attended Chard Guildhall on 14 May in order to return HMS *Campion's* ship's bell to its rightful place in the foyer of the building after it had been cleaned by S/M Dick Moon on behalf of the branch. Area 4 President S/M Malcolm Fay, S/M Helen Day, S/M Dick Moon and S/M Paula Moon were all there to see Chard Mayor Cllr Victoria Bates and her deputy receive the bell back into the custody of the people of Chard. The bell had originally been presented to the people of Chard when the ship

was decommissioned at the end of World War 2.

Pictured below is S/M Dick Moon, Cllr Victoria Bates and S/M Malcolm Day. HMS *Campion* was a Flower-class corvette, built at the yard of John Crown and Sons on the River Wear in Sunderland.

Launched in April 1941, the 940-ton ship was one of almost 300 vessels built as a simple, cheap solution to the urgent need for escort vessels, particularly on the

east coast of Great Britain.

These corvettes – larger and more powerful than trawlers but easily built in commercial yards at speed – turned out to be highly effective warships. *Campion* escorted more than 60 convoys between August 1941 and the end of the war, and was broken up in South Wales in the summer of 1947. Pictures by S/M Dick Moon.



### WREXHAM Branch

It was a very special occasion for Wrexham Branch as they celebrated the 101st birthday of S/M Herbert Pritchard RM, a proud Burma Campaign veteran. To mark the occasion, Herbert was presented with a stunning portrait of himself, painted by renowned artist Ruby Hanshaw. The portrait was commissioned by Branch Vice Chairman Andy 'Danny' Daniels and created from a photograph Danny took when Herbert met Brigadier Jock Fraser RM MBE, former Regional Commander Royal Navy, Wales and the West of England (the portrait and original photograph are pictured right).

The portrait was presented to Herbert by Danny in the presence of Herbert's daughter Jayne and Branch Welfare Officer Tim Pike. It was a fitting tribute to an extraordinary Royal Marine and veteran whose service and story continue to inspire us all.

Wrexham Branch members were delighted to welcome shipmates from the HMS Antelope Association, including survivors from her loss during action in San Carlos Water during the Falklands Conflict in 1982.

On the eve of their annual reunion, when they remember the loss of their ship on 23 May 1982, shipmates from HMS Antelope descended on Wrexham.

All agreed it was an absolutely superb evening, highlighting the core values of

the Royal Naval Association.

During the evening the chair of the Antelope Association, Bob Hutton, and Social Secretary Barbara McDonald were presented with a Wrexham Branch crest and a penguin (carved by S/M Kevin Roberts of Wrexham Branch), by Wrexham chairman Jeff Hughes RVM. Following the presentation Jeff was joined by Danny Daniels and Wrexham Secretary David Shipton to raise toasts to King Charles III, the RNA and Antelope Association and absent friends.

Following the toasts the 76 shipmates were treated to an evening of entertainment with music provided by Stevie J Kramer (Oswestry Branch), occasionally assisted by S/M Trefor Williams (Wrexham), which apparently included a search for a lady called 'Alice'...

Included in the 'Absent Friends' Toasts were Steward Mark R Stephens, HMS Antelope, and Staff Sergeant James Prescott, Royal Engineers CGM. Whilst on station in San Carlos Water, commonly referred to as 'Bomb Alley' because of the frequency of attacks by Argentine aircraft, on 23 May 1982 Type 21 frigate HMS Antelope was struck by two 1,000lb bombs.

Steward Mark Stephens was killed as the first bomb passed through the ship.

S/Sgt Jim Prescott was part of a bomb disposal team and was

instructed to defuse the bombs onboard Antelope. One of the bombs could not be reached so S/Sgt Prescott began work to defuse the second.

After three unsuccessful attempts to remove the fuse remotely, S/Sgt Prescott entered the compartment to remove the fuse by hand; as he did the fuse detonated killing him and beginning a fire which would result in the loss of the ship following explosions.

S/Sgt Prescott was on his second tasking of the day when he died and was later awarded the Conspicuous Gallantry Medal.

May their souls rest in peace.



### FOLKESTONE Branch

Friday 8 May was the 81st anniversary of the end of the war in Europe, and was marked in Folkestone by a short Service and wreath-laying ceremony in the town's Garden of Remembrance.

The service was led by the Padre of Cheriton and Morehall Branch of the Royal British Legion and was attended by Tracy Luke, the Mayor of Folkestone, Cllr J Meade and her Consort, the Deputy Mayor, Mrs Keen, as well as members of Folkestone Branch, pictured right; unfortunately the Standard Bearer was unable to carry due to ill health. Also in attendance were town councillors, veterans and members of the public.



## LONDONDERRY Branch

The annual Battle of the Atlantic (BoA) commemoration events took place on the weekend of 9-10 May.

On Friday 8 May an informal Meet and Greet in the Royal British Legion (RBL) Waterside Club allowed members of the Branch to welcome their visitors, have a catch-up and swing the lamp.

On Saturday morning they headed out of the city by coach to scenic Fort Dunree in Co Donegal to commemorate the loss of Armed Merchant Cruiser HMS Laurentic on 25 January 1917.

They held a short service and wreath-laying at the Memorial to the crew who lost their lives when Laurentic, a converted ocean liner, struck two mines and sank off the mouth of Lough Swilly. Although the crew abandoned ship, 354 men died – many because of the bitter cold conditions, despite the fact they had managed to scramble into lifeboats. A further 121 men survived.

Wreaths were laid on behalf of the County Council, the RNA, the Ulster Canada Initiative, the RNLI and Fort Dunree.

96-year-old S/M Eddie Lavery recited his poem 'Morning Dawn' © which always evokes an emotional reaction.

On completion, attendees made their way to the Laurentic Restaurant where the Ulster Canada Initiative hosted a tasty lunch and refreshments.

On Saturday evening the Annual BoA Commemoration Dinner was held in the RBL Club, where shipmates were joined by the Lord Lieutenant of the City of Londonderry, Ian Crowe, and Alderman Keith Kerrigan representing the Mayor. Other VIPs were Lord and Lady Hay of Ballyore, Alderman Janice Montgomery, the local Veterans Champion, and Lt Cdr Neil Copeland (HMS Hibernia).

The Standards of No 12 Area (Ireland), carried by S/M Arthur Lapsley, Londonderry Branch carried by S/M Ryan Freaney and Belfast Branch carried by S/M Amy Finley, were piped in

by Piper Burns.

The caterers did a fine job and the service was second to none. S/M Robert Buchanan read a letter of greeting from the King and proposed the Loyal Toast. Ian Crowe proposed a toast to "those who served during the Battle of the Atlantic." Everyone then retired to the Upper Lounge to continue the social evening.

The Parade mustered at the RBL Club on Sunday morning and were led off by the Churchill Band, followed by the Standards, veterans and a contingent of Sea Cadets and RM Cadets for the short march to All Saints' Church for the BoA Commemoration service.

The Parade was commanded by No 12 Area's Ceremonial Officer, the very able S/M Phillip McMullen, veteran RM.

The Lord Lieutenant was accompanied by his wife and an Army Cadet.

The service was led by Canon David McBeth, Hon RNA Chaplain, and readings were done by Ian Crowe, Lt Cdr Copeland and Senior Staff Officer (Northern) Cdr (SCC) Robert MacLennan RNR.

During the service an Act of Remembrance was observed. The Still was piped by S/M Frank Brown of Londonderry Branch. Standards were dipped and wreaths were laid on behalf of the Lieutenancy, Royal Navy, RNA and the Merchant Navy.

Immediately after the service the parade formed up to return to the RBL Club. The salute was taken by the Lord Lieutenant, who was joined on the dais by Lt Cdr Copeland and Cdr (SCC) MacLennan RNR.

On arrival at the RBL Club, S/M Robert Buchanan addressed the parade, thanking everyone for the support for this year's parade and service. The National Anthem was played and the Parade Commander dismissed the parade. Everyone was invited to a light



lunch hosted by Londonderry Branch. That concluded the 2026 Battle of the Atlantic Commemoration. These events don't just happen – a lot of work goes on in the background, and many thanks are due to the BoA committee, S/Ms Nigel Stott, Jack Garfield and Arthur Lapsley. For more information on how to join Londonderry shipmates for BoA 2027 contact S/M Nigel Stott on [stott-n1@sky.com](mailto:stott-n1@sky.com) or S/M Robert Buchanan on [castlecooley@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:castlecooley@hotmail.co.uk)



## PORTSEA and PORTSMOUTH Branch

May was a busy and memorable month for the members of Portsea and Portsmouth Branch, with shipmates coming together for both social occasions and important acts of remembrance.

The month began with a fun-packed Skittles Evening at the Royal Maritime Hotel in Queen Street, Portsmouth, providing a great opportunity for shipmates, friends and supporters to enjoy an evening of camaraderie. Alongside the social events, the Branch has also proudly supported a number of commemorative occasions, including the HMS Sheffield Memorial Service in Old Portsmouth, honouring those lost and all who served in the Type 42 destroyer which was struck by a missile on 4 May 1982 during the Falklands Conflict, killing 20 sailors.

The ship sank six days later while under tow away from the combat zone. Members also attended RM Falklands 44 and the dedication of the Foxtrot 4 Memorial Stone at the Royal Marines Memorial Gardens in Eastney. Foxtrot 4 was a large Landing Craft (Utility), one of four such vessels assigned to assault ship HMS Fearless with 4 Assault Squadron RM, designed to land commandos and their kit ashore. It played a significant role in the Falklands, taking part in the San Carlos



landings on 21 May and, along with Foxtrot 1, rescuing sailors from the frigate HMS Antelope after a bomb exploded on board – an action that won the Queen's Gallantry Medal for F4's coxswain C/Sgt Brian Johnston RM. Sadly, C/Sgt Johnson never collected his medal. On June 8 F4 was transporting vehicles from Goose Green to Fitzroy as British troops were making the final push towards Stanley.. The slow-moving craft was ambushed by Argentine aircraft, and a 500lb bomb struck F4's stern, destroying the wheelhouse and killing six crew, including her heroic coxswain. The badly damaged F4 could not be taken in tow and was set adrift – her final resting place remains unknown.





**WALLASEY Branch**

Wallasey RNA held a BBQ for shipmates, associated members and the local community—including a bouncy castle for the children.

A big thank-you to Karen, in charge of food, along with Ena Brian who looked after everyone serving burgers, hot dogs, chips and pizza. Also Ellie, who looked after the bar.

And a big thank-you to Branch Chairman Kevin Cosgrove, Barry Davies, Tony Boswell and Sam Ditchfield, who made it all possible by setting it all up.





### TORFAEN Branch

Torfaen Branch members were pleased to welcome back Branch President S/M Marcus Walden at a recent branch meeting following a period of illness. S/M Marcus rang the President's Bell to start the meeting (right).

Among the many things discussed were Uckers and trips. The meeting ended with the Chairman presenting S/Ms Bryn Carr and Zoe Gibbs (left) with RNA Certificates of Appreciation in recognition of their welfare support of shipmates. Torfaen members were invited to **Monmouth** Branch for a friendly afternoon of Uckers (if there is such a thing...)

Six shipmates made the short trip north-west to play both doubles and singles with varying degrees of success. Mary took great pleasure in decimating five-piece Mixi-Blob (the Bootnecks were not at all upset by this!)

They are now looking forward to the Welsh Open Tournament, hosted by **Builth Wells** Branch tomorrow (6 June)– both Torfaen and Monmouth Branches are entering teams.



### TORBAY Branch

Torbay members and friends from Brixham & Torquay Royal British Legion had an early start on 15 May to be at HMS Raleigh by 0900 for a great day witnessing the Passing Out Parade of the latest newly-qualified Part 1 trainees.

They received a warm welcome at the main gate from Karen the Public Relations Officer and Terry, Lee and other members of the RNA Mentoring Team (pictured right).

After coffee in the Senior Rates Mess, they were welcomed by the Training Commander, Tony Tipping RN, who gave them a brief introduction to the establishment.

They were then escorted to the Roebuck Theatre where families of the Nelson 25/36 Class had also congregated. WO Newbury introduced a presentation entitled 'Today's Navy' which included an impressive ten-minute video showing each stage of the ten-week training programme.

Following the presentations they were given a tour of one of the mess decks before taking lunch in the Victory Restaurant.

The highlight of their visit was witnessing Divisions. They watched the two guard platoons made up of the leaving classes, together with eight other platoons made up from trainees further down the training cycle.

The Royal Marines Band Plymouth gave their usual precise display of marching and music during the inspection and also provided a musical accompaniment to an extremely impressive Precision



Arms Drill, executed to perfection by the leaving classes guard.

The whole day was one not to be missed and is highly recommended to other branches.

■ Torquay and Brixham Branch has been invited to the annual Embarkation Service which takes place tomorrow (6 June) morning at Beacon Quay, Torquay Harbour. There will be a wreath-laying service which is supported by local schools, cadet forces, ex-Service associations and the general public. Attendees should assemble at the South End of the Quay by 10.45 for a short march-past with the Salute

being taken by the Lord Lieutenant of Devon.

Originally organised by local personnel involved in the D-Day Landings of 1944, the tradition has been carried on by the Torquay RBL and continues to grow in popularity year on year.





# AB WILLIAMS – ‘THE BRAVEST SAILOR I HAVE EVER MET..’

We reported in last month’s Semaphore Circular on ceremonies honouring those who fought and died in Gallipoli during World War 1.

One of the sailors mentioned was AB William Charles Williams, of Chepstow, who was posthumously awarded the Victoria Cross for his action during the Allied landings at V Beach on 25 April 1915.

AB Williams had already proved himself in battle, having been commended for bravery while serving in HMS Terrible as part of the Naval Brigade in the Second Boer War (1899-1902) in South Africa, and during the Boxer Rebellion (1899-1901). Having joined the Royal Navy in 1895 at the age of 15, Williams left the regular Service in 1910 and worked as a policeman in South Wales and at a steelworks in Newport, but remained a member of the Royal Fleet Reserve, and was mobilised again in 1914 at the age of 34, joining destroyer HMS Hussar.

In February 1915 command of the ship passed to Edward Unwin, at which time plans were being laid for the ultimately ill-fated Gallipoli Campaign.

One of the landing sites identified, V Beach, was expected to be heavily defended, and plans to use trawlers to tow open boats ashore loaded with troops was deemed too dangerous, as there needed to be a rapid deployment of hundreds of troops to stand a chance of overwhelming the defenders. Unwin suggested a converted steamer could be used as a landing ship, running it ashore before troops swarmed from sally ports specially cut in her sides, filing along gangways and across a bridging vessel to the beach.

Accordingly, ten-year old collier SS River Clyde was hastily prepared and Unwin, promoted to Acting Captain, was given command to carry out the mission.

Unwin chose 15 sailors from Hussar to join him in River Clyde, one of whom was AB Williams.

On 25 April 1915 River Clyde was driven ashore, but grounded further from the beach than expected.

The flat-bottomed lighter that was designed to bridge the gap slewed beam-on, so a string of smaller lighters was hauled in to fill the gap.

As the ropes would not reach the shore, under intense gunfire from Ottoman troops, Unwin and Williams took a rope each and waded chest-deep towards shore, holding the lighters in position to allow the troops to cross.

And there they stood for almost an hour, a human link in a crucial bridge between the ship and shore as bullets sprayed the beach and mowed down Allied soldiers around them.

Eventually Williams was struck by a shell and Unwin carried him back to River Clyde, where the Able Seaman died of his wounds.

Five men won Victoria Crosses that day for keeping the lighters in place, including Unwin and Mid Drewry, who held the line and also made his way back to the converted collier for additional ropes.

The day proved a disaster – River Clyde brought 2,000 troops to the battle, and by the end of the day 1,000 men had died in attempting to land.

Williams was the first Naval posthumous award of the VC, which was presented to his father by the King at Buckingham Palace the following year.

Capt Unwin VC survived the débâcle, and in 1922 unveiled a painting of Williams in St Mary’s Priory and Parish Church in Chepstow, describing the heroic Williams as “the bravest sailor I have ever met.”

Two other memorials in Chepstow honour the war dead – as well as the town’s war memorial, a deck gun from German submarine UB-91 was presented to Chepstow by King George V in honour of AB Williams VC, which still stands next to the war memorial in the town centre.

# GENERATIONS GATHER TO HONOUR JACK ON HIS FINAL JOURNEY

Serving sailors, veterans and members of the public came together to pay their respects to Royal Navy veteran Jack Meacham as he was laid to rest at the age of 106.

Personnel from HMS Collingwood and HMS Excellent lined the route to Portchester Crematorium, providing a fitting farewell to a man whose life was defined by service, sacrifice and unwavering commitment.

Jack served in the Royal Navy between 1938 and 1952, and during World War 2 he took part in the evacuation of Allied troops from Dunkirk in 1940 and later served on Arctic Convoys, delivering vital supplies through some of the most dangerous waters of the conflict.

At one stage during the war, Jack also narrowly escaped death when he was near offices opposite Portsmouth Dockyard in Queen Street which were bombed during a Nazi air raid.

Despite witnessing some of the defining moments of the 20th Century, Jack was remembered by family and friends for his humility, resilience and dedication to duty.

Following his Naval service, Jack built a career as an electrician and maintenance worker. He raised his son, John, who went on to have two sons, Greg and Kevin. Jack's wife Peggy died in 1989, and he later shared many happy years with his partner, Jan, until her death four years ago at the age of 105.

Jon Everett, Welfare and Wellbeing Support Coordinator at the RNA, said: "Jack Meacham's life was defined by service, sacrifice and unwavering commitment.

"Few can claim to have witnessed so much history, or played such a part in it.

"The RNA is proud to stand alongside his family and the wider Naval community as we pay tribute to a Naval veteran who served his country with distinction."

Jack's funeral brought together generations of the Naval family, ensuring that his remarkable contribution to the nation was honoured and remembered.



# OBITUARIES



## **S/M BRIAN DURRANS**

S/M Brian Durrans passed away on 6 May at the age of 80.

S/M Brian joined the Royal Navy at the age of 15 and served his country both on land and at sea for 26 years. He trained at HMS Ganges, where he later became an Instructor himself, and amongst the ships that he was so fond of were HMS Duchess, HMS Andromeda, HMS Hermione, HMS Bristol, to name but a few.

WO (Ops W) Brian Durrans BEM is much loved by his wife Carol, his three children Roger, Melanie and Saleigh, grandchildren Charlie, Jasmine and Thomas, and brother Robert, as well as the many dogs and cats within the family that he also adored.

If you would like to make a donation to Help for Heroes in Brian's memory, and to see a range of photographs and tributes to a much-loved shipmate, see <https://briandurrans.muchloved.com>

## **S/M EILEEN FOOTE**

Former Wren S/M Eileen Foote of Eastbourne Branch has crossed the Bar shortly before her 85th birthday. Eileen Mould (as she was then) joined HMS Culdrose in 1959 as part of a 200-strong cohort of Wrens at the Cornish air station.

She was serving as a female Air Mechanic in the Fleet Air Arm.

"I remember being part of a big Fleet Air Arm family, looking after the piston engine aircraft on the Air Station," Eileen told Navy News in an interview ten years ago.

"I was an Air Mechanic first class, working on Sea Balliols – a two-seat trainer – Dragonfly helicopters and Dragon Rapides which were used as a taxi service around all the Naval Air Stations across the country."

Eileen was part of the 'Station Flight' and at the time they were equipped with both fixed wing and helicopters that provided Culdrose's first dedicated Search and Rescue aircraft.

"It was all very exciting back then. I would always volunteer to be thrown in the water and get rescued by the RNLI lifeboat or winched up by the helicopters, she said.

"They would practice this quite regularly, so I got plenty of flying." Eileen was also a musician in the Seahawk Band.

Eileen added that she would have loved to have stayed in the Royal Navy for much longer doing air engineering, but she got married and under regulations at the time that put an end to her career.

## **S/M STEPHEN REDDEN**

It is with much sadness that Wansbeck Branch reports that one of their shipmates has crossed the bar at the age of 82.

Stephen Redden died on Saturday 9 May at Bridge View Care Home, where he has been since last year following a bad fall at home, then, after hospital, to the care home as he could not live alone at home.

His health had slowly deteriorated over time, as he could not walk, and had problems with his back and feet and legs and, lately, his arms.

His funeral was held on 22 May at Blyth Crematorium – at his own prior request, there was no Guard of Honour, no Last Post /Reveille and no standards.

The service was conducted by Dale Cox, a celebrant, and there was a donation collection for the Royal British Legion.

Stephen joined the RAF in 1962 at RAF Upwood, and served in various places in the British Isles and in Zambia. He was discharged in 1967 as a Senior Aircraftsman.

He has been married and divorced a long time ago, and lived on his own for quite a long time, with no known family.

He was a branch member of the Wansbeck Royal Naval Association at Ashington for around 40 or more years.



## **S/M JOHN HOLLOWAY**

It is with great sadness that the family of John Holloway announce his passing on Thursday 21 May at the age of 102.

John was predeceased by his wife Constance Hannah Holloway.

John enlisted in the Royal Navy Fleet Air Arm at the beginning of World War 2 as a Leading Air Mechanic in aircraft carrier HMS Formidable and was proud of his service in the Mediterranean, the Arctic Ocean and in the Far East, including India.

John was from the East End of London, the son of a docker but he rose to the role of Senior Lecturer in Industrial Design, ending his career at the Middlesex Polytechnic.

He also ran his own business making prototypes for well-known products such as Connect 4 and Battleship games and many others.

At one point he was asked to work for Lord Snowdon in his workshop at Kensington Palace to produce a mobile platform for disabled users. He was extremely talented and never without a project.

John was Chair of the Braunton Branch of the Royal Naval Association and a lifelong member of the Not Forgotten Association and the Royal British Legion.

He was invited to the Not Forgotten Association garden party at Buckingham Palace at the age of 100 and was thrilled to meet the Princess Royal.

Some of you may also remember seeing him on the BBC programme The Repair Shop with his cockpit clock at the grand old age of 101.

He will be lovingly remembered by his children Deborah and Janice, their husbands Clive and Stuart, his grandchildren Jonathan, Katharine and Thirza and by Richard and Lucy and his great-grandchildren James and Constance.

## S/M ALEC PENSTONE

The Royal Naval Association is deeply saddened to report that S/M Alec Penstone has crossed the bar, shortly after his 101st birthday. A proud wartime veteran, and a member of the Isle of Wight Branch, Alec lived an extraordinary life of courage, service and resilience, and leaves behind a legacy that will never be forgotten.

Alec was just 15 years old when war broke out. As the Blitz devastated London, he volunteered as a part-time Air Raid Precautions messenger, serving throughout 1940 and 1941. Reflecting on those difficult days, Alec once said: "At 15 years of age, pulling bodies out of bombed buildings, you grow up very quickly." As soon as he was old enough, Alec joined the Royal Navy.

"My mates were all going up, joining up, and I decided that I don't want to stay there any longer. I went and joined the Royal Navy, and that was the start of it."

Alec served in HMS Campania, an escort aircraft carrier tasked with



protecting Allied convoys, sweeping for mines and hunting U-boats. Much of his service was spent three decks below on constant action stations, listening for torpedoes, mines and enemy submarines in the unforgiving conditions of the Atlantic and Arctic Oceans.

He went on to complete ten Arctic Convoys, returning home forever shaped by the experience and sacrifice of war.

As a nation, we owe our today to veterans like Alec.

The Royal Naval Association was

honoured to count him among our beloved members and Shipmates, and we remember him with immense pride, gratitude and affection.

RNA General Secretary Capt Bill Oliphant said: "We are deeply saddened to hear of Alec's passing. "Alec represented the very best of his generation – courageous, resilient and full of life.

"He was a true legend, and the Royal Naval Association will honour and remember him always."

Fair winds and following seas, Shipmate Alec.

## S/M ERNEST MUNSON

Ernie Munson, one of the last (if not the last) surviving crew members from HMS Amethyst during the famous Yangtze Incident in 1949, has died at the age of 94.

As a 17-year-old boy seaman Ernie was serving in the frigate during the Chinese Civil War when the ship was fired on by Chinese Communist forces on 20 April 1949 as she was heading upstream to relieve HMS Consort as guardship at the inland port of Nanjing.

Caught between the Communists on one bank, and the Chinese Nationalists on the other, Amethyst suffered considerable damage and more than 20 of her ship's company were killed, including her Commanding Officer.

A gun turret that Ernie was manning was struck by a shell, killing two gunners, but Ernie escaped injury.

After temporarily running aground, Amethyst managed to steam to a slightly less exposed location on a creek on the Nationalist side of the river, where the wounded were disembarked, but she remained there for 100 days, often under gunfire and short of food.

With negotiations for her release constantly stymied, her acting CO, Lt Cdr John Kerans, took the frigate out onto the river late on 30 July 1949, hoping to slip back downstream under cover of darkness and initially in the wake of a refugee steamer.

Despite canvas camouflage and the darkness of the night, Amethyst was spotted, and proceeded to steam downriver at high speed – a remarkable feat of seamanship at night-time on a river dotted with shallows and defended by enemy forts at regular intervals.



Having steamed more than 100 miles, she was met by British ships south of Wusong Fort early on 31 July. After the Yangtze Incident, Ernie served on other Royal Navy ships and in the late 1950s became a Metropolitan Police officer.

Moving to Dorset in the late 1960s, Ernie started a 23-year career as a Coastguard, often working at the Coastguard station on Portland Bill, close to the Navy facilities at Portland, and at Weymouth.

Ernie died on 6 May, and his funeral took place last Wednesday (4 June),

Pictured above is HMS Amethyst at Hong Kong in August 1949, shortly after her escape from the Yangtze, showing some of the damage she sustained while trapped by Chinese Communists. Image from the Imperial War Museum collection: IWM (HU 129713).

# JUNE SWINGING THE LAMP



RFA Stromness, which was heavily involved in the aftermath of the sinking of RFA Ennerdale  
Image from the Imperial War Museum collection: © Crown copyright reproduced under delegated authority from The Keeper of Public Records. Image: IWM (MH 27595)

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

On 1 June 1970 auxiliary tanker RFA Ennerdale was in the Seychelles at the end of a break for her crew. By nightfall on that fateful Monday she had become what renowned Naval correspondent Desmond Wettern described as "probably the biggest ship under Naval ownership to be lost in peace or war."

The 47,000-ton tanker had been launched as the Naess Scotsman in Kiel, West Germany, in August 1962 for the Anglo-Norness Shipping Co, but in the summer of 1967 was one of three large tankers taken up from trade by the MOD. With the closure of the Suez Canal and the impending loss of Aden as a fuel storage facility, Britain needed to guarantee supplies east of Suez, not least for warships on the Beira Patrol blockading Rhodesia, and these tankers were the temporary answer.

They were far from perfect for the task, but the 'Mobile Bulk Tankers' (later reclassified as Mobile Reserve Tankers) underwent basic modifications which saw them fitted with gear to both refuel warships (astern) and to receive fuel (abeam) – they were too big to use Royal Navy shore facilities in the region.

Having been refitted by Vickers at Hebburn on the Tyne, Ennerdale was ready for business by February 1968, and although her service life was brief, there were some highlights. By the summer of 1969 she was working off the coast of Africa, and in June, while sailing from Cape Town to Tristan da Cunha, she was diverted en route to refuel a South African destroyer searching for two missing South African meteorologists.

In poor weather, the tanker picked up volunteers from Tristan da Cunha to help in the search, and shortly afterwards two bodies were recovered. The ship's company were awarded the Wilkinson Sword of Peace for their assistance in the search. In mid-April the following year Ennerdale was one of several Naval Service ships in the Indian Ocean and South Atlantic

that were put on alert in case they were needed to help recover the stricken Apollo 13 capsule when it splashed down. Ennerdale, along with RFAs Tideflow and Tarbatness and frigates HM Ships Nubian and Phoebe, sat along a possible landing line in the Indian Ocean on 14-15 April, but in the end the spaceship splashed down safely in the South Pacific. That was essentially the final act in her career.

On 1 June 1970 she left Port Victoria in north-east Mahe to refuel frigate HMS Andromeda, but seven miles out she struck an uncharted rock which ripped open her starboard flank. The ship heeled rapidly and sank by the stern within 30 minutes, though her bow remained above the surface. No lives were lost in the incident.

Just over a fortnight later Fleet stores ship RFA Stromness reached the Seychelles, having sailed from Singapore with salvage gear, and immediately took up the role of on-site salvage and communications centre.

Within a couple of days it was clear that salvage was out of the question, and the decision was made to take advantage of the south-east monsoon to allow Ennerdale's full cargo of 42,000 tons of oil to disperse out in the open ocean, away from the islands.

Specialist Naval divers arrived from Singapore and Mombasa (one group landing in a Hercules transport aircraft on rough ground in Mahe, as the airport runway was under construction – an anxious time as they were carrying explosives with them). On 25 June the operation to blow open Ennerdale's tanks got under way, and after three weeks it was presumed that her cargo of furnace fuel oil has been fully released.

The plan was that the tanker should be broken up by torpedo, and HMS Cachalot arrived at Mahe on 19 July to carry out the task, but that plan was abandoned, and instead the ten torpedoes earmarked for the job were transferred to Stromness, where the warheads were removed and prepared for remote detonation on the wreck.

These charges were placed on and around Ennerdale by boat and helicopter, and six of the warheads exploded, breaking the tanker into three.

Stromness finished the job by placing a wreck buoy over Ennerdale on 30 July, then returned to Singapore.

The wreck of Ennerdale lies in 30 metres of water and is now a thriving artificial reef, popular with deep-water divers.

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

# LONGCAST

2026

<b>6 June</b>	Welsh Open Uckers Tournament, Builth Wells Rugby Club
<b>12-14 June</b>	National Conference and AGM, Salford Quays
<b>28 June</b>	National Armed Forces Day
<b>4 July</b>	HMS Collingwood Open Day
<b>8 August</b>	Area 5 Quarterly Meeting (online)
<b>11 Sept</b>	CONA Conference, Portsmouth
<b>12 Sept</b>	Scottish Area Quarterly Meeting (City of Edinburgh Branch)
<b>19 Sept</b>	Area 4 Meeting (Weymouth Branch)
<b>3 Oct</b>	RNA Uckers World Championships, Royal Maritime Hotel, Portsmouth
<b>8 Nov</b>	Remembrance Sunday
<b>14 Nov</b>	Area 5 Quarterly Meeting
<b>13 Feb 2027</b>	Area 5 Quarterly Meeting

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



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



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

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