

SEMAPHORE CIRCULAR



TACTICAL RETREAT IS A WINNER

Thirteen women arrived in Falmouth with different lives, different pressures and different reasons for needing a break.

Yet by the end of the weekend, they felt like a small tribe, stitched together by sea air, shared laughter and the kind of conversations that only happen when people finally exhale. It was a chance to step away from the everyday, spend time with people who understood and enjoy some much-needed

space to reconnect, recharge and simply have fun. But perhaps the most important part of the weekend was the connection that developed between the group.

These were women who showed up for themselves and, without even trying, showed up for each other too.

And we want to do more.

The Royal Naval Association is keen to create more

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

The next Semaphore Circular will be published on Friday 6 November, and the deadline for material is 1000 on Wednesday 4 November. The next Branch Notes will be distributed on Friday 9 October, and Semaphore Shorts will next be published on Friday 16, 23 and 30 October.



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opportunities like this for all shipmates, bringing different groups of people together around shared experiences, interests or circumstances. And we want our shipmates to help shape what comes next. Have you got an idea for an event, activity or experience that could bring a particular group of shipmates together? We'd love to hear it.

One of those who joined the retreat was Central Office stalwart Milly Luxford, who gave her thoughts on the weekend as follows.

What was it that made the weekend so special?

Was it the yoga sessions overlooking the water, the Pilates, the exhilaration of open water swimming, the hours spent crafting, the coastal walks, the laughter, or simply the opportunity to step away from everyday life and spend time with people who just "get it"?

Perhaps it was a little bit of everything.

Thirteen women arrived in Falmouth with different stories, different challenges, and different reasons for needing



a break. Some came looking for adventure, some for friendship, some for a little peace and quiet, and others simply for the chance to do something for themselves.

What unfolded over the weekend was something rather special.

Against a backdrop of Cornish sea views and fresh coastal air, barriers quickly came down. Conversations flowed, confidence grew, friendships formed, and strangers became supporters, cheerleaders, and friends.

By the end of the retreat, thirteen individuals had become something much more. A small tribe, stitched together by shared experiences, mutual encouragement, plenty of laughter and the kind of honest conversations that only happen when people finally have the time



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and space to breathe.

The activities themselves were fantastic, but the real takeaway was the sense of connection. It was a weekend that reminded everyone just how important it is to stop, recharge and invest a little time in ourselves. Sometimes the greatest gift isn't what you do, but who you share it with.

Most importantly, it was a group of women who showed up for themselves and, without even realising it, showed up for each other too.

The feedback received since returning home has been overwhelmingly positive, with many describing the retreat as uplifting, empowering and exactly what they didn't realise they needed.

Could a future retreat be for you?

Following the success of the weekend, we're keen to explore similar opportunities in the future. If you would be interested in taking part in a future retreat, we'd love to hear from you. Please send an expression of interest to ceo-ea@rnassoc.org and tell us a little about the types of activities or experiences you would enjoy. Whether that's wellness activities, creative

workshops, walking, paddleboarding, guest speakers, adventure experiences, or something completely different, we'd welcome your ideas.

After all, if this weekend proved anything, it's that a little time away, a supportive environment and good company can make a bigger difference than anyone could have imagined.



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MEET OUR NEW GENERAL SECRETARY

When Andy – or S/M Cdr Andy Coles RN OBE, to be precise – took up the role of General Secretary and Chief Executive Officer four weeks ago, he made a simple promise: to spend his first months listening and getting the best understanding of the state of the RNA before setting out where we go next. He acknowledges that this is already proving challenging as he has already had to sign off on grant bids for next year.

He said: "I intend sitting down with colleagues across every part of the organisation, to try to gain the reality of the current position of the RNA."

"I am looking at how Central Office is functioning and intend to make sure we are all aligned so we can serve and maximise our effect for this incredible Association".

He also acknowledges that he has tough acts to follow.

"Bill Oliphant was so passionate about the RNA and was dedicated to the role, modernising many parts and steering the Association to where it is now," said Andy.

"And Kate Aldous has done an amazing job as Interim CEO, especially as she did that alongside her Governance role. I hope I can do as well!"

A career built on service

Andy joins us after 38 years in the Royal Navy, where he rose from a junior seaman 2nd Class in 1979 to become the first seagoing Captain of HMS Astute 2008 and retiring as a Commander in 2017.

His career involved service as a rating onboard HMS Invincible and HMS Alderney before becoming an officer and spending time in Hong Kong on board HMS Swallow and then on the towed-array Leander-class frigate HMS Argonaut.

Becoming a submariner, he served on both diesel boats and nuclear attack submarines, as well as taking up training posts in the submarine school.

After passing the notoriously-tough Perisher course he spent his XO's time on board Trident missile boat HMS Victorious as part of CASD (Continuous At-Sea Deterrent), before getting his first command – the Trafalgar-class attack submarine HMS Turbulent. His OBE recognises his leadership whilst in Command.

A staff appointment in MOD which saw him responsible for the Russian, American, French and Australian relations, preceded him being selected to become the first seagoing Captain of Astute.

His final appointments were in the Astute programme at Abbey Wood, Commander of HMS Drake and Commander Submarines Devonport.

Since then he has worked commercially in the maritime sector as a marina manager, Managing Director or Svitzer UK and as a Contractor.

He has also been a Rugby referee for 26 years for the RFU, Devon, the RNRU and UK Armed Forces.

Andy brings a reputation for clear thinking, calm leadership under pressure and an unshakeable belief that



organisations succeed when people feel trusted, equipped and valued.

"One of the key reasons for applying for the role was the desire to give something back," said Andy.

What he has learned in four weeks

Asked what has struck him most, Andy doesn't hesitate.

"It's the commitment of our people," he said.

"The Central Office team is small but already I have noted the passion and commitment towards the Association and their work ethic is exceptional, often going above and beyond."

"That is the foundation we build on."

He has also been candid about the challenges.

He is learning where processes slow people down, where communication could be sharper, and where opportunities are being missed.

"So far those conversations have been invaluable," he said. "Every one of them is helping me better understand our priorities."

"Key among them is making the Association sustainable for the future"

The vision

Andy's vision rests on three commitments:

1. People first: Investing in development, wellbeing and a culture where everyone understands how their work contributes to the mission.

"Strong teams deliver strong results, and that starts with looking after each other," he said.

2. Clarity of purpose: Setting a shared direction that is simple to explain and easy to act on, with clear priorities and fewer competing demands.

"If we can't say what we're here to achieve in a sentence, we've made it too complicated," Andy remarked.

3. Delivering with pride: Raising standards, strengthening partnerships and being accountable for outcomes.

"Our shipmates deserve an Association that they are proud of, supports them and does what it says it will do," he declared.

What happens next

Over the coming months, Andy will work with the leadership team and National Council to shape a roadmap for the future and will put together a programme of visits and open conversations.

Shipmates can expect regular updates, including drop-in sessions/Q&A/briefings where they can put questions to him directly.

Andy said: "I'm extremely proud to be selected for this role."

"The next chapter is one we will write together. We need to change our funding model for the future and improve delivery where we can."

"I fully appreciate that I don't have all the answers, and very much welcome suggestions and your ideas, so please keep telling me what you think."

To share ideas or questions with Andy, contact ceo-ea@rnassoc.org.

WAR VETERAN WREN PAM CELEBRATES 100th BIRTHDAY

Pam Warner of Bridport Branch celebrated her 100th birthday last month by hosting an Open Door event at her home.

She invited anyone who knew her to pop in and help her relive a host of memories and celebrate her milestones.

Pam received a wonderful cake and a letter from First Sea Lord Gen Sir Gwyn Jenkins on behalf of the Royal Navy.

In May 1944, during one of the most critical periods of World War 2, Pam volunteered to join the Women's Royal Naval Service (WRNS). She was the youngest of three friends who had volunteered, and was the last to join.

Her wartime service began at New College, where she was in Sick Bay on D-Day, 6 June 1944. She vividly remembered waking early and hearing coded radio messages being broadcast to agents in France. A few hours later, she and those around her realised that the long-awaited Allied invasion had begun.

Having missed her Wireless Telegraphy course because she was in Sick Bay, she was offered the opportunity to train instead as a Writer (Pay). She was sent to Highgate Hill in London, where she completed the course and came top of her class, qualifying for her rate.

She was subsequently posted to Chatham and then to HMS Beehive at Felixstowe, where she worked in the pay office supporting the Coastal Forces. Beehive was a busy and strategically important Naval base, and she helped keep personnel paid, supplied and able to carry out their duties.

Her time at Felixstowe coincided with the terrifying V-1 flying-bomb attacks. She experienced one particularly close call when a flying bomb struck nearby as she and her colleagues were leaving their accommodation. A doorway protected her from the blast, but several of the women behind her were knocked to the floor – she helped them to their feet then continued with her duties. The V-1 attacks became an almost daily part of life.

Despite the dangers, there were also memorable and lighter moments. She recalled the American servicemen who were stationed nearby and the dances and social events they organised. One particularly special occasion was being invited to a Glenn Miller concert held in an airship hangar at Bedford. The concert included WRNS personnel as well as American servicemen and others, and she remembered it as a wonderful evening. Glenn Miller disappeared only days later, making the memory all the more poignant.

During her service she also met the man who would become her husband. Their first encounter came when he arrived seeking a railway warrant to Bristol after injuring his finger. Pam, an Essex girl unfamiliar with Bristol Temple Meads station, asked where Temple Meads was. She later discovered that he was the brother of one of her colleagues.

They eventually married in a simple registry office ceremony, with just two witnesses – wartime circumstances made a traditional wedding impossible.

On VE Day, Pam was briefly at Newmarket Races with her father before returning to Felixstowe. Soon afterwards came another extraordinary moment in her Naval career – the arrival of German E-boats to surrender at Felixstowe.



She watched the boats entering the harbour and remembered the enormous sense of occasion as everyone gathered to see them arrive.

The surrender also brought practical responsibilities.

Ammunition had to be removed from the German vessels and disposed of safely. Pam was invited aboard one of the surrendered boats, RML 547, to accompany the crew as they took ammunition out into the North Sea.

It was an unforgettable experience – although her realisation that she was becoming extremely seasick led her to conclude that she was never going to make a proper sailor!

After the war, Pam continued her Naval service – personnel in essential occupations had to remain in service until their demobilisation numbers were called.

She returned to Chatham and was then posted to HMS Wildfire III at Sheerness Dockyard, where she continued working in the pay office.

By this time she had been promoted to Leading Wren. She subsequently undertook a Petty Officers' course, passed the examination and, following an Admiralty Fleet Order allowing those who had qualified to be promoted immediately, became a Petty Officer.

With an excess of Petty Officers at Sheerness, she was transferred to London, where she worked for several months

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WARTIME WREN CELEBRATES BIRTHDAY

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in an office on the Embankment dealing with RNR officers. A further spell in Sick Bay delayed her demobilisation, but she finally left the Service towards the end of 1946. Her work in Naval pay offices may have been behind the scenes, but was essential to the smooth running of the Service. One incident demonstrated just how important that responsibility could be. A group of sailors returned after spending months overseas without receiving their pay. With the men waiting to go on leave and the pay office unable to provide sufficient cash, Pam helped persuade the authorities to arrange for the bank to open specially. The money was obtained, the sailors paid, railway warrants issued, and the men were finally able to leave. Although her Naval career formally ended in 1946, her connection with the Royal Navy community continued for the rest of her life. She became deeply involved with the RNA



and served in a number of important roles, including Chairman, Secretary and Treasurer. When she began her involvement, the branch had approximately 110 members. Over more than 30 years she witnessed membership gradually decline to around 50, as well as attending numerous funerals and seeing generations of Naval comrades pass on. Nevertheless, she remained committed to keeping the Association active and supportive.

She described the RNA as hugely supportive, and took great pleasure in the friendships, activities and sense of community it provided. She and her husband were also involved in bringing together members of the RNA and the local RAF Association, creating many opportunities for fellowship and social gatherings.

In recognition of her outstanding and sustained commitment, Pam was made a Life Member of the RNA.

Her service at HMS Beehive in Felixstowe placed her at the heart of vital Coastal Forces operations during a decisive period of the war, while her subsequent service at HMS Wildfire III at Sheerness contributed directly to maintaining the readiness and effectiveness of the post-war fleet. Her experiences also form part of the wider story of women in the Armed Forces. Through her commitment, professionalism and willingness to serve wherever she was needed, she helped demonstrate the valuable contribution women could make to Britain's military services and helped pave the way for future generations of women in uniform.

More than 80 years after she first volunteered, her contribution remains an enduring legacy. Her memories provide a remarkable personal window into the Second World War, while her decades of commitment to the Royal Naval Association demonstrate that her sense of service did not end when she left the WRNS.

Mrs Warner's lifetime of service, dedication and comradeship is a remarkable achievement and a lasting source of inspiration.



JOIN THE BATTLE FOR REPARATIONS

Fighting With Pride (FWP) launched its Battle for Lost Veterans campaign at its Community Dedication Event of the LGBT+ Armed Forces Memorial sited at the National Memorial Arboretum on 20 June.

In the first 30 days since the launch 50 new veterans came forward to secure the reparations owed to them. However, FWP estimate that there are around 1,000 eligible veterans still to come forward.

The campaign is aimed at people who served in the UK Armed Forces

from 1967-2000 and are part of the LGBTQ+ community.

You may or may not have been dismissed or discharged during that time because of the 'Gay Ban' that existed.

Your career will have been impacted by the need to hide your true self from the homophobic and discriminatory environment you served in.

In either of those circumstances FWP can help you to gain the recognition and reparations that you are entitled to.

These include non-financial restorative actions such as the return of berets, medals and ranks, the award of the Etherton Pin and personal letters of apology from the State and the Service Chiefs.

These can also include Financial Recognition Scheme payments up to £70,000

FWP can help you in your application to these schemes, but you must apply before 12 December.

Follow [this link](#) for more details.



CONA GATHERS NAVAL FAMILY TO STRENGTHEN NETWORK

More than 80 delegates from across the Naval community gathered at the Royal Maritime Hotel, Portsmouth, on 11 September for the 2026 Conference of Naval Associations (CONA). Chaired by Vice Admiral Duncan Potts CB, the event brought together Royal Naval Association members, Naval charities, industry partners and key stakeholders for an afternoon of networking, presentations and discussion focused on strengthening collaboration across the Naval sector.

The programme featured a keynote presentation from Rear Admiral Andrew Rose, Director of People and Training and Naval Secretary, who provided delegates with an update on current priorities and developments within the Royal Navy.

Attendees also heard updates from RNA leadership and participating charities, highlighting the valuable work being carried out across the naval welfare and support community. Interim Chief Executive of the RNA, Kate Aldous, spoke of the growth of the RNA's membership and highlights of the Association since the last CONA gathering some 18 months previously. She told delegates of the success of RNA Sports and Comradeship Groups (SCGs), as demonstrated by the Motorhome, Caravan and Camping Group, which boasts more than

800 members and has held numerous well-supported meetings around the country. RNA National Chairman Andy Christie recalled last year's Naval Associations Biennial Parade – "a super Naval event and a great day out" and looked forward to the next parade, on 19 September 2027. He also referred to the current appeal to repair water damage and cover the maintenance of the Naval

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CONA GATHERS TO STRENGTHEN NETWORK



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Service Memorial at the National Memorial Arboretum in Staffordshire.

Naval historian and author Hugh Sebag-Montefiore (*pictured bottom right*) delivered an engaging presentation on the Arctic Convoys of World War 2, the subject of his book *The Battle of the Arctic*, which is published in paperback form next month.

The talk prompted lively discussion among delegates before concluding with a book-signing session.

The conference also provided an opportunity for attendees to exchange ideas on future partnerships, member engagement initiatives, communications improvements and ways to enhance support for serving personnel, veterans and their families.

Events such as CONA play an important role in supporting the RNA's strategic aims by strengthening relationships across the Naval community, raising the profile of participating organisations and encouraging greater engagement among members and stakeholders.

The Royal Naval Association would like to thank all speakers, delegates, volunteers and staff who contributed to the success of the event and looks forward to continuing the conversations and partnerships established during the day.

Pictures by S/M Nigel Huxtable



BIMBLERS TAKE ON KILTWALK



The RNA Bimblers successfully completed the 2026 Edinburgh Kiltwalk, raising more than £1,300 for the Royal Naval Association and demonstrating the power of teamwork, determination – and kindness.

S/M Val Doole (Rosyth & West Fife Branch), S/Ms Karen and Stephen Elliot, and S/M Simon McGlinchey (City of Edinburgh Branch) signed up for the Edinburgh Kiltwalk Big Stroll, an 11-mile challenge undertaken to raise funds for the Association.

Entering as a team under the name 'the RNA Bimblers', they set out with a shared goal of supporting the RNA's vital work while representing their branches with pride.

The day began on the shore of the Firth of Forth at Musselburgh, where the team gathered at the start line before setting off on their hike to Murrayfield Stadium, the home of Scottish rugby.

Thankfully, the course was mostly flat, allowing the walkers to focus on enjoying the experience, the camaraderie and the incredible atmosphere created by thousands of fellow participants and the spectators along the route.

Adding to the occasion was the fantastic support from fellow Shipmates.

Members of the City of Edinburgh and Rosyth & West Fife Branches turned



out to wave the team off at the start, while others were waiting at the finish line to offer congratulations and encouragement after the final miles had been completed.

Their support helped make an already memorable day even more special. The fundraising effort has proved just as successful as the walk itself.

Thanks to the generosity of sponsors and supporters, the RNA Bimblers exceeded their original target and have so far raised an outstanding £1,132.52, alongside £212.50 in Gift Aid, with a further £50 cheque deposited to the RNA.

Donations are still being received through the team's JustGiving page, meaning there is still time for supporters to contribute to the final total.

Every pound raised will go directly

to the Association, helping the organisation continue its vital work supporting shipmates, strengthening the Naval community and raising awareness of the assistance available to those who need it.

On behalf of the RNA, the Bimblers would like to extend a heartfelt 'thank you' to everyone who sponsored, supported and encouraged them throughout the challenge.

Every step taken on the route and every donation received will help fund RNA initiatives and provide support to shipmates across the Association. The team could not be prouder of what has been achieved and are deeply grateful for the generosity shown through this year's Edinburgh Kiltwalk.

If you would like to donate, follow this link: <https://tinyurl.com/2n7w85r5>



RUGBY TICKETS NOW ON SALE

The RNA Members Rugby Special offer is now live! Request We are delighted to announce that RNA members can now apply for tickets for the Army v Navy rugby doubler header at Twickenham on Saturday 1 May next year.

For the 2027 event the Association has an allocation of 1,350 tickets exclusively reserved for RNA members.

For 2027, tickets will be available through a dedicated members-only booking link, which will be sent directly to members who request tickets.

Please note: To protect our allocation, this booking link must remain confidential and must not be shared with anyone else.

Why book through the RNA?

Whilst we are unfortunately unable to offer the individual ticket discount available last year, the RNA experience still provides fantastic benefits, including:

- Dedicated RNA seating

- Exclusive access to our private clubhouse bar.

Enjoy the day alongside fellow RNA members, friends and family. The rugby kicks off at 1400 for the senior men's clash, with the women's match following at 1645.

Group Discount Available

Are you bringing a crowd? Purchasers of ten or more tickets will receive a **ten per cent discount** on their booking.

How to Request Tickets

Simply contact us to request your members-only booking link and secure your place before our allocation is exhausted.

Email: ceo-ea@rnassoc.org

Don't miss this fantastic opportunity to be part of a great day of rugby with the RNA community.

Tickets are available now. Request your booking link today!

RNA MEMBERS RUGBY SPECIAL IS NOW LIVE!

The Royal Naval Association is delighted to announce that **1,350 tickets**

have been reserved exclusively for RNA members for this year's Rugby Special.

When you book through the RNA, you'll benefit from:

- ✓ Dedicated RNA seating
- ✓ Exclusive access to the private RNA Clubhouse Bar
- ✓ A fantastic day alongside fellow RNA members, friends and family



Group Discount Available

Book 10 or more tickets and receive a 10% discount on your booking.

10%
DISCOUNT



To request your exclusive members-only booking link, contact:



ceo-ea@rnassoc.org



Please note: The booking link is exclusively for RNA members and must not be shared.





WARTIME VETERAN RECOGNISED WITH RNA LIFETIME MEMBERSHIP

This week, RNA General Secretary Andy Coles had the enormous privilege of presenting 100-year-old World War 2 veteran Wally Newman with his Life Membership of the Association on board the Royal Navy's most famous warship, HMS Victory.

With his two older brothers already serving in the Army, Wally was determined to do his bit for the war effort. Like many young men of his generation, he added a few years to his age and joined the Royal Navy at the tender age of just 16.

Before long, he found himself serving on board Algerine-class minesweeper HMS Moon, and he would spend more than three years at sea, travelling the world and circumnavigating the globe. It was an extraordinary experience for someone so young and the beginning of a lifetime of memories, friendships and service.

Now, in his 101st year, Wally remains a wonderful example of the resilience, courage and humour that defines so many of our veterans.

HELP PRESERVE OUR NAVAL MEMORIAL

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

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 gratefully received – the link is: [Naval Service Memorial at the RBL National Remembrance Gardens - JustGiving](#)

It was a truly special occasion to recognise not only Wally's wartime service, but also his connection to the RNA.

Receiving Life Membership was a fitting tribute to a remarkable man who answered his country's call when he was barely more than a boy.

Congratulations, Wally. It was an honour to celebrate your incredible contribution and hear a few of the stories from a life so well lived.

■ Wally will also feature as part of our Living Histories Project – more news on that coming soon!

MAGICAL CAREER OF ARTISTIC MERCHANT MARINER DAVID

When you first meet acclaimed artist David Hawker you might well think he is the very image of a time-served mariner.

But the white hair and beard could also put one in mind of the wizard fraternity from the world of Harry Potter.

And you would be right on both counts...

Let's start with the seafarer.

S/M David, a member of Rushden Branch for about 30 years, had a long career in the Merchant Navy, which also opened the door to a spell in the Royal Naval Reserves.

He is brutally honest about his time as a Reservist: "I was good as a sub-lieutenant but not much use as a lieutenant and basically no use at all as a lieutenant commander," he said. David spent time in HM Ships Avenger and Intrepid, but navigating merchant ships was a skill that he took to quite comfortably ("you only had to avoid other ships and not run aground," he noted), though he believes he would have cut the mustard in the RNR had he been somewhat younger.

No matter, he ended up in command of a vessel (albeit a "grubby little ship in the Persian Gulf") which David says entitles him to call himself 'Captain' –



RNA Membership Secretary Jon Boreham admires examples of David Hawker's artwork

though not, he added, in RNA or Royal British Legion circles...

The ship was, a 4,000-tonne offshore support vessel for the oil industry bearing the somewhat mundane name Big Orange XVI, carried two

grades of cement used to plug underwater oil well boreholes.

"Taking that from the open sea to shallow water ports I had to do all my own navigation and pilotage," said David, aged 81.

"I did that for several months, but most of my time was as Second Officer and

Navigator of both cargo and passenger liners, including Navigator of SA Vaal, previously the RMS Transvaal Castle of the Union-Castle Line – 32,000 tons!"

David says the highlight of his Naval career was probably his time with Ton-class minesweeper HMS Laleston, which was converted to a diving trials ship in the mid-1960s – David was Navigator ("which I did quite well," he said with a wry smile).

He also recalls the time he was seconded to 23,000-ton replenishment ship RFA Fort Grange, which he piloted at night through the Strait of Messina – the stretch of water between Sicily and

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mainland Italy which is less than two miles wide at its narrowest point and features strong tidal currents and a fabled whirlpool.

David can trace his love of the sea back to the age of four when he went to visit the home of his grandmother in Dublin, catching the ferry from Liverpool – he said the vessel, looking like a miniature ocean liner, would have been a thrilling sight for a young boy.

On a subsequent crossing several years later David was invited onto the bridge to watch as the ferry sail from Liverpool, which cemented his interest in the sea – though that put another love, of drawing and painting, onto the back burner for a considerable period of time.

That has now come to the fore – “I am an artist, according to Google,” David notes – and he said he is now scraping a living from his art, having been pressured by his parents to do “an honest day’s work instead” in his younger days.

Now fully committed to his art, David believes there is no sense of aesthetics in looking at ships today when compared to the classic passenger and cargo liners of the past; he is dipping his toe into that world again as he looks to build on lectures he has given on passenger liners in recent times. He began to take drawing and painting more seriously at the time of the Falklands Conflict, and was invited to create drawings of more than 60 warships, which were turned into thousands of prints and sold in NAAFI

shops on board.

Readily admitting he is chasing fame rather than fortune, David says he is a watercolour artist in the main, though he expects he will eventually get round to oils at some point, and although he specialises in ships his talent stretches well beyond the maritime. You can find paintings of cathedrals, civic buildings and castles amongst his works “because ships are a very limited market.” He also happily takes up the role of ‘artist-in-residence’ for major events – many shipmates will have seen him sketching at this year’s RNA National Conference in Salford, from which some illustrations are displayed on these pages.

David said he would be more than happy to provide artwork to RNA shipmates for merchandise such as prints or Christmas cards – if any shipmate, Branch or Area is interested in discussing it with David he can be reached on capdavidhawker@yahoo.co.uk

So what of the wizardry mentioned at the start of this story?

Well, David also had a sideline as an uncredited extra or character actor in numerous TV and film productions. If you are a Harry Potter fan, and look closely, you may well spot David



as a wizard in Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets, and amongst the Wizengamot at Harry’s hearing in Courtroom Ten of the Ministry of Magic in Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix.

He was also one of the first actors to act in fight scenes with real elephants – that happened during filming for the 2004 Hollywood epic Alexander, which features a number of ‘war elephants’ in the Battle of Hydaspes scenes.

“I was later asked how close I actually got to the elephants,” recalls David, “well, one of them knocked me flying...”

If you would like to see more of David’s beautiful artwork see <https://davidhawker.co.uk>





CARRIER SAILS FOR FURTHER TRAINING WITH NATO ALLIES

Royal Navy aircraft carrier HMS Queen Elizabeth sailed last month to continue her planned training for operations around the UK and Northern Europe.

Over the few weeks, the 65,000-tonne warship and her crew of more than 800 sailors will conduct an intensive programme of training and operations, working alongside Allies to enhance collective security, deterrence and readiness.

The deployment comes as the Defence Investment Plan confirmed that £240 million is being invested in the development of new drones to build a Hybrid Carrier Air Wing, including jet-powered drones to work alongside F-35 fighter jets.

HMS Queen Elizabeth will undertake

advanced training under the Royal Navy's Flag Officer Sea Training (FOST) organisation, exercising across the full spectrum of modern naval warfare to ensure the carrier is ready to respond to emerging threats. Having assumed the role of NATO's command ship for the Allied Response Force in July, the carrier will also rehearse how an Allied naval force would operate together in the event of a crisis.

It's the first time either of the Queen Elizabeth-class ships has performed this NATO role.

The training programme will continue into next year, including participation in major NATO exercises, and will prepare HMS Queen Elizabeth to take over from HMS Prince of Wales as the UK's flagship and high-readiness strike carrier in late 2027.

HMS Queen Elizabeth's Commanding Officer Capt Claire Thompson said: "We've returned from summer leave rested and ready for the next phase of our training.

"Sailing this autumn is a key milestone

for both our NATO commitment, as the Afloat Command Platform and also on our journey back to the Royal Navy's 'very high readiness' aircraft carrier, a duty we will resume from our sister ship HMS Prince of Wales in 2027.

"Sailing with an embarked battle staff, integration and training is essential whilst relearning the skills required to conduct safe and effective aviation as we ensure that we are prepared to deliver operational activity at the heart of NATO should it be required." British forces are playing a vital role to deter and defend, increasing NATO's resilience, readiness, and unity.

There are over 1,000 British personnel across NATO command posts, while the UK also leads the Allied Rapid Reaction Corps (ARRC) from its HQ in Gloucestershire.

UK forces also remain on the frontline of defending NATO – from the 800-strong UK battlegroup in Estonia to the RAF Typhoon jets defending the skies over Romania, and the RAF P-8 Poseidon and Rivet Joint surveillance aircraft patrolling the Baltic Sea.

Photographs by S/M Nigel Huxtable





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[Claim your free will](#)



ANDY IS UP FOR A CHAT

You will (hopefully) have seen our new General Secretary Andy Coles introduce himself on page 6 of this Circular.

But if you would like to know more about Andy and his career, both the good times and the not-so-good, he is the subject of our next Fireside Chat on Monday (5 October) at 1830.

Andy started as a junior seamen and worked his way up to command nuclear submarines, including HMS Turbulent, which he took on a round-the-world deployment. Expect an interesting and informal conversation, including Andy's time with HMS Astute, and hopefully a little amusement along the way!

Fireside Chats are delivered via Zoom, and you don't need to be an RNA member to come along and enjoy them – everyone is welcome. They are opportunities to be amused and educated by expert speakers on a wide range of subjects connected to the Royal Navy and the wider maritime environment. That could be a moment in history, a famous (or infamous) name from the history books or an in-depth analysis of the current state of the world's maritime forces. You'll find the Zoom link in the online events section of the RNA website – use this link to access the page.



EX-ENGINEER TAKES UP NEW CAREER IN ARTS

Laurie Peters is former Royal Navy aircraft engineer turned artist and illustrator based in St Buryan, near Penzance in Cornwall. Laurie worked on Sea King Mk 5 and Mk 6 helicopters at RNAS Culdrose, and also painted Naval plaques and squadron crests while serving, later returning to a career in art and design.

He now creates bespoke watercolours and digital images of aircraft, ships and classic vehicles, celebrating subjects that hold a special place in people's lives through service, ownership or a lifelong interest.

"My subjects range from classic and contemporary cars, motorcycles and aircraft to pubs, hotels, restaurants, coastal properties and distinctive landmarks," said Laurie.

"I'm drawn to subjects with character, history and a story behind them, creating expressive, watercolour-led artwork that captures their personality as much as their appearance."

The accompanying Sea King artwork offers a glimpse of his work and may bring back memories for members of the Naval community.

Laurie welcomes commissions from

individuals, clubs and associations.

Working from reference photographs, he creates personal keepsakes, gifts and illustrations for publications.

Prices depend on the subject and level of detail.

To enquire about commissions contact Laurie on WhatsApp/ mobile: +44 7555 081129. Laurie's website is www.lauriepeters.uk and he has an Instagram account: @lauriepetersstudio



RNA TRANSPORT IS AN ASSET FOR ALL

The RNA has three minibuses for use by shipmates.

The minibuses are a great asset to us all and we are proud to offer this membership benefit.

We are also extremely grateful to RNA volunteers who manage the minibuses.

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

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



FREE TRAIN TRAVEL FOR REMEMBRANCE WEEKEND

Hundreds of bereaved military family members will be able to travel by train free of charge over Remembrance weekend, 7 to 8 November, helping them attend memorial services and commemorative events to honour loved ones who died while serving in the Armed Forces.

For the first time, one next of kin of a Service person who died while serving will be able to travel free of charge on National Rail services to attend Remembrance weekend events.

The move builds on the existing free travel offer by the Rail Delivery Group for serving personnel and veterans – further details of this will be announced nearer the date.

Eligible family members wishing to take up the offer have until 16 October to apply for a free ticket through the Defence Medical Welfare Service.

Rail Minister Lord Hendy said: Remembrance weekend is a time for the nation to come together to honour those who made the ultimate sacrifice whilst serving our country. Bereaved families are at the heart of these commemorations and the cost of travel should not prevent them from being there to remember their loved ones.

Extending free rail travel to next of kin will help more families attend Remembrance events, standing alongside communities, veterans and serving members of our Armed Forces as we honour and remember those who served.

Cabs-for-Veterans will also be offering their free service in London on Remembrance Sunday.

London taxis take veterans from all mainline terminal stations to and from Whitehall for Remembrance

Sunday service. The service is provided by the drivers and helpers in their own time with their own money by way of thanks to the military community.

Operating from 0800 to 1000 inbound, and around 1200 until 1400 for the return journey, the service, formerly known as Poppy Cabs, operate from a number of hubs, and there is no need to book – just turn up and go.

All London taxis are wheelchair accessible. That means that all those

going to the annual service and parade can be assured of getting a taxi that is right for their particular needs.

The hubs are at Euston Station, Fenchurch Street, Kings Cross (main line), Liverpool Street, London Bridge, Marylebone, Paddington (main line), the Union Jack Club, Victoria (main line), Victoria Coach Station, the Victory Services Club, Waterloo (main line), Admiralty Arch and Westminster Bridge

AUTUMN PROGRAMME FOR NEWLY-RENAMED GARDENS

The Royal British Legion National Remembrance Gardens has announced its autumn programme of events and activities remembering service and sacrifice on behalf of the nation.

The 150-acre Staffordshire estate, previously known as the National Memorial Arboretum, will welcome tens of thousands of visitors for **Ride to the Wall, Remembrance Sunday, Armistice Day, Illuminated** and a wider programme of learning activities and visitor experiences.

Daily talks, guided walks and tours, family activities and seasonal exhibitions help visitors explore the inspirational stories remembered within the landscape.

The first large-scale Remembrance event this autumn take place this weekend, with thousands of members and supporters of the Armed Forces community making a pilgrimage by motorcycle for Ride to the Wall (RTTW) tomorrow.

This unique act of modern Remembrance also raises funds to support the site, with more than £2

million raised to date.

The Field of Remembrance will return to the Gardens from 30 October to 15 November.

Open during daily visitor hours, the Field features thousands of individual wooden Remembrance tributes, each carrying a handwritten message in memory of someone who has served.

The Field will open with a special public dedication service on Friday 30 October at 10.45am.

In November, thousands of Armed Forces community members and the wider public will attend the annual Remembrance Sunday and Armistice Day services at the National Remembrance Gardens.

The annual Remembrance Sunday (8 November) service at the base of the Armed Forces Memorial is open to all. On 11 November, the estate will lead the nation in marking Armistice Day with a ticketed service on the Armed Forces Memorial to remember all those who have served and continue to serve.

These proceedings will be broadcast on screens in Heroes' Square.

From 4 to 22 December, visitors will have the opportunity to explore Illuminated and discover extraordinary stories told through colour, light and sound.

This year's thought-provoking light trail will include new installations charting the evolution of the Nation's year-round place to remember during its first 25 years.

It will also see the return of beacons above the Armed Forces Memorial and the intricate hand-crafted giant Poppies created in the 2025 Guiding Lights community and learning arts programme.

HMS ROYAL OAK VICTIMS HONOURED

The HMS Royal Oak Association will be holding services of remembrance in the coming weeks to commemorate the 87th anniversary of the loss of the battleship and 835 men and boys from her ship's company.

Services will take place as follows:

■ **Saturday 10 October** – service of remembrance at St Barbara's Church, HMS Excellent, Portsmouth at 11am. Further details are available by contacting the HMS Royal Oak Association at info@hmsroyaloakassociation.com.

■ **Wednesday 14 October** - service of remembrance at Scapa Flow at 9.30am.

■ **Wednesday 11 November** – a Remembrance Day service at the HMS Royal Oak Memorial, The Hard, Portsmouth, commencing at 10.45am. All are welcome.

More information on the Association is available at their website – [click here](#).

'NELSON'S GUINEA' IS SOLD AT AUCTION

Nelson's Guinea, found aboard Victory among his personal possessions, fetched a hammer price of £30,000 – three times its pre-sale top estimate – at auction by Noonans Mayfair last month. The 'Horatia Nelson-Ward' Nelson Guinea and Casket contained a George III gold guinea that had

been found aboard Victory among Nelson's personal effects and was given to Emma Hamilton's infant daughter Horatia as a memento of her father. It was subsequently mounted as a brooch and was being sold by a Chinese collector of historical items. It was bought by a British collector

of important historically connected British coins and medals. The guinea and casket passed down through the Nelson-Ward family to the Rev Hugh Nelson-Ward, then to his friend the Rev Robert Evans (Royal Navy College Chaplain) who passed it to his nephew. It was previously sold in 2005.

RNRMC GRANTS SUPPORT SERVING NAVY AND VETERANS

Royal Navy and Royal Marines Charity (RNRMC) have awarded £149,000 in grants to organisations delivering vital family and relationship support to serving personnel, veterans and their loved ones across the Naval community. The funding will enable grant holders to provide a range of services including counselling services, family mediation, parenting support, wellbeing programmes and community-based activities that help families strengthen communication, build resilience and remain connected during difficult periods.

Strong and stable home lives are essential to the wellbeing of those who serve, yet Naval families can face a range of pressures, including deployments, periods of separation, caring responsibilities and transitions out of service.

Through Open Grants, RNRMC invests in organisations, charities, and Community Interest Companies (CICs) that understand these challenges and are equipped to provide practical, tailored support.

Mandy Harding, Head of Commissioned Grants at RNRMC, said: "Families are at the heart of the Naval community, and strong relationships make a real difference to the wellbeing and resilience of serving personnel, veterans and their loved ones.

"We are proud to support organisations that bring people together, offering friendship, connection and practical help when it is needed most.

"Naval life can be rewarding, but it also comes with unique challenges. Having people to turn to can make those challenges easier to face.

"Through these grants, we want more Naval families to feel supported, connected and confident, helping them not only manage life's ups and downs but truly thrive.

"Together, these projects will make a meaningful difference to Naval families across the UK."

Among the funding recipients is

Defence Medical Welfare Service (DMWS), who deliver confidential, personalised physical and mental health and wellbeing support to RNRMC beneficiaries in Plymouth.

The service will help individuals and families navigate healthcare pathways while supporting positive relationships at home and within their communities. A spokesperson from DMWS said: "This funding will enable us to provide tailored support to Royal Navy and Royal Marines beneficiaries, helping families reduce stress, improve communication and feel more connected."

Organisations receiving funding include:

■ Aggies (Storybook Waves Teens)

■ Albatross Arts CIC (A Space to Belong: Supporting Military Families Through the Arts)

■ Helensburgh & Lomond Carers SCIO (Forces Family Resilience)

■ The Warrior Programme (Naval Veterans and Families Programme)

■ Turn to Starboard (Family Sailing Programme and continuation of its existing project)

The grants form part of RNRMC's commitment to supporting the people behind the uniform, recognising that strong family relationships contribute significantly to the wellbeing, resilience and long-term success of serving personnel, veterans and their families.



GO LEARN

FREE ONLINE TUTORING

for serving Royal Navy families

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RM EXPERIENCE OPENS THIS MONTH

A powerful new experience is arriving at Portsmouth Historic Dockyard this month.

Royal Marines Experience brings together immersive challenges, personal stories, remarkable collections and iconic objects in ways never seen before. Challenge yourself with hands-on activities inspired by Royal Marines training.

Test your reactions, fitness and observation skills.

Step into an immersive virtual reality mission and discover the pressure of making split-second decisions.

Alongside these new experiences, you'll discover the people behind the uniform through powerful stories of courage, resilience and service, told through personal accounts, photographs, medals and objects from the RM collection.

New highlights include:

- Interactive challenges that put you to the test
- An immersive Royal Marines virtual reality mission
- Inspiring stories from Royal Marines past and present
- Fascinating objects, photographs and personal treasures
- A display bringing together all 10 VCs awarded to the Royal Marines
- A fresh new experience to enjoy with

friends, family and adventure seekers. Whether you're taking on the challenges, exploring the collections or discovering stories of bravery, there's something new to experience around every corner. Portsmouth Historic Dockyard's newest

attraction is due to open on 24 October in the former Action Stations building (above).

For further details of tickets and attractions at the Historic Dockyard use [this link](#).

TIME AND SPACE TO REFLECT

A key feature of the Royal Marines Experience will be the Remembrance Room, which aims to reflect and represent the human cost of sacrifice and the impact of service on individuals.

Visitors are invited to take time to reflect and contemplate, remembering those who came before us.

Three walls will display photos in memory of Royal Marines.

To create this room, the Museum is seeking images of Royal Marines who have passed away. They invite supporters to submit photos of loved ones who served in the Royal Marines and are no longer with us.

This is intended to be a thoughtful space for reflection on the cost of Service; this should be borne in mind when considering which images to submit. It is not intended

as a traditional memorial, nor as an exhaustive record of RM casualties.

Eligibility: Images submitted should show individuals who served in the Corps including the RM Band Service, and have passed away, in service or later.

When in service, this may include, but is not limited to, those killed in action, those who died of illness during active service, those who died in accidents during training or on operations, or those who died as a result of mental health conditions – such as, but not limited to PTSD.

If the image is of someone who died after having left the Corps, this can relate to age, illness or those who died because of suicide, or mental health conditions, such as but not limited to PTSD.

Please use [this link](#) for a full list of eligible personnel.

LATEST HUNTER-KILLER BOAT LEAVES BARROW FOR TRIALS AND TRAINING

The sixth of the Royal Navy's leading-edge hunter killer submarines has sailed for the first time as she prepares for front-line operations.

Nuclear powered and conventionally armed, HMS Agamemnon is the latest Astute-class submarine to be delivered by BAE Systems.

She sailed from Barrow, where she has been built and comprehensively tested over the past 13 years. Agamemnon will now conduct trials and training before debuting at the home of the UK's submarine force at Faslane in Scotland.

"In an increasingly dangerous world, sea power remains fundamental to keeping our country and people safe," said First Sea Lord General Sir Gwyn Jenkins.

"Our submarine fleet is essential to that effort, which is why I am delighted that HMS Agamemnon, the sixth of our Astute-class submarines, has now begun sea trials and will soon arrive at HMNB Clyde to join the fleet.

"She embodies the best of British engineering and the professionalism of our submariners and will be one of the most advanced submarines ever operated by the Royal Navy.

"As we continue to strengthen our warfighting readiness, HMS Agamemnon will play a central role in keeping the United Kingdom safe, contributing to NATO's collective defence and ensuring we are ready to lead, fight and win."

Agamemnon's mission will be to safeguard submarines carrying the UK nuclear deterrent from interference.

She can also project power, attacking key targets on land when required with Tomahawk cruise missiles, take out hostile submarines and warships using her heavyweight Spearfish torpedoes, launch raids by Royal Marines commandos, and using her extensive suite of sensors to gather intelligence.

Known by crew as 'Awesome Aggie', the 7,000-tonne boat was



formally commissioned into the Royal Navy 12 months in the presence of King Charles.

Since then her complex systems have undergone thorough testing by her crew and industry experts and the boat has conducted her maiden dive in a specially-deepened basin which is part of BAE Systems' complex.

The boat's crew have also used the time to foster affiliations and ties, in particular with Yorkshire. Agamemnon is affiliated with the city of Wakefield, Yorkshire University Royal Naval Unit (based in Leeds), and has signed a 'bond of friendship' with Sheffield Forgemasters.

It took a long-planned two-day operation to leave Barrow with its basins, docks and intricate locks and negotiate narrow Walney Channel before Agamemnon reached open waters. Just one more Astute-class boat remains to be finished; HMS Achilles is in the later stages of construction in the Devonshire Dock Hall complex which dominates the Barrow skyline.

Image: UK MOD Crown copyright

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CHRISTMAS CARDS ON SALE



The RNA's Christmas cards will soon be available through the RNA's newly-refurbished online shop at [this link](#).

There are two different packs of ten cards, each with two designs – four designs in all as seen here.

In all designs the words inside read 'Merry Christmas and Happy New Year'.

Each pack costs £4.50, which includes postage of the pack.



QUICK QUOTE FOR TRAVEL INSURANCE

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

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

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

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

REQUEST FOR EMAIL DETAILS

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

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

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

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



**ONCE
NAVY
ALWAYS
NAVY**

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

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RAFFLE PRIZE WINNERS ENJOY BREAK AT CHINA FLEET CLUB

The RNA was delighted to hear from Helen and Gavin Brechany, winners of the Army vs Navy rugby match raffle prize, who recently enjoyed their prize – a stay at the renowned China Fleet Club in Saltash, Cornwall.

Following their visit, Helen got in touch with us to share their thanks and a selection of photographs from what they described as “a fantastic trip”. “We just wanted to say thank you so much as we’ve had a brilliant time,” they added.

The couple enjoyed making the most of their prize and were keen to pass on their appreciation to everyone involved in organising the raffle and arranging the experience.

The Army vs Navy Match raffle is just one of the many ways the Association engages with members and supporters while raising vital funds to help continue our work supporting shipmates and their families across the UK.

We are always pleased to hear from prizewinners and to see the positive impact these opportunities have on our members and supporters.

Helen and Gavin’s feedback is a wonderful reminder of the value of bringing people together and creating memorable experiences through the RNA.

Thank you to Helen and Gavin for sharing their photos and kind words with us, and congratulations once again on winning the prize.



SHOP ONLINE AND HELP US RAISE FUNDS

You could raise money for the Royal Naval Association simply by shopping online using a website called **easyfundraising**.

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.

GENERAL ENQUIRIES HERE PLEASE!

If shipmates have any general queries or questions, including issues with email communications, they should use either **ams@rnassoc.org** or **admin@rnassoc.org**

For submissions to Semaphore Circulars and Shorts, or other communications matters, please use **comms@rnassoc.org**

SHOPPING SHORTLY

Our new online shop will shortly be open for business through the 'Shop' button on the front page of the main RNA website – use **this link**.

UPCOMING MEETINGS

Assoc Management Committees:

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

Thurs 15 Oct (Zoom 1800)



CENTRAL OFFICE HAS NEW PREMISES

Just a reminder that the Central Office staff are currently working from a smaller office in Portsmouth Naval Base (above) or from home while essential maintenance is carried out on Lanyard Building (right).

While our temporary office shared with the Association of Wrens – is not exactly ideal, we will make every effort to maintain business as usual, though you may experience some delays, including responses to queries. Please accept our apologies for any disruption, and thank you all for your patience and understanding.

The maintenance work is due to last until mid-December, but the schedule could be amended as work progresses.

You can contact the team on 07889 059025 during office hours, or use the usual email addresses as laid out on **page 5**.

Keep an eye on our social media channels and the Semaphore publications for further updates.



FACs (finance):

Fortnight ahead(ish) of NC, preferably post AMC
Fri 13 Nov (Zoom 0930)

National Councils:

Fri 20 Nov (Zoom 0900)
Annual Report



YOUR INSURANCE PARTNER

Enjoy the following member benefits:

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

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



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WILL YOU HELP THE ASSOCIATION?

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

A will doesn't just save your loved ones time, money, and stress. It's also an opportunity to be part of something bigger. By including a gift in your will, you can help support the Royal Naval Association and make a meaningful difference to shipmates for generations to come.

That's why we've partnered with expert estate planners Octopus Legacy to offer you the chance to write or update your will for free, online, over the phone, or in person with

one of their professional will writers or solicitors. We cover the cost of wills up to £150, meaning you can write a simple will at no charge, or receive a discount on a will with trust. For more information, click [here](#).

LATEST OFFERS ON NEW CARS

There are some spooky good deals available this October!

Forces Cars Direct are excited to welcome a new brand to their portfolio – Lepas, with their L8 model available with a saving of £6,161.

You can also save up to £10,367 on the Toyota C-HR+.

If you want to see all of Forces Cars Direct's special offers available this month go to <https://www.forcescarsdirect.com/special-offers/monthly-offers>.

Also see the display advert on page 42 of this Circular.

Are you:

Ex-forces?

Eager to travel more this year? ✓

Tired of rising insurance costs? ✓

You could make a saving by

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

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TAKE A CHANCE ON THE RNA LOTTERY

You could win up to £25,000 in our Weekly Lottery, which gives supporters the chance to win cash prizes as well as backing the RNA. Once players have registered online they will be entered into the draw every Friday they are in credit (£1 per line, per week).

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

PUTTING US ON THE MAP

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

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

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

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

Any feedback to the RNA Communications team please.

GET YOUR SLOPS HERE

Shipmates are reminded that items such as blazer badges, pin badges, ties, beret badges etc are still available for purchase from Central Office. If you would like to obtain such items, please contact Central Office on 07889 059025 or shortly via the 'Shop' button at the top of the RNA website home page at www.royal-naval-association.co.uk

SPORTS AND COMRADESHIP GROUPS

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

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

Choir – Jon Everett: wws@rnassoc.org

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

Cricket – Mark Smith : Markmiff1962@gmail.com

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

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

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

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

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

RNA Football Club – scc@rnassoc.com

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

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

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

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

RFA VETERANS GATHER FOR CEREMONY

For many Royal Fleet Auxiliary (RFA) veterans, opportunities to reconnect with former colleagues can be few and far between.

After years spent serving at sea, often spending months away, leaving service can sometimes mean losing the close-knit community that was such an important part of daily life.

A recent gathering in Weymouth helped bring that community back together. Serving personnel, veterans and families came together for the unveiling of a new RFA memorial plaque on the town's seafront, creating not only a place of remembrance, but also an opportunity to reconnect, share experiences and strengthen friendships.

Situated between Weymouth's Cenotaph and Merchant Navy Memorial, the plaque provides a permanent place where members of the RFA community can pause to remember those who have served and those who are no longer with us.

While the unveiling ceremony was an important moment of remembrance, for many attendees the greatest impact came from the opportunity to spend time together afterwards.

Veterans and serving seafarers gathered alongside family members, local representatives and supporters, sharing stories and memories from their time at sea.

For some veterans, particularly those living alone, the event provided a valuable reminder that they remain part of a wider community.

Matthew Rowberry, founder of RAS Group, said: "Some of our veterans live alone, so this gathering was a valuable opportunity to reconnect with old shipmates and share stories.

"Days like this remind people they are not alone and help strengthen the sense of community that is so important for serving personnel, veterans and their families."

Matthew established RAS ten years

ago to honour fallen RFA seafarers and support bereaved families. Through donations, the organisation has funded memorial tributes, charitable donations and remembrance initiatives that help keep the memory of former seafarers alive.

The Weymouth plaque also represents a significant step towards Matthew's wider ambition of creating more accessible places of remembrance for the RFA community.

At present, the RFA has only one other permanent memorial, located at the National Remembrance Gardens in Staffordshire, making this an important addition for serving personnel, veterans and families in the South West.

Funding from Greenwich Hospital and the Royal Navy and Royal Marines Charity (RNRMC) helped support the post-unveiling reception, enabling attendees to continue connecting and strengthening the support networks that are so important to veterans' wellbeing.

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NO TIMETABLE FOR GRIEF

As part of my role with the Royal Naval Association, I have supported many families following the loss of a member or Naval veteran, *writes Jon Everett, RNA Welfare and Wellbeing Co-ordinator.*

Over the past two years I have spoken with people trying to come to terms with bereavement, and one thing I have learned is that grief affects everyone differently.

A few months ago, my own dad passed away.

My dad was not a Naval veteran, but he was incredibly proud of the fact that I had served in the Royal Navy and of the work I now do with the RNA.

Like many fathers, he was a constant in my life. His values, guidance and quiet support helped shape the person I am today.

When he died, there was suddenly so much to do. There were arrangements to make, family to support and practical matters that needed attention. Like many people facing a loss, I did what needed to be done and kept moving forward.

One of the decisions I made was to speak at his funeral.

Several people asked whether I was sure

I wanted to do it. They were looking out for me, but for me there was never really a decision to make. I felt I had to stand up and speak about my dad. I wanted to share something of the man we knew and loved – the husband, father, grandfather, great-grandfather and friend who meant so much to us all.

It was one of the hardest things I have ever done, but also one of the most important.

A few weeks later, when our family gathered to scatter his ashes, I found myself speaking again. This time, it was just a few words and a prayer, shared with those closest to him. It was a quiet and personal moment, but one that meant a great deal to me.

Looking back, I realise that those moments, along with everything else happening around me, were all part of my grieving journey. At the time, I didn't really see it that way; I was simply doing what I felt needed to be done.

Soon after the funeral, I spent several weeks at HMS Raleigh. In many ways, being busy helped. Having a purpose, a routine and people around me gave me the space to keep moving forward.

But Raleigh also gave me time to reflect.

It was particularly poignant being there because, many years ago, my father had witnessed my passing-out parade at HMS Raleigh. Standing there again without him brought back a lot of memories. At times I felt lonely, but I was also reflective and grateful for the memories we shared. Even when you are surrounded by people, grief can sometimes feel lonely.

No matter how many people are around you, there are moments when you realise that nobody else is experiencing the loss quite in the same way that you are. The relationship you had with that person was unique. The memories were yours. The loss is yours too.

I don't think grief is something we ever necessarily 'finish'. For me, there are days when life feels much the same as it always has. Then there are moments when a photograph, a familiar song or a simple memory catches me completely off guard. Sometimes grief arrives when you least expect it.

That is why I wanted to write this article. Too often, people believe there is a 'right way' to grieve, or that after a certain amount of time they should somehow be 'over it'. My experience has taught me that grief does not work like that. It does not follow a timetable, and it certainly does not follow rules.

Some people cry openly. Others do not. Some want to talk constantly about the person they have lost, while others keep those thoughts to themselves. Some find comfort in being around others, while some need time alone.

None of these responses are wrong.

As members of the RNA, we understand the value of comradeship. We know the importance of standing alongside someone when life becomes difficult. We may not always know what to say, but sometimes simply being there is enough. That is something I have seen time and time again through my work supporting families following bereavement. Often, we cannot take away someone's pain, and we don't need to have all the answers.

Sometimes the most important thing we can do is listen, offer some company and help someone find the support they need. If you are grieving the loss of someone you love, please be kind to yourself. Take each day as it comes. Accept support when it is offered and remember that everyone walks this path differently.

What I do know is that the people we love never truly leave us. They remain in our memories, our values and the stories we continue to tell.

My dad certainly does.

Fair winds, Dad. Until we meet again.

WELFARE CONTACTS

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

FORCES PENSIONS, DIVORCE AND THE M'CLOUD REMEDY

This article complements the information shared during Pension Awareness Week 2026 (week commencing 14 September) and highlights the importance of understanding retirement provision for serving personnel, veterans and their families.

For individuals facing separation or divorce, an Armed Forces pension is often one of the most valuable assets within the matrimonial finances, making it essential to understand its true value, the options available for division, and the potential impact on long-term financial security.

Unlike many private pensions, Armed Forces pensions are highly specialised and can present complex issues when it comes to reaching a fair financial settlement.

Recent developments, including the McCloud Remedy, have added a further layer of complexity, making specialist advice more important than ever.

1: Why are Armed Forces pensions so important on divorce?

In many military families, the Armed Forces pension may be the most significant asset – even more than a home. As a result, pensions should never be overlooked during financial remedy proceedings.

The court has a wide discretion when determining how assets should be divided on divorce and will seek to achieve a fair outcome having regard to factors such as:

- The length of the marriage
- The parties' ages
- Their financial needs and resources
- Income and earning capacity
- Retirement provision.

Pensions are often central to

Knights

achieving fairness, particularly where one spouse's pension provision substantially exceeds the other's.

2: Options available for dividing pension benefits

There are several ways in which pensions can be addressed within a divorce settlement.

The most common is a Pension Sharing Order (PSO). A PSO transfers a percentage of one spouse's pension to the other.

Once implemented, the receiving spouse becomes a Pension Credit Member and holds their entitlement independently of their former spouse. This is generally considered the preferred option because it creates a clean financial break and allows both parties to build their own retirement provision.

3: The importance of obtaining accurate pension valuations

The starting point in most cases is obtaining a Cash Equivalent Value (CEV) from Veterans UK.

The CEV provides a capital value for pension benefits and is used by the court and advisers as part of the overall financial assessment. Both parties should also obtain valuations for any additional private, public sector or workplace pensions they may hold.

However, Armed Forces pensions present unique challenges because the CEV does not always accurately reflect the true value of the future benefits that the member will receive.



4: Why Armed Forces pensions are different

Armed Forces pensions are defined benefit schemes, meaning they provide a guaranteed income in retirement based upon service and scheme rules rather than investment performance.

Consequently:

- The CEV should not be viewed as the definitive value of the pension
- Military pensions cannot be directly compared with private defined contribution pension pots
- Different Armed Forces pension schemes provide benefits in different ways.
- Early retirement features can materially impact value. This often means that specialist analysis is required before a fair settlement can be reached.

5: Understanding the McCloud Remedy

One of the most significant pension developments affecting serving personnel and veterans is the McCloud

Continued on page 31

Emma Nicholas has significant experience in dealing with legal issues arising from the breakdown of relationships involving serving or former Armed Forces personnel, their families and current or former MOD individuals.

Emma – an RNA member – has represented personnel in the Royal Navy, from ABs to Vice Admirals. She understands the difference between civvy and military life and the impact this can have on a relationship and/or a family. Knights is a business and leading law firm offering premium professional services everywhere in the UK. The team is made up of 1,100+ professionals across 26 (and

growing) locations in the UK from Carlisle all the way down to Exeter.

The national family team at Knights are familiar with all aspects of family law, including contact arrangements for children, divorce and finances and pre/post-nuptial agreements. They have a handful of individuals who specialise in the treatment of Armed Forces pensions on divorce and appreciate the complexities of these schemes. It's important to seek specialist legal advice when considering the financial arrangements on divorce, and they are there to help.

WELFARE AND WELLBEING

Continued from page 30

Remedy.

In 2015, public sector pension reforms moved most Armed Forces personnel into AFPS 15.

Personnel closer to retirement were permitted to remain in their existing schemes, such as AFPS 75 and AFPS 05, under transitional protection arrangements.

Subsequent court decisions found that these protections amounted to unlawful age discrimination because they favoured older members.

As a result, the government introduced the McCloud Remedy across affected public service pension schemes.

6: Who is affected?

The remedy generally applies to personnel who:

- Were serving on or before 31 March 2012.
 - Remained in service on or after 1 April 2015.
 - Did not have a disqualifying break in service greater than five years.
- The relevant period, known as the Remedy Period, runs from 1 April 2015 to 31 March 2022.

7: What choice will members receive?

Eligible members will receive a Remediable Service Statement (RSS) from Veterans UK.

The RSS will set out the pension benefits available under both:

- Their legacy scheme (AFPS 75 or AFPS 05); and
- AFPS 15.

Members will then be able to choose which set of benefits applies during the Remedy Period.

The most beneficial option will vary depending on numerous factors, including:

- Length of service.
- Rank progression.
- Retirement plans.
- Future income requirements.
- Individual circumstances.

8: Why does the McCloud Remedy matter in divorce?

For divorcing couples, the McCloud Remedy can significantly affect the value of pension benefits.

Historically obtained pension valuations may no longer accurately reflect the benefits that will ultimately be payable.

A pension that appears to have a certain value today could generate substantially different retirement income once a member has exercised their McCloud election.

This creates potential difficulties when negotiating Pension Sharing Orders,

because any settlement should be based upon the most accurate picture of future pension entitlement available.

In cases involving a significant military pension, failing to consider the McCloud Remedy may result in a settlement that does not properly achieve fairness between the parties. A further complexity arises from the unique retirement structure of Armed Forces pensions and the specific rights and entitlements of these schemes. This is often where the experts come in!

9: The role of a Pension on Divorce Expert (PODE)

Given the complexity of Armed Forces pensions, many cases benefit from the involvement of a Pension on Divorce Expert (PODE).

A PODE is an independent pension specialist who assists the parties and the court by analysing pension benefits and advising on fair methods of division.

A PODE may be instructed where:

- The Armed Forces pension represents a significant asset
- The McCloud Remedy applies
- The parties hold different types of pension schemes
- The court requires assistance understanding pension values
- The objective is to equalise retirement income rather than capital values.

10: What does a PODE do?

A PODE will typically:

- Analyse pension valuations
- Review scheme rules
- Assess retirement income outcomes
- Consider the impact of the McCloud Remedy
- Model various pension-sharing scenarios
- Recommend appropriate pension-sharing percentages.

The PODE remains independent and their role is to provide objective evidence, while a family solicitor advises each party on the best outcome for their individual circumstances.

11: Why specialist advice matters

When dealing with Armed Forces pensions, obtaining specialist legal advice at an early stage can be crucial. A specialist family lawyer can advise on:

- Whether a PODE report is required
- How military pensions should be valued
- The impact of the McCloud Remedy
- Whether pre-marital or post-

separation pension accrual should be considered

■ The most appropriate method of achieving fairness

■ Drafting and implementing Pension Sharing Orders.

Armed Forces pensions are often the most valuable and complex asset on divorce.

The introduction of the McCloud Remedy means that pension benefits may not be as straightforward as historical valuations suggest, making careful analysis essential.

Following Pension Awareness Week 2026, ensuring that you understand your pension rights and how they are treated on divorce can help secure a fair settlement and provide greater financial certainty for the future.

Emma is an Associate in the Family Team at Knights.

Coming from a military family and being married to a Royal Navy veteran, she understands the unique challenges that military families can face during relationship breakdowns. She is also a proud mother to her two-year-old daughter, which gives her a personal appreciation of the importance of securing the right outcome for families and children during difficult times.

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FUNERAL GUIDE ON RNA WEBSITE

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.

If you are a family member or friend of someone who has passed away, please do not hesitate to reach out to us for advice or support.

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

POSITIVE IMPACT THROUGH WORKING IN PARTNERSHIPS

As we move through another busy year, I wanted to take a moment to reflect on the continued development of the RNA's Welfare & Wellbeing Programme and the positive impact that can be achieved through partnership and collaboration.

One of the greatest strengths of our programme is that we do not work in isolation. Supporting members of the Naval family often requires organisations to come together, share knowledge and focus on achieving the best outcome for the individual. Whether working alongside fellow military charities, local support services or our own dedicated network of volunteers, collaboration remains central to everything we do.

Over recent months, we have continued to strengthen relationships across the sector, working closely with organisations such as the Royal Navy Benevolent Trust, SSAFA, the Royal British Legion and many other local and national services. These partnerships allow us to share information, make introductions where appropriate and ensure that members are aware of the organisations best placed to support their particular circumstances.

Importantly, this collaborative approach allows us to focus on what really matters. It is never about who provides the support. It is about ensuring that shipmates and their families can access the right support, from the right organisation, at the right time.

Across the Association, Branch and Area Welfare Officers continue to play an invaluable role. Their local knowledge, commitment and willingness to support fellow members help strengthen the welfare network throughout the RNA. They are often the first point of

contact for members seeking advice, information or simply a listening ear.

I would also like to take this opportunity to thank the Royal Navy and Royal Marines Charity (RNRMC) for their continued support of the RNA Welfare & Wellbeing Programme. Their investment enables us to further develop the programme, strengthen our partnerships and continue building a network that benefits shipmates, families and branches across the country. Their support remains vital in helping us fulfil our commitment to ensuring that no shipmate feels left behind.

Finally, thank you to everyone involved in supporting welfare and wellbeing throughout the Association. Whether you are a Welfare Officer, branch volunteer, committee member or simply a shipmate looking out for another shipmate, your contribution helps make the RNA the organisation it is today.

Shipmates helping shipmates remains at the heart of everything we do.

WELFARE TRAINING

The next training session for RNA Welfare & Wellbeing Volunteers covers the basics, DBS (the Disclosure and Barring Service) and GDPR (the General Data Protection Regulation), helping volunteers support our people safely and effectively.

The session is scheduled for tomorrow (Saturday 3 October) from 10am–midday online using Zoom – the link is at <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/89582756392?pwd=Cp3HnJrbRN20wVZhdRm8zT7ZuaP6S.1>

LOOKING AHEAD TO THE AUTUMN

As the seasons change and we move into autumn, it is a timely reminder that the coming months can present challenges for many people.

The lighter evenings begin to disappear, the weather becomes less inviting and many of us naturally spend more time indoors. For some, this is simply part of the seasonal cycle. For others, particularly those living alone, coping with health issues or dealing with difficult personal circumstances, it can be a lonely time of year.

This is where the RNA can make a real difference.

Our branches have always been about more than meetings and social events. They provide friendship, routine and an opportunity for people to stay connected. For many members, branch activities may be one of the few regular opportunities they have to get out, meet others and enjoy the company of fellow shipmates.

As we head towards winter, I would encourage branches to think about those members who may not have attended recently. A simple phone call to ask how someone is doing

can mean a great deal.

Equally, reaching out to a new member and making them feel welcome can be the start of a friendship that lasts for years.

None of us know what challenges another person may be facing. Sometimes people simply need to know that someone is thinking of them and that they remain part of the RNA family.

Autumn is also a good opportunity for branches to review how they keep in touch with members and to consider whether there are individuals who may benefit from a little extra contact over the coming months. Small acts of kindness often have the greatest impact.

The strength of the Royal Naval Association has always been its people. By continuing to look out for one another, we can ensure that the spirit of comradeship remains strong throughout the winter months and beyond.

After all, welfare often starts with a simple question: "How are you?"

KEEPING YOUR PLACE AMONGST THOSE WHO UNDERSTAND YOU

One of the things I have come to appreciate most through my time with the Royal Naval Association is the importance of belonging, writes *Jon Everett, the RNA's Welfare & Wellbeing Support Coordinator*.

Many of us experienced a strong sense of belonging during our service. We were part of a team, part of something bigger than ourselves. We shared challenges, achievements, humour and hardship. Above all, we knew that those around us understood what it meant to serve.

Although our days in uniform may be behind us, the need for connection and companionship never disappears. That is one of the reasons the RNA remains so important. It provides an opportunity to stay connected with others who share similar experiences, values and outlooks.

It offers friendship, understanding and a place where people feel comfortable being themselves.

Belonging is not something that can be measured on a membership form or attendance register.

It is found in the conversations before a meeting starts, the laughter shared with old friends and the warm welcome given to somebody walking through the door for the first time.

Throughout the Association, I regularly hear stories of members supporting one another in ways both large and small.

A lift to a meeting, a welfare visit, a check-in phone call or simply taking the time to sit and have a chat over a cup of tea.

These moments may seem ordinary, but they help create something increasingly valuable in today's world: genuine human connection.

Many people face periods in life when they can feel disconnected.

Retirement, moving home, losing a loved one or health concerns can all affect a person's sense of purpose and belonging.

Having a community around you during those times can make a tremendous difference.

The RNA has long been built on comradeship, and that comradeship continues long after service has ended.

It lives on in our branches, our

events and, most importantly, in the friendships that are formed between members.

Every one of us has the ability to help strengthen that sense of belonging.

A friendly greeting, an introduction to a new member or taking the time to include someone in a conversation can help ensure that everybody feels welcome and valued.

At its best, the RNA is more than an association.

It is a network of friendship, support and shared experience that continues to enrich the lives of its members.

Because belonging is not about where you have been.

It is about knowing that you still have a place where you are valued, respected and among friends.

REPORT EXAMINES PROBLEMS OF ENSURING DIGITAL ACCESS

In ground-breaking analysis, Age UK has set out the most authoritative account to date of where older people in England are when it comes to their use of and familiarity with digital technology. In its new report, 'Digital Done Right', the charity explains that the conventional wisdom of older people either being 'online' or 'offline' is simplistic – they sit on a spectrum comprising four broad groups, ranging from the digitally included at one end to the digitally excluded at the other.

The report also makes clear that there are far fewer over-65s with the confidence and skills to use digital technology with ease than policymakers like to assume.

The charity says that this reality means that as we move towards becoming an increasingly digital society, the government needs to step up and lead a major digital inclusion effort, while protecting offline access to essential services for those who are not digitally savvy.

This dual approach is crucial: otherwise, we will leave millions of older people cut off from essential services which they depend on, including banking and the NHS.

Age UK's analysis finds that in England, among the over-65s:

- 15 per cent (around 1.6 million) are fully digitally included
- 47 per cent (5.2 million) are partially digitally included

- 25 per cent (2.7 million) are partially digitally excluded

- 13 per cent (1.4 million) are digitally excluded.

Only the 1.6 million digitally included older people are using online technology routinely at home as well as while out and about, and for the tasks often viewed as the most challenging to do digitally – banking and managing their interactions with the NHS.

The 1.4 million digitally excluded group don't go online at all for various reasons including having insufficient skills or because they are worried about fraud. The Age UK report details how digital exclusion is increasingly holding back older people in many areas of daily life, including managing their money, engaging with the NHS, parking and paying for transport, and accessing council services.

Among the report's recommendations are that the government should oversee and ensure the development of a sustained national digital inclusion programme; that terrestrial broadcasters should not be allowed to shift to internet-only TV until the needs and skills of all viewers are accounted for; it should legislate to guarantee continued offline access to all essential services, and also legislate to protect access to face-to-face banking. You can find more details and gain access to the full report using [this link](#).

BRANCH NEWS



HARWICH Branch

On the 3rd September, Members of Harwich Branch joined Harwich Royal British Legion and Merchant Navy veterans mustered on Harwich Quay for the town's annual Merchant Navy Day Service of Remembrance in honour

of those sailors who were lost at sea in the Merchant Fleet during the two World Wars as well as in peacetime.

The Parade Marshal was S/M President Bob Bliss, who piped the Still and then the Carry On for the two-minute silence.



SOUTHEND Branch

The Mayor of Southend-on-Sea City Council, Cllr Tony Cox, has invited residents to join him at the Southend Cenotaph on Sunday 8 November as the community comes together to remember all those who gave their lives in service to our country during the two World Wars and subsequent conflicts.

The parade will form up at Prittlewell Square at 10.30am, before marching to the Cliffs Cenotaph at 10.45am. The Service of Remembrance will

begin at 11.00am.

At the conclusion of the service, participants will reform and march back to Prittlewell Square, passing the Saluting Dais on Clifftown Parade where the Mayor, accompanied by civic dignitaries and distinguished guests, will take the salute.

Everyone is welcome to join them for this important act of remembrance and to pay tribute to all those who served and sacrificed.

Veterans who wish to attend the Act



of Remembrance and Service but are unable to participate in the Parade are warmly welcomed to attend. A reserved seating area will be available at the Cenotaph, together with dedicated wheelchair spaces for those who require them.

To reserve a seat or wheelchair space, please email adamtregoning@southend.gov.uk in advance so that suitable arrangements can be made. Please note that the Parade & Service will take place regardless of the weather conditions on the day.



FOLKESTONE Branch

Having enjoyed an afternoon tea in the heat of August, 16 members of Folkestone Branch marked the season's change from summer to autumn by enjoying a two-course Sunday lunch at Folkestone's Indoor Bowls Club



on the last Sunday in September.

The lunch took the form of a Carvery with plenty of food and was enjoyed by all. We would like to thank all the team at the Bowls Club and look forward to seeing them again for our Trafalgar Night Dinner.

WANSBECK Branch

On 13 September there was a get-together of veterans at Eden Camp in North Yorkshire, with people coming from all over to this annual event.

Wansbeck & District Branch had three members in attendance, along with former branch member Derek Degg, who now lives in Hull.

He was with a coach trip from Hull including a number of former Falkland veterans, complete with SAMA scarves, as well as other ex-Service personnel. The weather was fine and the event was well attended. After the coaches arrived there was plenty time to walk around the 40-plus huts, each with a different theme and containing memorabilia and reports and information about many different events and people.

At around 2pm the 75 or so veterans and 25-strong band and cadets formed up and marched through the camp onto the parade ground, past hundreds of spectators which included a good number of veterans who were unable to march.

The band from Yorkshire was followed by the more than 30 standards, followed by the veterans, followed by the cadets. The veterans were led by Maj Derek Fairbairn (Rtd) as has been the case for the past 37 years.

There were a number of dignitaries and special guests also watching, and part of the service included a laying-up of a standard of the 4th Battalion The Green Howards.

There were four wreaths laid on the makeshift cenotaph at one side of the parade ground, and the service included a two-minute silence and the Last Post and Reveille.

After the parade and service the procession moved back off the parade ground and was dismissed at the point from where they started – time for a drink and a chat to old and new



friends before retiring to the waiting transportation back home.

The camp itself, which is open most of the year, was built in 1942 by German and Italian POWs who were interned there until the end of World War 2.

It has a variety of events throughout the year, for the schools and visitors alike.

A large number of military vehicles and guns and artefacts are on display throughout the camp – when you first arrive at the camp there are several large guns and two aircraft (a Spitfire and a Hurricane) on display at the reception area.

At both ends of the parade ground there tanks and armoured vehicles on display, and at one end of the parade ground there is an area which includes a bar and seats, where a lady sings military or wartime-type songs, next to a small arms display.

Also on the camp there is a church area and a mini cinema and a music hall,

souvenir shop, and a NAAFI where you can get cooked meals and refreshment.

Another area displays a variety of medals, and in some cases who they were presented to and why. Near the parade ground there is an adventure playground which includes an assault-type course for children.

At points around the camp there were displays stands from charity organisations.

Regular visitors noted that some of the display models in the huts have been modified and updated to improve the feel and atmosphere they are intended to create – a big improvement and well worth a visit by those who have not been. At around 4pm the Wansbeck group and other busloads began to depart.

Pictured above are Alan Burgess (SAMA), Derek Degg (SAMA), Keith Thompson (SAMA), another Keith (SAMA) and Derek Wilkinson (RNA Wansbeck Branch Secretary) (SAMA).

AREA 6

Area 6 members attended the annual Armed Forces Fair at the town of March, Cambridgeshire towards the end of August.

The shipmates were located in the veterans' enclosure, right alongside two working aero engines which were regularly fired up, making conversation almost impossible!

There was a Royal Navy catering van dispensing free scrum and an RN Submarines careers detachment from Rosyth, with Lt Cdr 'Speedy' Steedman.

S/M David Hawker, from Rushden Branch, gave the Area's takings a useful boost by sketching members of the public alongside the RNA gazebo (see right). It was a huge event, with many exhibits and stalls covering a large park in the centre of March, and it was very well-attended.

Shipmates were delighted to represent the RNA at such a prestigious event and meet other veterans, serving personnel and cadets.

The event concluded with an impressive parade and Drum Head Service.



WEYMOUTH and PORTLAND FAAA Branch

Almost 100 members and guests of the Fleet Air Arm Association's Weymouth and Portland Branch raised more than £5,000 for Weldmar Hospicecare at their annual Black Tot Night on Friday 7 August, held at Weymouth Working Mens Club.

The money was handed to the hospice five days later, on 12 August. When Standard Bearer Jeff 'Ted' Edwards handed the money over, the Weldmar team were delighted, and remarked that the branch must have had a very successful night.

The evening marked Black Tot Day, 31 July 1970, when the Royal Navy issued its last daily rum ration after more than three centuries.

It is now the branch's main fundraiser of the year.

An auction and raffle of donated prizes raised more than £5,000.

The top lot, a one-of-a-kind Fleet Air Arm Association watch donated by

Dorset firm Elliot Brown Watches, sold for £1,200.

Last year's event raised £500. This year's total is ten times that.

New members are always welcome in the Branch.

Contact Ian Tate, Branch Secretary, at faaa.wpsecretary@outlook.com



PURLEY Branch

Purley Branch certainly picked a scorcher of a day to hold their annual BBQ - phew, was it hot! It was very well attended, with much fun and laughter. In addition to the usual offer of barbecue fare and fortifying drinks, there were super-effective cooling towels (as recommended in a recent Semaphore Circular for keeping cool), cold and refreshing drinks with lots of ice and fans shared around. Unbelievably, the shipmates who seemed least affected by the heat were two of Purley Branch's most senior (but youthful at heart) members, only 102 and 93 years young - they'd obviously experienced high temperatures in their worldly travels and took it in their stride. As always preparing, catering and hosting about 45 members and guests was a team effort, with long-standing friends of Purley Branch offering stalwart support, proving that's what the RNA is all about. Purley Branch were fortunate to have the lovely S/M Nigel Huxtable chatting to members and taking some memorable photographs once again, a few of which are featured here. After 17 years, mostly blessed with lovely weather, we have decided to do something different but hopefully as much fun next year. Watch this space!



Jean Maynard, S/M Glenn Jack aka Jacko and June Lusty



S/M Liam Troy and Des Maynard



S/M Anne Macleod-Carey



S/M Jim Lyons



(Above) S/M Pat Cannon and Special Birthday S/M Peter Bowen with Pussers gift

(Left) S/M John Hailey

OBITUARIES



S/M ANTHONY (TONY) TANNER

It is with profound sorrow that his family must share news of the passing of their dear husband, father and grandfather, Tony Tanner.

After a full, busy and joyous 78 years of life, Tony passed away peacefully at home on 31 August surrounded by the everlasting love of his doting family. Tony's funeral and celebration of life was being held today – Friday 2 October – at Telford Crematorium followed by a celebration of his life at the Anstice, Madeley.

Donations to The Fire Fighters Charity and The Severn Hospice will be gratefully received. Both of these charities were close to Tony's heart.

S/M DEREK COOPER

S/M Derek Cooper passed away on 28 August at the age of 98.

Derek had been bed-bound for at least the past two years, and life became difficult for him.

He was, however, always interested and proud of the Royal Navy, having passed through the ranks, but was enrolled on a short-service commission in 1967 which he completed in 1976 as Lieutenant.

He did not take part in many social or other events in the past few years but read your RNA news publications with interest, while he could.

He was certainly very proud of his commission in the Royal Navy, which he always told any visitors about until the end.



S/M CHRISTOPHER (CHRIS) WHITEHOUSE

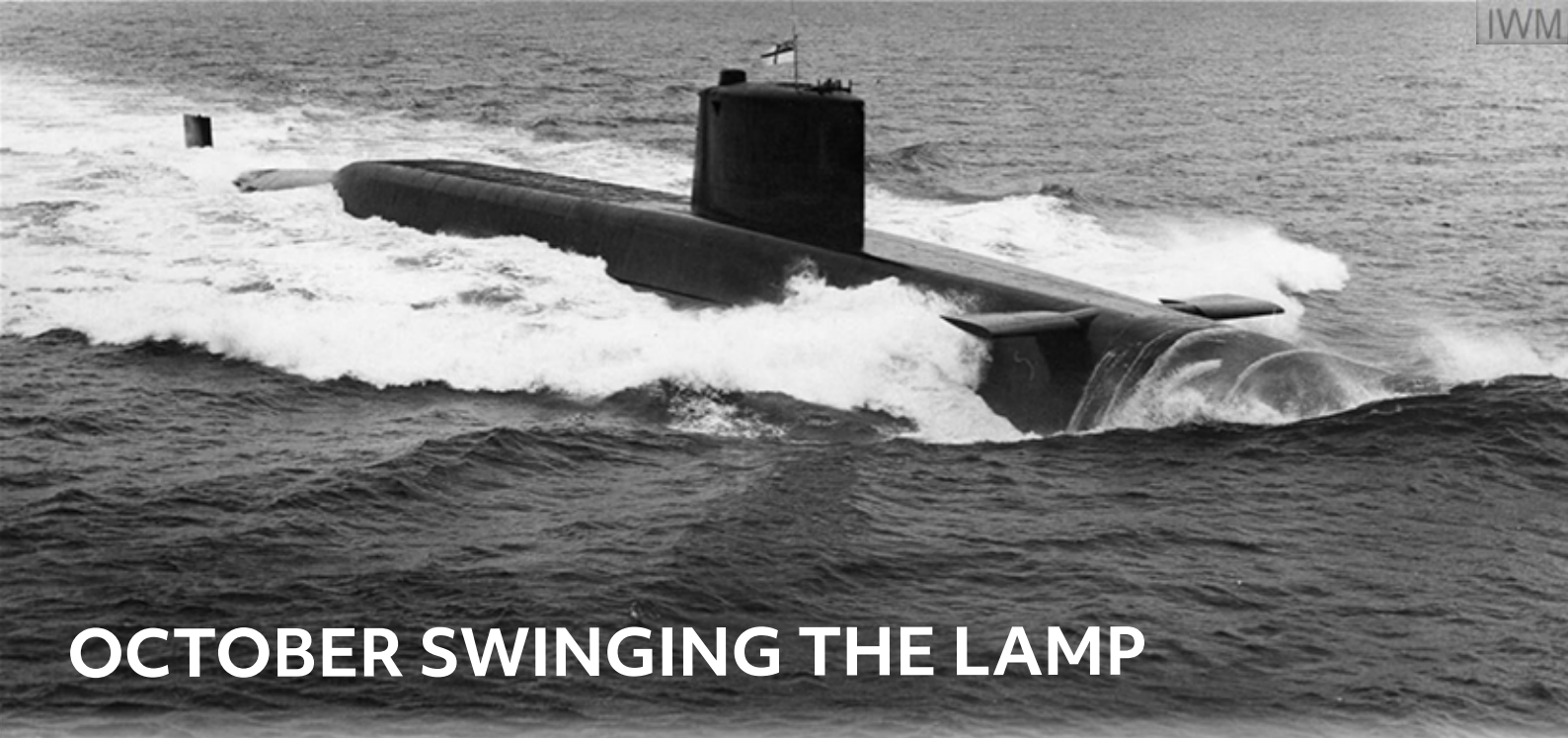
Chris joined HMS Ganges in September 1958 at the age of 15. He served for 35 years, retiring as a Lieutenant Commander Marine Engineer Officer, in February 1994.

The many ships and establishments he served on are HMS Raleigh, Fisgard, Caledonia, Torquay, Corunna, Chichester, Russell, Excellent, Eagle, Sultan, Whitby, Rothesay, Rooke, Centurion, Dido, Diligence, and Pyestock.

He was a member of Welshpool Branch, and recently Tewkesbury Branch.

He served as Hon Sec for Area 7 for many years and was awarded a Life Membership. Chris crossed the bar suddenly on 14 September in Oaks Care Home in Newtown, Powys, at the age of 83. May he find safe anchorage".

Pictured is HMS Whitby at sea in 1970 – Image from the Imperial War Museum collection © Crown copyright reproduced under delegated authority from The Keeper of Public Records. Image: IWM (HU 130048)



OCTOBER SWINGING THE LAMP

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

A ceremony on a cold, windswept jetty in Cumbria on 2 October 1967 marked a pivotal moment in the defence of the UK.

That ceremony at the Vickers shipyard in Barrow-in-Furness celebrated the commissioning of submarine HMS Resolution, and as VIPs and guests looked on the responsibility for the British nuclear deterrent was passing from the RAF to the Royal Navy, where it has remained for the subsequent 59 years.

Through the 1950s the burden of the UK deterrent was shouldered by the RAF's V-bomber force, but it became increasingly clear that air-launched nuclear weapons had no future as they were too vulnerable to pre-emptive nuclear strikes, counter-attacks and increasingly effective air defence systems.

The Royal Navy had been putting forward its own case since World War 2, but the technology for submarine- or ship-launched missiles did not then exist, and the best bet seemed to be a free-fall nuclear bomb delivered by carrier-based aircraft.

That line of thinking yielded the excellent Blackburn Buccaneer, a much-loved low-level nuclear-capable strike aircraft of almost mythical abilities, not the least of which was its stability at high speeds at levels down to 100ft.

By the time it entered service with the Royal Navy in early 1963 the nuclear bomb/missile role was on borrowed time – the British Polaris programme had been announced less than a month before the aircraft first flew operationally, and the American version had become operational in 1960. The American-designed and built Polaris intercontinental ballistic missile would deliver British-designed and built nuclear warheads thousands of miles from submerged submarines that could hide in the vast expanses of the world's oceans.

And the first of four Royal Navy delivery platforms was HMS Resolution, an 8,400-ton boat with two alternating

crews – 'port' and 'starboard' – of 143.

She was ordered on 21 May 1963 and her keel was laid the following February. Launched on 15 September 1966, she began sea trials eight months later.

After she was commissioned her test programme continued, culminating in the firing of her first Polaris missile on 15 February 1968.

With all systems deemed ready, Resolution began her first deterrent patrol on 14 June 1968, just over five years from the date he was ordered.

And so began the British CASD programme – Continuous At-Sea Deterrent, which has continued unbroken with at least one nuclear-armed ballistic missile submarine patrolling the seas undetected at all times.

Their purpose is to preserve peace, prevent coercion, and deter aggression.

The UK's nuclear deterrent works every hour of every day to guarantee our safety and that of our NATO Allies, with our adversaries knowing that any benefit they may gain from attacking us will be outweighed by the consequences for them.

Resolution completed 69 patrols before she was withdrawn from service, and she was officially decommissioned on 22 October 1994, with her two remaining sisters following her in rapid order (HMS Renown on 24 February 1996 and HMS Repulse on 28 August the same year; HMS Revenge had already bowed out in May 1992).

The four (a fifth, HMS Ramillies, never got off the drawing board) were replaced by the Vanguard-class quartet in the mid-1990s and these submarines still carry out CASD patrols to this day.

A new class of submarine – the Dreadnoughts – will enter service in the early 2030s.

These 17,000-ton boats, slightly bigger than the Vanguards, will be built in Barrow-in-Furness.

The submarines have already been named – HMS Dreadnought, HMS Valiant, HMS Warspite and HMS King George VI

Pictured is HMS Resolution on sea trials in the Atlantic in September 1967 © Crown copyright reproduced under delegated authority from The Keeper of Public Records. Image: IWM (A 35105)

For more events and actions on dates in October 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

3 Oct	RNA Uckers World Championships, Royal Maritime Hotel, Portsmouth
8 Nov	Remembrance Sunday
14 Nov	Area 5 Quarterly Meeting
16 Jan 2027	Area 4 AGM, to be hosted by Dorchester Branch
13 Feb 2027	Area 5 Quarterly Meeting
1 May 2027	Army v Navy rugby matches, Twickenham
4-6 June 2027	RNA National Conference, Durham
19 Sept 2027	Naval Associations Biennial Parade, London
16-18 June 2028	RNA National Conference, Plymouth

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



www.royal-naval-association.co.uk



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

■ Please check with the relevant organisation for full details of each offer and any terms and conditions



ROYAL NAVY AND ROYAL MARINES WIDOWED ASSOCIATION

The Royal Navy and Royal Marines Widowed Association was formed in 2008 when a small group of widows set up the Association to support others, with the aim of bringing friendship, support, guidance and comfort to those who have experienced bereavement.

We enjoy the invaluable support of a fellow widow or widower who understands the nuances of Royal Navy, Royal Marines or Royal Fleet Auxiliary life, has endured loss and is happy to give their time to help others through challenges and dark days.

Friendship and support are fundamental to this group

Our members range in age from their 20's through to their 90's, each with a different story to share. There is no easy answer to the grief bereavement brings, there is no timescale and each of us will take a different path on the journey. We would like to extend the support of the Royal Navy and Royal Marines Widowed Association to you and offer the following benefits:

- Support and friendship to those bereaved spouses and long-term partners of both serving and former Royal Navy, Royal Marine and Royal Fleet Auxiliary personnel and to any veteran who has been bereaved.
- Opportunities for social interaction between members through face-to-face events and social media platforms.
- Representation of the Naval Service bereaved community at meetings of related boards and organisations that support that community and to work closely with the Ministry of Defence and the Naval Service to ensure that the service provided to the military bereaved is compassionate, professional and appropriate.

"The Royal Navy and Royal Marines Widowed Association has given me something I didn't know I needed – connection. It linked me to others that were also trying to work out if we would ever smile again"

The Association is totally fee-free and if you would like more information on how to join, please visit our web site at
www.rnrmwidows.org

Or contact us at
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07462 376850

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