

# SEMAPHORE CIRCULAR



Image by S/M Nigel Huxtable

## ➤ SHIPMATES HONOUR THE FALLEN

Three World War 2 veterans finally got the opportunity to join the marchers at the Cenotaph in London, thanks to the RNA. The three joined countless other RNA branches and members who paid their respects at ceremonies across the world over the Remembrance period. With the RNA in London were William Jones, aged 99, Donald Macangus, 99, and Kenneth MacNaughton, 100, who all served in the Royal Navy and

clearly recall their experiences of war. The men were all grateful to make the pilgrimage to Whitehall as none of them had ever attended the Cenotaph at Remembrance before. Bill Jones, from Staines, served in the Pacific with HMS Nabaron, an airfield on Ponam Island, one of the Admiralty Islands. Bill recalled: "This wasn't exactly a desert island paradise. Almost on the Equator, it was very hot and humid, the mosquitoes

carried malaria, and a small cut from the coral could end up as a sore that never seemed to heal. "You could swim off the small beach in a lagoon but it was full of black and white venomous sea snakes. For most of the time we were there we had no fresh fruit or vegetables and lived off tinned and dehydrated food. Also, there was no fresh water on the island so drinking water had to be shipped in..." Donald Macangus, from Lincoln,

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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 – 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 10 January 2025. Notes for Branch officers will be published on Friday 13 December. There will be no Semaphore Shorts this month because of the Christmas holidays. Please note Central Office will be closed from Monday 16 December until Friday 3 January 2025 inclusive – we will re-open for business on Monday 6 January.**





served in motor torpedo boats (MTBs) in the Mediterranean and Adriatic.

He was 19 years old when his MTB struck a mine and sank in March 1945 – the vessel split in two and half of the crew of 30 were killed, many of them a similar age to Donald, who had to swim through patches of burning fuel on the surface of the sea to escape.

Donald attended the Remembrance parade with his son, who was a Royal Marine, his daughter-in-law, who was a Wren, and his granddaughter. Ken Macnaughton, from Harrow, volunteered for the Royal Navy in 1942 as soon as he turned 18, and served on the gruelling and dangerous Arctic Convoys. Ken said: “The Arctic Ocean was often incredibly rough and many of us suffered severe seasickness. I always made sure I found some bread to help stop me from being sick.”

All three sailors intend to return to the Cenotaph next year, with the help of the RNA, who has a veteran co-ordinator to enable these veterans to attend.

If you would like to march with the Association in London in 2025, be you a working-age veteran or a tad older, please email [ams@rnassoc.org](mailto:ams@rnassoc.org) to register your interest at any time, and feel free



to enquire for family or friends. RNA General Secretary Bill Oliphant said: “We are so very proud to enable these World War 2 veterans to march with us this year. If any former member of our Naval Forces wishes to attend the Cenotaph with us next year, please do get in touch and we will be delighted to assist.

“We would particularly like to thank Poppy Cabs, who assisted with transport, and the Royal British Legion, who organise the march and have been particularly accommodating to

our older veterans.” Members of the RNA attended ceremonies large and small, national, provincial and purely local, to honour those who served their country and paid the ultimate sacrifice, and we feature a number of those ceremonies in the following pages. But it is worth noting that shipmates also pay tribute to their fallen predecessors, and those who served with them, at anniversary ceremonies and special occasions throughout the year, not just in November.

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Six members (and their wives) from **Plymouth Branch** were able to travel to London and proudly march at the Cenotaph this year, also attending the Festival of Remembrance at the Royal Albert Hall. Pictured above, left to right, are Plymouth shipmates Keith Elliot, Charles Brunel and Les Yeoman.



**Harwich Branch**, in association with Harwich Royal British Legion, Merchant Navy and Trinity House standard bearers and members, attended the three memorials in the Harwich area, starting with the Merchant Navy Memorial at 1000, the Minesweepers Memorial at 1030, and finally the Great War Memorial at Upper Dovercourt at 1100. Chloe Jay, a member of the Tendring Brass Band, played the Last Post and Reveille at each memorial. S/M Bob Bliss, President of Harwich Branch, was Parade Marshall for the occasion. Amongst the many tributes laid at these monuments were wreaths placed by the Deputy Lord Lt of Essex, Nigel Spencer, and MP for Harwich Bernard Jenkens. At 1500 all mustered again at St Nicholas Church for the annual Service of Remembrance, hosted by Harwich RBL.



Personnel at **HMS Collingwood** attended a Service of Remembrance at the Fareham training establishment.

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Members of **Isle of Wight Branch** went up to London for the Remembrance weekend and attended various events. Branch Chairman S/M Ron Boynton, Treasurer S/M Faye Crawley and S/Ms Shaun and Sandra Greenwood visited St Paul's Cathedral on the Friday afternoon, taking time to view Admiral Lord Nelson's tomb, the Falklands War Remembrance Plaque and many other relevant pieces. Saturday started off with a visit to Westminster Abbey to pay respects at the Tomb of the Unknown Warrior and spending some time looking at associated artefacts and writings, after which they headed to the Royal Albert Hall for the matinee of the Festival of Remembrance, where they had a chance meeting with RNA National Standard Bearer Steve Champion. S/M's Ron and Shaun marched with the RNA Division on the Sunday parade to the Cenotaph, while the Branch's very own Arctic Convoy survivor, S/M Alec Penstone, was also in the parade, along with S/M Jay Sowerby, who marched with the **Association of Royal Yachtsmen**. Meanwhile, more locally, Branch



members attended the Remembrance Service at the old Town Hall in Ryde, with Standard Bearer S/M Martin Scholes leading the way. Other members attended services in towns and villages across the Island.



The laying of poppy crosses on Commonwealth war graves is an important part of the Remembrance time of year. It is a tradition that **West Lothian Branch** have tried to do every year, laying crosses on Commonwealth graves in the half of West Lothian they cover, including Bathgate and South Queensferry – the Royal British Legion Livingston covers the other half. After a

Herculean effort the branch managed to raise £225 towards the purchase of the 258 poppy crosses needed, the rest being made up from branch funds – however, the price of crosses is now £3 each, which might not be sustainable for such a small branch in future years. There is hope, though, as the Sea Cadets at TS Lochinvar and RBL Bathgate will look at helping the

branch to raise the money required next year to enable them to keep this part of Remembrance going. A special thanks to Meg Stenhouse, who made up the crosses with the names and information on each person, and a map of the cemeteries. The crosses were laid by branch members, and thanks to the Sea Cadets who laid the crosses in South Queensferry.

**Although his Branch, Launceston, did not parade, S/M Philip Friend was in attendance at Remembrance as part of Okehampton Armed Forces Veterans Breakfast Club. Two Launceston Branch shipmates are members of the club, but Philip was the only one marching. He is pictured far right of the image holding one of the two wreaths – Philip's was laid on behalf of Devon's SSAFA, the Armed Forces charity.**



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# The John Wallace Linton



Shipmates from **City of Newport Branch** were joined on the city's Remembrance Sunday parade by the ship's company from HMS Severn, currently undergoing refit in Falmouth. Following the ceremony, matelots old and new enjoyed the Chairman's hospitality in the pub named after the town's only Victoria Cross recipient – Lt Cdr John Wallace Linton VC DSO DSC, Commanding Officer of the submarine HMS Turbulent, which was lost on patrol with all hands in 1943 in the Mediterranean. The Senior Service also proved popular with Army and RAF veterans, who were eager to stand them a few wets...



**South Wales RNA members pictured over the Remembrance period**

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The spectacle of a parade of standards all carried by Royal Naval veterans was led by the Torrevieja Pipes and Drums on their parade to and from the Remembrance Day service at the Capilla de las Mil Palmeras (Church of a Thousand Palms) in Mil Palmeras.

While UK focus of Remembrance at the Cenotaph on Whitehall is on the contribution of British and Commonwealth military and civilian Servicemen and women involved in the two World Wars and later conflicts, at the southern end of the Costa Blanca and the Mar Menor in Spain, the previous Mil Palmeras Remembrance Day coordinators, British Army Veteran Kevin Reardon and team members Jean Heald & Eddie Coleman have been supporting the **Torrevieja Branch**, covering the Alicante to Cartagena area, to ensure that the same high standards are maintained this year.

Once again, the tiny Catholic church was brimming, with most of the 500 congregation of veterans and members of the public outside, using the large display screen and sound system provided by the Pila de la Horadada Ayuntamiento, allowing them to join the Remembrance Service led by Pastor Keith Brown, of the Hope Christian Fellowship Church in La Marina.

The event was a particularly sombre and moving affair as, together with Jose Maria, the Mayor of Pilar de la Horadada, his councillors from all political parties, many Spanish families, and the British Vice Consul from Alicante, Sara Munsterhjelm, the community was able to come together as one, in its mutual sorrow and respect for all those who made sacrifices in order to provide us a life without tyranny.

Lessons and readings were delivered in Spanish by the Mayor, Jose Maria and Francisca Samper, and in English by Maureen Jenkins, RN veterans Amanda Clancy, Nicola Loudon and Tony Jenkins, and RAF veteran Walter Shatford. Cindy Fitzpatrick gave a particularly moving vocal rendition of Hallelujah, and the Last Post and Reveille were played by the Costa Blanca's premier bugler, Ian Gibson. A veteran Welsh Guards Pipe, Maj Brian Day, played the lament, Hector the Hero and the Costa Blanca International Concert Band, led by Musical Director Jeremy Davies, provided musical



accompaniment to hymns. This year's offertory was divided between the charities for Veterans and Pilar de la Horadada Ayuntamiento support of the Valencia DANA. Sisters Angelina and Leticia Bergmann carried the peace candle to the altar, after which they recited the Children's Citation for Peace in English and Spanish. The service concluded with the National Anthems of Spain and the UK, after which the ceremony

moved out to the International Garden of Remembrance, All the standards carried by RN veterans, Bryan Dalton, Nicola Loudon, Tom Paterson, Danny Kay & Steve Hemingfield and while on parade around the Garden of remembrance for the laying of wreaths and crosses, once again 'dipped standards' for a minute's silence, but this time as a mark of respect to all those that had 'crossed the bar' during the recent Valencian DANA.

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**Christchurch Branch**

President S/M Rick Squibb laid a wreath at the Naval Service Memorial at the National Memorial Arboretum, Alrewas, also placing crosses in memory of those recently crossed the bar. Locally in Christchurch the Branch standard was paraded by Standard Bearer S/M Ian Prescott. The parade assembled at Christchurch Priory. Branch Chairman S/M Cliff Espin laid a wreath in the Garden of Remembrance. Elsewhere in Christchurch, S/M Christine Payne laid a wreath at the Purwell war memorial ( pictured right), while S/M Squibb laid a wreath at Christchurch Memorial Stone on Armistice Day itself.



Shipmates from **Caerphilly Branch** attended the Wales Festival of Remembrance (pictured above), and were also prominent at Remembrance weekend ceremonies in South Wales (pictured below).

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**Norwich Branch** shipmates joined serving personnel, other veterans and standards at Carrow Road for pre-match Remembrance observance and to celebrate Norwich City Community Hero, S/M John Kett (pictured above right). John was nominated for his selfless commitment to caring for others evident through his representation of the Royal Naval Association at parades, memorials, funerals and other events across Norwich and the surrounding area. John has successfully organised many key social events for veterans, most

of whom he has supported in some way over the years. The branch is extremely proud of John. Our shipmates attended Remembrance services across Norfolk and at the Cenotaph. In Norwich the branch were well represented at Norwich War Memorial and for the parade through the city to Norwich Cathedral where some of our shipmates had a first look at our new memorial bench (below left).



The Remembrance Sunday Parade and Service at Inverkeithing was a great success, with members of the **Rosyth and West Fife Branch** supported by a Royal Navy contingent, Sea Cadets and Royal Marines Cadets from TS Fife in HMS Caledonia, Rosyth Army Cadets and the Emergency Services, led by the Fife Constabulary who joined the Parade, the Fordell Scouts and Inverkeithing Scouts, and the local Masonic Lodge. Shipmates were also joined by a large number of the local residents. A huge BZ to all who turned up, and especially the youth organisations, who were resplendent in their best uniforms. Very smart! Last year there was some confusion in the church with the standards, so to get it right

this year, the verger had all standard bearers muster in the church earlier. The parade was led by the Comrie Community Pipe Band, and Pipe Major Bill Davidson. The parade marched through the town to the Garden of Remembrance, where the standard bearers lined the approach to the War Memorial. The Memorial ceremony was led by the Branch Pastor, Rev Ewan Ritchie, followed by a wreath laying ceremony for those organisations attending. The last post was played by Branch bugler Mike and the lament played by their piper. This was followed by a short church



service, and the formalities for the day were concluded with a march past through the High Street of Inverkeithing, with the Deputy Lord Lieutenant taking the salute.

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Members of the **Military Wives Choirs (MWC)** were delighted to be at Stowe Gardens, amidst the 1,475 silhouettes (pictured right), as part of the For Your Tomorrow art installation, remembering those Servicemen and two female nurses who gave their lives on D-Day. They felt it was an honour to be part of the MWC choirs, standing shoulder to shoulder, at the Sunset Ceremony for the live première of 'November Sunday', the new recording for His Majesty the King – a poignant, historic moment in the life of the MWC charity, which empowers women impacted by their military connection to sing, share and support one another. The single, composed by John McClaren, is a lullaby, inspired by the King's service to the nation. It is a joyous celebration which reflects on the chilly, foggy, London night when the future King was born to his beloved mother in post-war Britain. Queen Elizabeth II, of course, served in the Armed Forces and was herself a military wife. On the single you can hear 100 ladies from MWC choirs across the Forces World, in the UK and overseas, conducted by their Artistic Director Hilary Davan Wetton, with the Band of the Household Cavalry, See [www.novembersunday.co.uk](http://www.novembersunday.co.uk) and [www.militarywiveschoirs.org](http://www.militarywiveschoirs.org) for more details of the recording and the MWC organisation.



**Wansbeck Branch** members attended the Submariners Remembrance Service at Blyth and a wreath was laid by Branch Secretary S/M Derek Wilkinson at the Tiptoe Memorial Park outside St Mary's Church in Blyth. There was a good turnout for the parade and service, as usual, with more than 200 in attendance and 19 wreaths laid. A six-piece band and two buglers took part, with eight standards on parade. Among those laying wreaths were the Deputy Lord Lieutenant and the Mayor and Deputy Mayor of Blyth, followed by representatives from the Royal Navy, Army, RAF, and a large number of Submariners from across the country. Refreshments were laid on at the High Street Club nearby, and a very good raffle raised £360. Shipmates also turned out in force for the Blyth Remembrance Parade and Service the following week, with 400-500 people in attendance. More than 40 wreaths were laid by representatives from various organisations, including the Deputy Lord Lieutenant of Northumberland, the Lord Mayor of Blyth, the local MP. There were eight standards on parade and the band including a bugler and a lone piper who played a lament as wreaths were laid.

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It was a busy week of Remembrance events for **Portsea and Portsmouth Branch**, with members making sure the Association was well-represented. Standard Bearer S/M Clive Sutton is pictured with other Branch members and other veterans at Fratton Park, home of Portsmouth Football Club (above right), while Branch Chairman S/M Tom Frank laid a wreath at Portsmouth Guildhall (below). S/M George Mitchell is pictured (right) at Portsmouth War Memorial on Southsea Common, while S/M Richie Farman, attending ceremonies in London, also got the chance to audition as an EastEnders stunt double for Grant Mitchell (aka actor Ross Kemp), who was also at Horseguards Parade.

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**Tyne Branch** shipmates attended and laid wreaths at a number Remembrance and Armistice Day Services across Tyneside and beyond over the Remembrance period.

Commencing with the North-East Submariners Remembrance Sunday (the week prior to national Remembrance Sunday) at the Tiptoe Anchor in Blyth, shipmates from Tyne, **Sunderland** and **Wansbeck and District** Branches supported the respective branches of the Submariners Association. Well attended by the general public, various veterans associations, a number of serving submariners and a Deputy Lieutenant of Northumberland with other civic guests, this special service increases in its significance to the community of Blyth, which was a prominent submarine base in World War 2. Remembrance Sunday itself saw Tyne shipmates attend services in Newcastle-upon-Tyne, North Shields, Whitley Bay, Gateshead, Consett and Hebburn amongst others, and on Armistice Day itself, they attended services at the post-1945 Jigsaw Memorial in Killingworth and the Merchant Navy Memorial in South Shields. All services were very well-attended by the veterans community and the general public. Branch members said it is pleasing to see the increase in interest and knowledge about the importance of Remembrance in younger generations, and great to meet up with the veteran community, renewing and building up mutual links to work together.





## ➤ RNA CONTINUES TO FOCUS ON RUGBY

Last month the RNA reinforced its love of rugby by supporting the UKAF Women's team. Pictured (right) is Player of the Match, Rosie Tidball, receiving her prize from RNA General Secretary Bill Oliphant, while Royal Navy player Jasmine Abel was presented with her first cap.

"It was great to support UKAF Women's rugby at Portsmouth today with six of the squad from the RN," said Bill.

"They came a very close second place, but an amazing effort throughout.

"The RNA provided a small token to the player of the match, but today there's no doubting, comradeship was the winner!"

At the end of the month the RNA was also represented at the brilliant Army v Navy U23s game at Aldershot, presenting the Player of the Match award to George Edson, who played superbly as the Navy won 19-6 to take the inter-Services title – and George has only just passed out of basic training. The RNA is following tri-Service rugby particularly closely

since it has been announced as Charity of the Match for the Army v Navy game at Twickenham on 3 May. If you would like to attend you can buy tickets which include access to the RNA's private bar here: [www.rnagizzet.co.uk](http://www.rnagizzet.co.uk) or email [engagement@rnassoc.org](mailto:engagement@rnassoc.org)

■ Kick off times have been confirmed for the big match on 3 May.

The Senior Men will kick off at 1400hrs, while the Senior Women will play at 1645hrs. With music from the Royal Marines Band Service and fun and games in the West Fan Village, this is billed as a day for all the family at the home of England Rugby.

Members of the RNA can claim a £5 discount on their match tickets for Army v Navy 2025 if they book through the RNA.

■ **Please note: the number of discounted RNA tickets is capped, and once they have gone tickets will only be available through normal sales channels, at full price, and will not be in the RNA section of the ground.**



## ➤ EASTBOURNE HELP VERA CELEBRATE 100TH BIRTHDAY

Like everyone else in the RNA family, Eastbourne branch is always ready and willing to help a fellow shipmate. So it was at the Lansdowne Hotel Eastbourne on Sunday 3 November when Eastbourne Branch President S/M John Kingwell was honoured to help Portsmouth Branch Life member Vera Brett celebrate her 100th birthday. Vera is a World War 2 veteran who, serving in the Wrens, helped in the development of radar-controlled gunnery at Eastney in Portsmouth. Vera is rightly very proud of her Naval roots. John gave a short speech, helped Vera cut her Naval themed birthday cake (pictured) and presented her with a letter from Capt William

Blackett of HMS Prince of Wales and a card from RNA General Secretary Bill Oliphant. Eastbourne RNA wish Vera a very Happy birthday.





## ➤ CONTACTS



<b>Central Office Contacts</b>	
For all contacts and general enquiries 023 9272 3747	<b>admin@rnassoc.org</b>
CEO/General Secretary	<b>ceo@rnassoc.org</b>
COS (Chief of Staff)	<b>cos@rnassoc.org</b>
Executive Assistant to the CEO	<b>ceo-ea@rnassoc.org</b>
Governance Support Officer	<b>gso@rnassoc.org</b>
Engagement	<b>engagement@rnassoc.org</b>
Plans Manager	<b>dcos@rnassoc.org</b>
Editorial Manager	<b>sce@rnassoc.org</b>
Semaphore Circular and Short	<b>comms@rnassoc.org</b>
Membership Manager	<b>ams@rnassoc.org</b>
Finance	<b>dams@rnassoc.org</b>
Head of Communications	<b>hoc@rnassoc.org</b>
RNA Communications Lead	<b>cml@rnassoc.org</b>
<b>National Advisors</b>	
National Branch Retention and Recruiting Advisor	<b>rna.brra@outlook.com</b>
National Welfare Advisor	<b>geoff@royalnavalassoc.com</b>
National Rules and Bye-Laws Advisor	<b>governancechair@royalnavalassoc.com</b>
National Ceremonial Advisor	<b>nca@royalnavalassoc.com</b>

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### Snail Mail – Postal Address

RNA Central Office,  
Lanyard House,  
Scott Road,  
HM Naval Base,  
Portsmouth  
Hants PO1 3LU



## ► CHAIRMAN'S CHAT

### Dear Shipmates,

Before I commence my column, I would like to pass on my heartfelt and sincere condolences to Shipmate Yvonne Crawford and family after suffering the loss of our former National Vice Chairman Shipmate Keith Crawford MBE, who has crossed the bar.

A huge loss to the RNA community, Keith was a superb Shipmate who served at all levels in our Association. He will be much missed.

I can't believe we are already in the month of December! November went too quickly, and my beloved Saints are still bottom of the league! (I know you are genuinely feeling empathy for your National Chairman...)

I joined the National President, General Secretary and 70 other Shipmates on Whitehall for the Cenotaph Remembrance Parade.

National President S/M Duncan placed a wreath on behalf the Association at the Cenotaph. The 'Whitehall 70' included three World War 2 veterans in wheelchairs leading the RNA Platoon.

A huge BZ to National Standard Bearer Steve Champion for stepping in at short notice to take up the role of Local Acting Parade Marshall – the alternative was Bill (!) but luckily he opted to push World War 2 veteran S/M Billy round in a wheelchair.

A special BZ goes to the 'Whitehall 70' for travelling from far and wide – Redruth and Edinburgh Branches to mention a couple. It would be fantastic to see everyone again next year – remember, you will need to register in June 2025 so you can attend.

Prior to the Remembrance Parade I attended, along with the General Secretary, the Garden of Remembrance event, organised by the Poppy Factory, which is held at Westminster Abbey.

For those of you unaware, the garden is adjacent to the Abbey and is divided up into small plots where a



small wooden cross dedicated to an individual can be placed.

I am so grateful to Sara Field for placing the RNA crosses in the RNA plot. Sara places a cross for all those Shipmates who have crossed the bar in the previous year. Please forward your special request to Sara at Central Office if you would like a special remembrance cross placed next year.

Finally, on Monday after the Whitehall parade I was honoured to attend the Armistice commemoration in HMS Nelson and then a small ceremony in the RNA Falklands Garden outside Central Office, which was attended by Central Office staff and members of the Association of Wrens.

Talking of parades, a key date for next year...

The RNA's Naval Associations Biennial Parade will be held on Sunday 14 September 2025. It is a key RNA75 event and it would be marvellous if we could have 1,000 shipmates marching (or matelot bimbling) in Whitehall.

For those shipmates who are unaware, this parade 'forms up' in King William Street and marches onto Whitehall with a small service being held around the Cenotaph, and then back into King William Street.

The parade is led by a Royal Marines Band, with the parade being reviewed by a senior RN Admiral. You'll be pleased to know it is all done and dusted inside 40 minutes. If you don't feel you could manage to march, it would be fantastic to support the shipmates from the pavements and cheer them on.

It is an amazing Naval community occasion with music, standards flying and RN/RNA platoons marching. So, shipmates, give it your consideration please. ☐

Finally, to finish on some really great news the Central Office Team has informed me that our Association is 22,000 strong – again, BZ!

Can I take this opportunity to wish shipmates a fabulous fun family festive season and good luck for our anniversary year 2025.

Best wishes

*Andy*





## ► FROM THE GENERAL SECRETARY

### Ahoy Shipmates!

So, the question is, have you got your Christmas present for your nearest and dearest yet? If not, I have the answer. Next week, we hope to be able to release, exclusively to RNA members, tickets for the Royal Naval Association-produced charity fundraising concert with the Fisherman's Friends folk group, the Band of the Royal Marines and the RNA choir. This will mark the high-water mark in our 75th anniversary year. Made famous through the movies of the same name, the one-off concert with the shanty group is timed to coincide with the 220th anniversary of the Battle of Trafalgar. It's in the Guildhall, Portsmouth, on 22 October next year. What's more, for a limited period, until the seats go on general release at £40 and £30 each, they will be sold to members only at a reduced rate of £30 and £25. Very special Guests of Honour have been invited, although we've yet to receive a response.

A bit sooner than that, we are still offering discounted tickets for the Army v Navy rugby match at Twickenham for our members – £5 off the face value of the ticket. Also, for the match on 3 May next spring, the RNA will have its own dedicated bar within the stadium which is wheelchair accessible. Two things to think about; firstly, get your partner to get you a ticket for Christmas, and as the date falls adjacent to the 80th anniversary of VE Day, if you have a World War 2 veteran in your Branch please contact us in Central Office and we'll do what we can to support him or her coming to watch the match. Remember, we have three wheelchair-capable minibuses available to support this task.

Well done to all those Branches and members who took part in Remembrance events last month – I think we did our fallen comrades proud throughout the length and breadth of the country. Thank you also for your contributions to this Circular recording



the event. On a personal basis, it was an immense pleasure and huge honour to push 99-year-old PO Billy Jones, who ended his war in the Pacific, past the Cenotaph on Remembrance Sunday. He was one of three World War 2 veterans who we were privileged to take to Whitehall, so thank you so much for allowing us that privilege.

Moving on, we are into the Christmas season and normally I would like to say that we are winding down for the festive season. However, planning for RNA75 is really ramping up and Central Office is still buzzing. It's going to be a great year for the Association – please come and be part of it! As well as the Army v Navy rugby match and the Fisherman's Friends charity fundraising concert, the Conference/Reunion in Portsmouth over

the weekend of 20-22 June is going to be a cracker! And start thinking now about the Naval Associations Parade on Whitehall on 14 September. Please reach out to our fellow associations, and let's get representation from as many associations as we can on the day. Again, a great event to get the World War 2 veterans out to in this VE/VJ 80 year.

Finally, can I add my regrets to those of our National Chairman with the loss of Shipmate Keith Crawford, Chairman of No 9 Area and long-time National Council Member. Keith was already a member of the RNA before I joined the RN! RIP Keith.

*Bill*







## ► THRIVING (AND STRIVING) TOGETHER

A hardy group of adventurers have completed the last element of the RNA's 2024 Thriving Together programme – a bracing walking weekend in the Lake District. Designed to foster comradeship and encourage shipmates to try something different, the Thriving Together programme has offered a range of activities over the past year and more, from challenging hikes to learning new skills or sports. And the Lake District walking weekend, in the last week of November, certainly fitted the bill in terms of the programme's aims, as reported by Central Office's Communications Lead, Sarah Bewley, who took part and acted as the administrator for the event. Sarah explained: "During this week's Thriving Together event one of our participants explained the 'Dash Theory'. "The Dash', a poem by Linda Ellis, encapsulates the essence of a person's life, emphasising

the significance of the dash on a tombstone between the date of birth and the date of death. "The poem serves as a reminder to live a purposeful life, filled with

kindness, love, and meaningful connections. And that is exactly what we did this weekend.

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"We made new friends, walked up a fell, explored caves, helped each other when we were struggling. "We laughed, cried, skinny-dipped at midnight, talked about our divorces, our families, our health issues. We got blisters and shared truly extraordinary dits. "We arrived as strangers and left as friends. All of us now understand that the other people on this

weekend know their story and will support them if they ever need it. "This is the Thriving Together programme – a peer support network, delivered by the Royal Naval Association, funded by the

Royal Navy and Royal Marines Charity, and loved by everyone who has had chance to enjoy one this year!" Look out for next year's programme, coming soon...





# ➤ ASSOCIATIONS ARE STRONGER TOGETHER

One of the first of the major RNA75 events in 2025, celebrating the 75th anniversary of the RNA, will be the CONA gathering in Portsmouth at the Princess Royal Gallery in Portsmouth Historic Dockyard on Friday 28 March. CONA – the Conference of Naval Associations – seeks to support all Naval associations, from the largest to the smallest, in sharing information and ensuring members get the most from their particular group.

It is not a membership organisation, but a loose collective of groups which have broadly common interests, and for whom shared information and support

would prove beneficial. Malcolm Little at RNA Central Office keeps a list of all such organisations who take part in this shared enterprise, but it is a case of the more, the merrier. Check if your association is already registered with Malcolm, or if it is not, contact him to get more details of how CONA could benefit you – one such example is joining the Naval Associations Biennial Parade on 14 September in London. Malcolm can be contacted at [dcos@rnassoc.org](mailto:dcos@rnassoc.org) or see the CONA page on the RNA website [here](#).

On that subject, HMS Dido Association's

membership is falling, and they are having difficulty mustering enough members to hold a meaningful reunion. Next year's event is planned for the weekend of 16 May at a trusted hotel in Torquay. Is there another association out there with a similar problem? If so, the Dido Association extends to you an invitation to join them for your reunion. All the planning work has been completed – a meet and greet reception on Friday evening, an outing on Saturday, formal dinner Saturday evening.

If you are interested please contact [admin@hms-dido.com](mailto:admin@hms-dido.com)

## PACK YOUR BAGS! WIN A WEEKEND IN PORTSMOUTH DB&B, CHAMPAGNE, CHOCOLATES AND HEALTH CLUB ACCESS



SEND YOUR GUESS AND TELEPHONE NUMBER TO  
[ENGAGEMENT@RNASSOC.ORG](mailto:ENGAGEMENT@RNASSOC.ORG) BY THE END OF DECEMBER.  
WINNER ANNOUNCED IN JAN

ONCE  
NAVY  
ALWAYS  
NAVY



# ➤ RNA WELFARE AND WELLBEING – PUTTING THE VOLUNTEERS FIRST

Over the past few months, the Welfare and Wellbeing structure of the Royal Naval Association has gone through some development, which has been led by the Welfare and Wellbeing Implementation Group (WWIG).

Members of the WWIG are shipmates from Branches and Areas, with experience in their own occupation or experience within the volunteer Welfare sector.

The group first met back in August of this year and have been working on all areas of the Welfare and Wellbeing development to ensure “we get it right” by keeping things simple.

The new Welfare and Wellbeing organisation is very much members-led and looks after the wellbeing of all volunteers to ensure that all shipmates receive the support they need.

Opinions and input of Branch Welfare and Wellbeing Officers (BWWOs) have been sought in selected areas

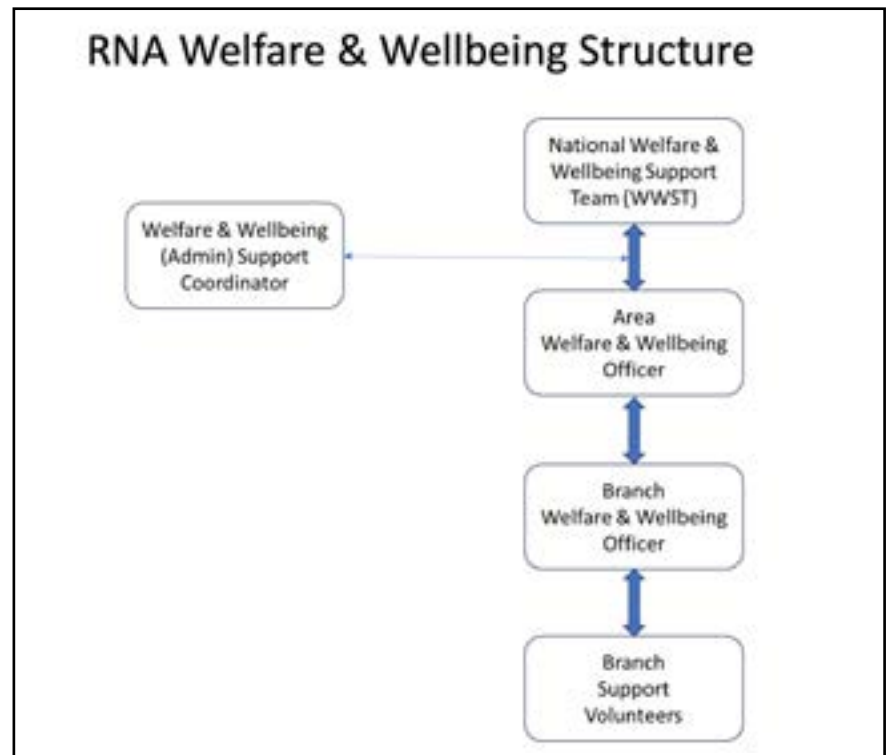
We, as an Association, have a duty of care to all volunteers, so it is important that the role descriptions are based on the understanding that we are not asking anyone to be ‘case workers’ or commit to a certain number of hours per week, but to ensure that we all know and understand our boundaries and expectations.

The future of Welfare and Wellbeing within the RNA now has a direction, and with all members looking out for their shipmates we can ensure that no one goes without help.

Training and support will be offered to all volunteers who undertake the roles within the structure.

This will include safeguarding and lone-worker training as well as General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) compliance. We would expect all shipmates who take on a role to have safeguarding training and DBS checks.

This would be carried out by the RNA, however if you already hold



these through your work, we will just need them verified and then they would be accepted, and your ID Card could be issued. We have comradeship at the heart of the new structure. Looking after the Welfare and Wellbeing of our oppos and training our volunteers is crucial so that we can recognise those who may require help to ensure that any signposting is in the best direction to obtain the best help. The new structure will take nothing away from Branch members just looking after their oppos – the roles offered are for those shipmates who would like to volunteer and offer a little more.

Present Branch Welfare Officers are already doing this. The launch of the new RNA Welfare and Wellbeing structure will start from this month and into January 2025, followed by training from February 2025. This will allow time to identify those requiring training and to allow us to offer the correct training.

The role descriptions will be available to view on the RNA website and will be contained within the Welfare and Wellbeing Volunteers handbook.

Training will be offered at Area levels, as well as online. We are so lucky that within the RNA organisation we have so much experience and talent. Some of you will have years of learned knowledge and experience, which we hope serves to enrich your sense of value coupled with a desire to share this with shipmates new to the many wellbeing roles through mentoring and guidance. Remember that support for each other is only a phone call or email away.

We would encourage all Branches and Areas to engage in this structure and, importantly, feed back their thoughts. We would ask that present BWWOs ensure their Branch Secretary has named them as BWWO on the RNA database. The new Welfare and Wellbeing central point of contact is with Central Office and is available currently on a part-time basis. The relevant email addresses are:

**Welfare and Wellbeing Support Coordinator** [wws@rnassoc.org](mailto:wws@rnassoc.org)  
**RNA Central officer – General enquiries** [admin@rnassoc.org](mailto:admin@rnassoc.org)  
 The telephone number 02392 723 747.



# ➤ CAROL SERVICE AND RNRMC RECEPTION SIGNAL START OF CHRISTMAS SEASON

The RNA was officially represented at the annual Admiralty Carol Service in London, attended by the First Sea Lord, Admiral Sir Ben Key, and members of the Navy Board. This event, at St Martin-in-the-Fields, Trafalgar Square, marks the official start of the festive season for the wider Naval family, with the lighting of the first Advent candle. Musical performances were provided by a brass quintet from the Royal Marines Band Portsmouth and the Chapel Choir of the Royal Hospital School. Lessons were read by Amanda Martin, MP for Portsmouth North, Andrew Jameson, CEO of the Royal Navy and Royal Marines Charity (RNRMC), and Dominic Hurdall, Partner at event sponsors Oaklin Consulting.

AB Shaneika McLean from HMS Queen Elizabeth and Royal Marine of the Year 2024, Cpl Ryan Brennan from 45 Cdo, read on behalf of the Royal Navy.

Following the service, a reception, sponsored by RNRMC, was held in the Crypt of the church, offering an opportunity for the First Sea Lord (pictured above) to highlight the significant impact of the RNRMC's work and to express gratitude to those present for their unwavering support of the charity's mission to assist sailors, marines, and their families for life, including



Picture courtesy of RNRMC

event sponsors Navy Leaders and Oaklin, marking Oaklin's

partnership with RNRMC through the Bridge Partnership scheme.

## ➤ TWICE THE REASON TO DONATE

**We remain forever indebted to those who serve – and have served – in the Royal Navy, Royal Marines and Royal Fleet Auxiliary. A donation this Christmas can help our Naval community – both serving and veterans – whether they served at sea, in the air, or on land, as well as their families. Every online donation to the RNRMC made at the link below will be DOUBLED – up to 12pm on 10 December. Donations will be doubled thanks to donors including The Reed Foundation who have agreed to match all donations until the RNRMC reaches their target of £56,000.**

**You can donate through this link: <https://bit.ly/4fX95nW>**

## ➤ UCKERS TOURNEY PLANNED

An RNA Scottish Area Uckers competition is being planned – but it needs support from branches north of the border.

It will take place over the weekend of the RNA Scottish Area AGM and 1st Quarterly Meeting 2025, which is being hosted by the City of Edinburgh Branch.

The competition will be on the evening of Friday 14 February, at the Social Gathering, at the Royal Navy & Royal Marines Club, Broughton Road, Edinburgh EH7 4EW.

This will be a Singles Competition, and organisers need at least eight participants.

Fancy your chances of being the RNA Scottish Area Uckers Champion, and then going on to represent at the National Competition? Get your name in, via your Branch Secretary to secure a place, to be with the Area Secretary by no later than the end of January.

Also, if anyone has an Uckers board that could be used on the night, please let Scottish Area Secretary S/M Karen Elliot know as soon as possible (she has one already!).

There are plans to have a few other activities on the night (mini quiz – possibly the annual Inter-Association, raffle, games, buffet), therefore, if Uckers isn't your thing, you'd still be very welcome to attend – Karen just needs names by no later than the end of January (for catering purposes).

Contact Karen at [kelliott250666@gmail.com](mailto:kelliott250666@gmail.com) to express an interest, or for further information.

## ➤ FEES DEADLINE

**The deadline to apply to a hardship fund over school fees is fast approaching. Following the decision by the government to implement VAT on school fees starting in January 2025, the Naval Children's Charity (NCC) identified that this may create unexpected financial strain for some families.**

**To assist those affected, the NCC, in partnership with Greenwich Hospital, established a hardship fund to provide financial support to eligible families. To be eligible, at least one parent must still be serving, and the child/children must be at a critical stage of their education or have additional needs. To confirm your eligibility, you will find a short form here, which will need to be completed. Once it is completed, you will be able to download the full application form.**

**The completed application form, along with the required documents, must be submitted to us by Friday 13 December.**



## ➤ SUPPORT FOR SERVICE CHILDREN

As part of the Naval Children's Charity (NCC) ongoing collaboration across all three Services to improve the outcomes of children and young people, the NCC provided funding for the SCIP Alliance to develop a set of 50 case studies in the Thriving Lives Toolkit Case Study Bank, a new tool aimed at assisting schools in better supporting Service children.

This initiative seeks to offer schools a collection of evidence-based examples of best practices to help in evaluating their progress by using the Thriving Lives Toolkit self-assessment.

The initial seven case studies are now accessible to schools nationwide, showcasing practical implementations of the seven principles of effective support in real school settings.

They represent a variety of primary and secondary schools in different phases of the self-assessment process – emerging, developing, and embedding – and cater to the unique needs of Service children across diverse school environments, ranging from those with only a few to those with many Service children.

The case study bank will serve as a searchable database, enabling school staff to learn from the experiences of others and apply valuable insights to their own contexts.

Each question within the Toolkit has been exemplified as part of this project, aiding schools in recognising successful practices within their own settings and identifying steps for enhancing support. Ultimately, a total of 50 case studies will be published, creating a comprehensive resource that will continue to support schools as they work with Service children and young people.

With education in mind, the UCAS website has a whole host of new information on there; young people from Year 9 can start looking at it rather than waiting until nearer the time they want to apply for university.

The website now includes:

- Career guides, industry guides and employer guides

- Taster courses
- Virtual work experience
- Apprenticeship opportunities

There are also teacher toolkits on there for Service children plus other cohorts, and schools have access to the UCAS Outreach Connection Services; however, next year this will be available on the hub for all. You'll find all the information [here](#).

The NCC are thrilled to announce that in 2025 they will celebrate the bicentenary of the Naval Children's Charity, marking 200 years of support to the children of Royal Navy, Royal Marines, and Royal Fleet Auxiliary families.

Over the past two centuries, the charity has evolved from their original orphanages to their delivery today, improving the wellbeing and resilience of Naval children, and they continue to make a meaningful difference in their lives.

This milestone reflects the charity's enduring commitment to helping families navigate the unique challenges of Naval life.

They will be celebrating throughout 2025, and plan on hosting a number of events and initiatives, and asking you to join them, support them, raise money for them and be part of their future.

Please keep your eyes on their website and social media channels to find out more – see [www.navalchildrenscharity.org.uk](http://www.navalchildrenscharity.org.uk)

## ➤ SING OUT IF YOU'D LIKE TO JOIN CHOIR

The RNA75 charity fundraising concert in October 2025 will feature singing group Fisherman's Friends, Royal Marines bandies – and possibly you... The concert, on 22 October at the Guildhall in Portsmouth, will be supported by the new RNA Choir.

If you would like to be a part of that choir please get in touch with the point of contact in your part of the country:

**Plymouth:** Jane Allen, [ejaneallen@btinternet.com](mailto:ejaneallen@btinternet.com);

**Portsmouth:** Jenny Frank, [Jenworking41@gmail.com](mailto:Jenworking41@gmail.com);

**Scotland:** Karen Elliot, [kelliot250666@gmail.com](mailto:kelliot250666@gmail.com)

Membership is open to all, and to all abilities – they are not concerned about balancing voices, but rather making sure they include everyone who wants to be. Singing is good for the soul, and it should be fun!

## ➤ STRIKE WHILE THE IRON IS HOT...

A 'Blacksmithing for Health' workshop for veterans, and people who have PTSD, is starting on 22 January (midday to 2pm) in Devonport and runs for six weeks, with the final session for this cohort being on 26th February.

The sessions, run by the Craft Workshop, are funded by the National Lottery and therefore completely free, but places are limited.

The workshops are designed to build confidence and community and support positive mental health.

Further courses are scheduled to run in March, April, June and August next year.

Anyone interested in joining the next group please email The Craft Workshop direct on [enquiries@thecraftworkshop.co.uk](mailto:enquiries@thecraftworkshop.co.uk)

## ➤ CHARITY SEEKS BOOK CLUB VOLUNTEERS

Reading Force is a tri-Service charity which is passionate about using books to bring Forces children and families closer together. Their shared reading initiative encourages families to read, talk, and scrapbook about a book, improving communication and enriching relationships with books and each other.

Reading Force welcomes veterans/ Reservists and their families as well as ex-Service families. Books can be posted to overseas locations using the

BFPO system.

The charity runs book clubs for adults and children – the junior age range is 8-11yrs and for 12-16/18yrs they have senior book clubs. The junior and senior book clubs must be held in a location such as a school, library, or community centre, and not a private residence.

Volunteer co-ordinators of children's book clubs must hold a recent Enhanced DBS/Disclosure Scotland/ AccessNI check.

Reading Force are looking for volunteers to run a book club with their support.

They have a great selection of books available for each age category and will send out three books to each member from this list. These books are free of charge for each book club member to keep.

See the Reading Force website [here](#) which gives more information along with the Reading Force contact.



## ➤ MINIBUSES ARE AN ASSET FOR ALL

The RNA has three minibuses, located in Plymouth, Manchester and Portsmouth, for use by shipmates.

The minibuses are a great asset to us all, and we are proud to offer this membership benefit. As you can appreciate, it costs a significant amount of money to keep all three minibuses on the road, and this year we have received a generous grant from the Seafarers' Charity, for which we are extremely grateful. We are also extremely grateful to our RNA volunteers who manage the minibuses regionally, including the bookings. To book a minibus, the contact details are:  
**Plymouth** – Les Yeoman -



**lesyeo3@gmail.com** – 07795 231397

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

**Portsmouth** – Sara Field – **ams@rnassoc.org** – 023 92 723747

For insurance purposes, there are certain criteria for driving the minibuses and these, along with additional details, can be found on our website at [www.royal-naval-association.co.uk/mini-bus-hire](http://www.royal-naval-association.co.uk/mini-bus-hire)

## ACTION IS PAUSED...

The Action Stations attraction in Portsmouth Historic Dockyard will be closing on 23 February 2025 as the site is prepared for a new Royal Marines Museum, due to open in mid-2026. The old Royal Marines Museum was located at Eastney Barracks on Southsea seafront until 2017, when the collection was put into storage until a new museum could be established.

During the closure period, alternative spaces will still be available for birthday parties and events. Contact the National Museum of the Royal Navy team on [specialevents@nmrn.org.uk](mailto:specialevents@nmrn.org.uk) to learn more about other venues.

## ➤ LISBON MARU MEMORIAL 'FINISHED SOON'

Following the unveiling of the Lisbon Maru Memorial at the National Memorial Arboretum in October 2021, Denise Wynne, the daughter of the late Dennis Morley, the last survivor of the Lisbon Maru, wrote to President Xi Jinping of China.

She explained her late father's wish to have a memorial erected in China to commemorate the courage of the fishermen of Zhoushan in rescuing hundreds of British POWs, and in so doing causing the Japanese to stop the slaughter and save hundreds more. Lisbon Maru was a Japanese cargo ship which on 1 October 1942 was transporting Allied prisoners of war from Hong Kong to Japan when it was torpedoed by American submarine USS Grouper, which was unaware of the ship's human cargo.

The ship sank and more than 800 British men died from drowning or being shot trying to escape; almost 650 POWs were picked up by Japanese ships, but nearly 400 were rescued by Chinese fishermen, although most of them were subsequently recaptured by the Japanese.

In August 2022 Denise received a reply from President Xi to the effect that such a memorial would be built. This letter was delivered personally by hand of the Chinese Ambassador, Zheng Zeguang, and this led to the development of personal relationships between relatives of the POWs on the Lisbon Maru and members of the Embassy, and more

recently also with the people of Zhoushan, including descendants of the fishermen who had taken part in the rescue in 1942.

Ambassador Zheng has now written to confirm that that the memorial will be finished soon, and that the official unveiling will take place next year. The Ambassador said: "I would like to share with you the good news that the memorial in Zhoushan in remembrance

of the fishermen rescuing British POWs during World War 2 is expected to be finished in the near future.

"After the construction work is done, the memorial will be open to the public. "An official unveiling ceremony for the memorial is planned for 2025 to which the Lisbon Maru families will be invited."

We will publish further details when they become available.

## ➤ FILM IS SET FOR UK PREMIÈRE

**A film about the sinking of the Lisbon Maru is set to be released in the UK.**

**The première of 'The Sinking of The Lisbon Maru' is set for around 17 March, and general release in the UK will follow on 20 March.**

**In the meantime, the film has been entered for the BAFTAs and eligibility has been confirmed. As part of this process, there will be a number of screenings around the UK ahead of the première as follows:**

- **22 January: Oxford; the Ultimate Picture Palace at 6pm**
- **27 January: Hereford; the Courtyard Cinema at 5.30pm**
- **3 March: Birmingham; the Everyman Cinema at 6pm. Manchester; the Everyman Cinema at 6pm. Leeds; the Everyman Cinema at 6pm. Glasgow; the Everyman Cinema at 6pm (this venue is not yet confirmed).**

**Bookings for these cinemas can**

**be made now (with perhaps the exception of Glasgow)**

**In addition, it may be possible to arrange a small number of charitable screenings, for example in local arts centres. The idea would be for a percentage of the takings to be donated to the Lisbon Maru Memorial Association. If anyone wants to organise such local screenings, contact Brian Finch at [bfinch1941@gmail.com](mailto:bfinch1941@gmail.com)**

**The UK distributor, Chan Hiu Man, is now preparing a campaign to support the film at the BAFTAs. It would be helpful if those who have seen the film could write direct to Hiu Man giving their opinions (not a review of the film!). You can use your name and that of your loved one who was on the Lisbon Maru, or you can write anonymously.**

**Please send your messages direct to [h.m.chan@ukchinafilm.com](mailto:h.m.chan@ukchinafilm.com) and copy them to Brian, email as above.**



**3rd May Twickenham Stadium**

# **Army v Navy Rugby**



**Reserve your RNA  
subsidised tickets now**

**Only £43 per person**

**including access to our exclusive  
RNA Bar**



**Our seats are in the Cat1 section M33/34 - an excellent  
position on the centre line.**

**The bar is next-door - no long trek or queues for drinks.**

**The RNA is delighted to announce it is the  
Army v Navy Chosen Charity in 2025!**

**The RNA's Branch Support Fund can help out with transport  
costs (tickets must be purchased via the RNA)**

**[engagement@rnassoc.org](mailto:engagement@rnassoc.org) for more details**





## ➤ NAVAL HISTORY GROUP RANGES FROM DRAKE TO DREADNOUGHT AND BEYOND

That's the motto of the Britannia Naval Research Association (BNRA) – a group of Naval history enthusiasts who meet regularly to hear papers presented on every Naval subject, from the Royal Navy in the Norway Campaign of 1940 to the loss of Sweden's flagship the Vasa in Stockholm Harbour in 1628, and much more besides across the centuries.

Wooden, iron and steel navies (and in the future no doubt carbon fibre ones too!) are discussed.

Models and modelling are at the heart of the BNRA, too – pictured above at a meeting is one of modeller Colin Vass' extraordinary works – HMS Warspite; fully functional on water, with steam from her funnel, turrets that fire, and even a crane to lift a sea-boat away.

The BNRA meets on Zoom throughout the autumn and winter, and holds monthly gatherings in person at Sturdy's Castle conference centre near Oxford for wide-ranging presentations on the world's navies, their ships and



equipment.

Every May sees the day-long BNRA Symposium - next year's theme is 'Australia and her Navy, Past and Present'.

These events attract leading speakers; in 2025 the Association will welcome Dr Andrew Lambert, Laughton Professor of Naval History in the Department of War Studies at King's College London.

May 2024's Symposium featured film-maker Chris Terrill, who won his Green Beret at the age of 55 in order to film 'The Royals' in Afghanistan, and undersea explorer Mensun Bound, on finding the wreck of Shackleton's Endurance.

A summer 'works outing' is also held. This year the Association visited the Golden Hinde

and HMS Wellington on the Thames in London.

The Association produces a picture-rich Journal twice a year.

The latest edition includes BNRA Chairman James Walters' account of his trans-Pacific voyage in a three-masted baroque, a detailed account of the Brokensha Naval family, and the inspiring story of the 'Cockleshell Heroes', with a full analysis of the daring World War 2 raid on German shipping at Bordeaux Harbour in France, known as Operation Frankton.

■ **If RNA members would like to join the Britannia Naval Research Association, the annual membership fee is a maximum of £45 (for two members, with journal), and a minimum of £36 (for one member, no Journal). Small charges at the Sturdy's Castle meetings and the Symposium also apply. To become a member, please contact the Association's Membership Secretary, Susan Amos, on [susan\\_amos2005@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:susan_amos2005@yahoo.co.uk)**



## ► NEW PLAY LOOKS AT ADMIRAL BYNG'S LAST DAYS

A new play looking at the last days of Admiral John Byng is due to open in the spring.

'Swing! Swing! Admiral Byng!' by BAFTA Award-winner Christopher Swann will debut at the Playground Theatre in Latimer Road, London, and is due to run for three weeks from 8 May.

It is set on the last two days of the Admiral's life before he was executed by firing squad on board HMS Monarch in 1757 anchored in the Solent for not doing his utmost to defend Port Mahon on Minorca.

It will star award-winning actor Peter Tate as Byng, with a group of professional actors the playwright has been working with for some years as the supporting cast of Capt Augustus Hervey, Sarah Osborne (Byng's sister), Hutchens (Byng's valet), two Sailors and a Mr Arouet.

It is about a man facing his certain death but it is also about Naval life on board a ship at the time – different from the world of Nelson's navy that the public are more familiar with; for a start sailors had only just got any form of uniform.

Christopher Swann is in the process of raising money from sponsors and theatre angels to make this happen and it is looking promising, so he is keen to let RNA members know as they might like to go along next year and be in the audience – as he said, there won't be many plays set in the world of the Navy in 2025, but there will be this one at the very least!

If you know of any company or organisation that might help by being one of the sponsors to help them put the play on then please contact him at [christopherriswann@gmail.com](mailto:christopherriswann@gmail.com)

# Ex-Military

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[WWW.COMBINEDSERVICESTRAVELCOVER.ORG.UK](http://WWW.COMBINEDSERVICESTRAVELCOVER.ORG.UK)



## ➤ TAKE A CHANCE ON RNA LOTTERY

Just a reminder that you could win up to £25,000 in the RNA's very own Weekly Lottery, which gives supporters the chance to win cash prizes as well as backing our rank-blind network of serving, veterans and family members of the Royal Navy community.

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

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

"The RNA is free to join but relies on donations to help continue the good work.

"Since Covid, we've done so much more in the welfare/wellbeing space with our veterans, and having an RNA Lottery allows us to do even more.

"Please do sign up and play our lottery, and if you're not a member – join us!"

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

## ➤ SLOPS STILL AVAILABLE

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

## ➤ SPECIAL INTEREST GROUPS

Shipmates might be interested to become involved with the popular and successful RNA Specialist Interest Groups. Whether you are already a part of a group or are yet to join one we highly recommend you get involved and see what it's all about. For more information on each group please contact the designated leaders, listed in no particular order:

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

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

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

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

Decorative Ropework – Bob Jones: [oldsalt69@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:oldsalt69@hotmail.co.uk)

Divers – Bill Lawless: [billylawless40@yahoo.com](mailto:billylawless40@yahoo.com)

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

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

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

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

## ➤ MONDAY NIGHT FIRESIDE CHATS

The subject of next Monday's Fireside Chat (9 December) will be the 'Noble 8th of December – the Battle of the Falkland Islands 1914, and will be given by Anthony Moth. The battle was the British response to a painful defeat at the Battle of Coronel on 1 November 1914, as a result of which a powerful Royal Navy force set out looking for a German cruiser squadron – and revenge...

■ For shipmates who are unaware, there is an ongoing a series of 'Fireside Chats' on subjects of Naval and wider maritime interest. The presentations are held on Monday evenings commencing at 1830 using 'Zoom'. All are welcome.

Meeting ID – 288 830 5105 Password – Shipmate (case sensitive) Or, click on the link [here](#)

\* Lecture subjects may change at short notice.

\*\* Shipmates please note that the 'Fireside Chat' commences at 1830

Date	Presenter	Subject
Mon 9 Dec	Anthony Moth	The Noble 8th December, Battle of the Falkland Islands 1914
Mon 16 Dec	Mike Milne	The Battle of the River Plate – 85th Anniversary
Mon 23 Dec	No Fireside Chat	
Mon 30 Dec	No Fireside Chat	
Mon 6 Jan 2025	No Fireside Chat	
Mon 13 Jan	Phil Packer	The British Inspiration Trust
Mon 20 Jan	Charlie Knight	UK Carrier Strike Group
Mon 27 Jan	Ralph Dodds	FAA Palambang Raids – 80th Anniversary
Mon 3 Feb	Debbie Dollner (TBC)	RNBT (TBC)
Mon 10 Feb	Bill Oliphant	Plans for RNA75





# REASONS TO ATTEND YOUR AGM

## YOUR BEST CHANCE TO BE HEARD

If you have any concerns of branch/area life or want to propose changes to the association, then the AGM is the perfect opportunity for you to raise this with and in front of your fellow shipmates.



## TAKE CONTROL OF IMPORTANT DECISIONS

Remember, the Royal Naval Association is YOU, the members who have joined collectively. Your AGM is the perfect opportunity to take part in the decision making process



## REPRESENT YOUR BRANCH

Your voice and attendance matters; and the conference is the chance to take any issues from a local level to a National platform. Shipmates from all around the UK gather - ideally this is the ONE time your branch can stand up and be counted



## MORE THAN A MEETING

What happens in branches under the name of the Royal Naval Association is remarkable

A number of prizes are awarded at Conference for shipmates' contribution to the Association - These are presented during Conference - the only time of the year the RNA is ALL together

*COMRADESHIP*

*CONNECTION*

Comradeship is the lifeblood of our Association - friendships are secured by getting to know each other sharing experiences and making new memories

*COMMEMORATION*

Tradition, respect and honour  
We are all rightly proud of our Naval history and service; commemoration and ceremony is a huge part of the RNA's identity

**ONCE  
NAVY  
ALWAYS  
NAVY**

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## ➤ BRANCH NEWS

### **RIDERS Branch**

'The only RNA Worldwide Branch', as stated by Branch Secretary S/M Mark Gayton, who provided this report – from Vietnam...

On 20 October, the birthday of former Royal Marines Wren Fiona Laing, Fiona set off on an arduous two-day trip to Vietnam.

Definitely not a trip where Fiona would be basking on beaches, sipping a few wets, but rather dressed in hiking boots with a full backpack for making her way along the paths in the thick jungles of the Vietnam northern highlands.

Why, may you ask? The answer is simple – to raise funds for SSAFA. (It should be noted that the RNA Riders Branch normally make an annual donation of £500+ to Central Office).

On arrival in Vietnam, Fiona met up with the rest of the team, including fellow S/M James Gould, who served in the Royal Yacht, and who is an avid biker and an RNA Riders Branch member.

After landing in Hanoi, they had only half a day to acclimatise to the hot, humid environment before being transported to the depths of the jungle for what was to be a baptism of fire.

Each day the team slogged through 20km of thick jungle and parts of the Ho Chi Minh trail, which took its toll on everyone.

Blisters and lost nails were a daily occurrence.

After five days of hard trekking, they reached their finish point, having completed 24km of Vietnam trails.

Fiona said that coming off the mountain she felt emotional and could not speak, as two years ago she underwent a major operation and has battled complications ever since.



So, to achieve this objective was a bit overwhelming and gave her hope for future ventures.

The Vietnamese people were just very friendly, although those that lived in rural areas just gave the trekkers strange looks, probably thinking who are these idiots? Whilst the rest of the team flew home, Fiona and Maj Sophie Morris stayed for another nine days and did a bit of a recce on motorbikes for a future RNA Riders Branch trip in 2026.

The best thing is the team raised a total of just over £93,000 – not too shabby amount at all!

If you are a motorbike rider and interested, why not join either the Motorbiking Matelots Facebook page (the RNA Riders also have a FB page), or indeed, join the RNA Riders Branch.

For more details contact Mark Gayton, Branch Secretary, on [secrnariders@gmail.com](mailto:secrnariders@gmail.com)

### **STOURBRIDGE AND DISTRICT Branch**

The shipmates of Stourbridge and District branch have changed the times of their mess meetings starting in the New Year to deconflict with lively activities at their venue.

From 6 January 2025 the branch will move their mess meetings to the first Monday of every month.

Shipmates were finding that events and bookings at the Royal British Legion Club in Kingswinford on a Friday evening were causing some issues for those members whose hearing is not as good as it once was! The meetings will continue to be held at the RBL Club, in Summerhill.





## STREET Branch

Street Branch celebrated its 32nd Trafalgar Night Dinner at the Wessex Hotel, Street, on 25 October. The Guest of Honour, Lt Cdr Samuel Cuff RN, was accompanied by his wife Sheree.

The Branch was also joined by members of the Somerton Branch of the Royal British Legion and Committee members, Officers and Cadets of TS Excalibur, Glastonbury and Street Sea Cadet Unit. Along with other guests, which included Street Branch President S/M Bernie Page, Somerton President Cdr Brian Parker RN Rtd and TS Excalibur President Cdre Tim Hare RN Rtd, there were 43 who sat down for the dinner.

The Cadets formed a Guard of Honour and piped the side and Hands to Dinner for the arrival of the Guest of Honour and the entrance of the Top Table.

They also carried out general duties in supporting the early evening activities.

A 'rum raffle' was held which proved very popular, and a donation from the proceeds was made to TS Excalibur in appreciation of the invaluable contribution the Cadets made to the success of the dinner.

Lt Cdr Cuff's speech allowed for some light-hearted banter with a 'guess the length of the speech raffle', with several unscrupulous shipmates attempting to bribe Sam into spilling the beans!



Before introducing the Guest of Honour, Street Branch Chairman S/M Mike Jayes welcomed everyone to the dinner, particularly the RBL President and his good lady Jean, who were being dined out by Somerton for their many years of service to the Branch. After Lt Cdr Cuff's speech and the



toast to the 'Immortal Memory', the dinner finished with a flower arrangement being presented to Sheree by S/M Sheila Thomas, one of Street's senior ladies.

Sheila and S/M Brian Godden had set out from Weston-Super-Mare at 2pm for the 45-minute journey to Street. However, due to serious traffic problems they finally arrived at the dinner as it started at 8pm, 'so no time to get dressed up'...

On completion of the presentation everyone retired to the bar to socialise and to enjoy a few drinks into the early morning. And yes, Sheila and Brian were there at the end!

## RUSHDEN AND DISTRICT Branch

Rushden and District Branch members continue working together across all the veteran associations and cadet forces locally.

Following the successful Big Band Concert earlier in the year Branch Chairman S/M Michael Thompson and Branch Secretary S/M Terry Perkins attended the annual RAF Air Cadets awards ceremony. Michael, alongside RBL Branch Chairman Jake Baker and RAFA Branch Chairman Denis Murphy, awarded a certificate of thanks to a number of cadets who have supported the branch over the past year.

After the ceremony Michael said it is fantastic that locally, the RNA, RBL and RAFA support our future veterans. They take every opportunity to promote our Armed Forces and share their experiences with youngsters across the three cadet forces.

Pictured (left to right) are Cadet Sqn CO Colin Harmer, RBL Chair Jake Baker, RAFA Chair Denis Murphy, RNA Branch Chair S/M Michael Thompson, Deputy Lieutenant Andrew White & S/M Terry Perkins.





## TORFAEN Branch

S/M Markus Walden, aged 92 years old, a member Torfaen Branch, regularly attends the Veterans Hub at the Army Regional Centre in Cwmbran, South Wales, on a Wednesday, along with at least 50 veterans from across the three Armed Forces. Over a bacon sarnie and cup of tea Markus mentioned that he served during the Suez Conflict, but that he hadn't received a campaign medal.

As a result, Maj Steve Smith, the Officer in Charge of the Army Regional Centre, took it upon himself to apply for the medals and had the honour of presenting them to Markus during a recent veterans breakfast meeting (see picture right).

Markus served from 1948 to 1959 as an AB RP3 and trained at HMS St Vincent, then served in HM Ships Gambia, Bermuda, Ulster, Venus, Eagle and Victorious.

Talking of presentations, at a recent Torfaen Branch meeting, the Royal Marine within the branch presented Branch Chairman S/M Jim Attenbough with a copy of the Covering Order regarding



the formation of the Royal Marines (pictured below left). The members then raise a tot to their Royal Shipmates (pictured below).



## FALMOUTH Branch

Falmouth Branch continued its long support of the young people of Falmouth and Penryn by attending Presentation Evenings during November. On November 8 Branch Chairman S/M Richard Hallowes, accompanied by Branch Vice President S/M Mick Stevens and S/M Peter Bellamy, attended the 6th Falmouth Sea Scouts AGM, where the Branch Chairman, on behalf of the Branch, presented 6th Falmouth's Secretary Carolyn Tuttiet with a cheque (pictured right). The Branch actively supports the Sea Scouts with several Branch members on the management committee. Later that month, on the 21st, at TS Robert Hitchens – the Falmouth & Penryn Sea Cadet Unit – Branch Chairman S/M Hallowes presented the Cadet of the Year with the RNA Cup (pictured top left). During the presentation evening the Unit CO, Fan Mitchell, described the RNA Cup as "the most prestigious award". It comes with a bursary to allow the recipient to undertake a week's sail training. Able Cadet

Joshua Benton told the assembled guests that he was delighted to win and was looking forward to a week aboard the TS Loyalist. Also presented that evening by the Guest of Honour was the Stevens Cup (pictured bottom left). This cup, donated by the Falmouth Branch Vice President, is awarded to the Best New Entry Cadet and went to Cadet Rowan England.





### PLYMOUTH Branch

Plymouth Branch arranged a Memorial Service in tribute and in gratitude to their branch benefactor, the late Graham Elford-Knox, Royal Navy World War 2 veteran. The two-part event, on 23 October, began with a church service in St Peter's Church, in the picturesque Kent village of Bredhurst, followed by a wreath laying ceremony adjacent S/M Graham's final resting place. During the church service an account was given covering S/M Graham's time aboard HMS Swiftsure, at that time the RN's most advanced cruiser, which in 1944 was deployed to the Far East as part of the British Pacific Fleet and served as part of the US Navy's 5th Fleet. The ship played its part in ferociously-fought actions, including 'fighting off relentless kamikaze attacks. By August 1945 Swiftsure was preparing to join the US Navy's 3rd Fleet for the planned invasion of mainland Japan, only for these orders to be overtaken by the surrender of Japan. Swiftsure returned to Royal Navy control, taking up the role of flagship to a powerful RN Task Group mustering in Subic Bay, preparing to secure Hong Kong in readiness for the



formal surrender of the colony. Having been deployed for two years Swiftsure finally return to the UK in August 1946, two months before Graham's 20th birthday. On completion of the church service, arranged especially for the occasion by Lay Minister Colin Brown, Plymouth shipmates processed to the graveyard led by the Church warden and standard bearers Jeff Fox and Steve Champion (Plymouth/Maidstone). S/M Les Yeoman opened the wreath laying ceremony by reciting the Naval Prayer, followed by the Last Post/Reveille by local volunteer trumpeter Elain Garner. The Exhortation was delivered, the standards were dipped and the wreath laid in front of S/M

Graham's headstone. Before the Blessing and Dismissal. S/M Liam O'Hara recited The Kohima Epitaph, in a final salute and tribute to Graham our Far East Warrior. On completion of the Service they retired to the The Bell, the only pub in the village, to swap dits. The success of the occasion was in no small part down to the assistance and support received over several months from both **Maidstone** Branch (arranged by Hon Sec

Carol Dorey and husband Ron) and St Peter's Parish. They also thanked HMS Ganges Association's Co-ordinator Roger Ide for his support and attendance as well as Mick and Gwen Whiteman for their help and advice. Maidstone Branch invited the visitors to join with them at their club for the evening – a great evening with the best of company! As the evening progressed, on behalf of the Membership of Plymouth Branch, a gift of 'Presentation Port' (WO & SR's Mess HMS Drake) was made to Maidstone Branch Chairman S/M Jerry Brown in gratitude for the unstinting support his Branch members had given. Branch Crests and Pennants were also exchanged.

### TORREVIEJA Branch

José María Pérez Sánchez, the Mayor of Pilar de la Horadada, received a 600 Euros donation towards the Valencian DANA Appeal Fund from the Vice Chairman, S/M Graham Shelton of Torre Vieja Branch. The ceremony took place at the Ayuntamiento de Pilar de la Horadada, and accompanying Graham Shelton was the Branch Standard Bearer, S/M Bryan Dalton and the Chairman, S/M Tony Jenkins, all of whom are Royal Navy veterans. The donation was part of the offertory collected at the Remembrance Service held at Mil Palmeras on Sunday 10 November; the remainder of the offertory has been donated to Royal Navy and Royal Marines veterans charities and the Naval Children's Charity. During the presentation, Graham Shelton made a short speech in Spanish to Mayor José María, conveying that the Branch are moved to present this donation as a token of their support for their neighbours in Valencia who have suffered so much from recent violent storms and flooding. He also highlighted the poignancy that the donation was part of the offertory collected from the over 500 veterans and civilians who attended



the annual Remembrance Service who had "opened up their hearts and purses". Mayor José María responded by saying how important monies raised from donation are in helping the Valencian people and businesses to start recovering from the losses that they had suffered during the floods, and stressed that "the reconstruction work, for many families, will still take many months, and the return to normality is still a long way away."



**PORTSEA AND PORTSMOUTH Branch**

It has been a busy month for the shipmates at Portsea and Portsmouth Branch. A group of 11 shipmates visited the Houses of Parliament on a bright and sunny October day. They had a very informative guided tour around the Westminster estate and afterwards met with the two local MPs representing Portsmouth North and South – Stephen Morgan and Amanda Martin. Together they enjoyed a delicious lunch on the terrace on the banks of the River Thames. BZ to S/M George Mitchell for organising. S/M Richie Farman was asked by Central Office to lay the wreath on behalf of the RNA at the unveiling of the new HMS Royal Oak memorial on The Hard, outside the gates of Portsmouth Historic Dockyard. The service was attended by relatives of ship's company from Royal Oak, the Lord and Lady Mayoress of Portsmouth, the COs of HMS Nelson and Excellent, Rear Admiral Bailey and both Bishops of Portsmouth. The Branch was also well-represented at ceremonies marking the centenary



of the Royal Naval Memorial on Southsea Common. The branch had 20 members attend the annual Trafalgar Night at the Royal Maritime Club (RMC) on 18 October, again organised by George Mitchell. They also attended the HMS St Vincent Reunion Dinner at the RMC, and had two members attend the HMS Lowestoft Reunion at the Queen's Hotel. George Mitchell and Pat Smythe represented the Branch at the World Uckers Championship – both fell before the final in both singles

and doubles to worth opponents. And finally, S/M Richie managed to cross another thing off his Naval bucket list by attending the Trafalgar Day Service in HMS Victory as guest of the 1st Lt WO1 Pete Morewood.



**MANSFIELD AND DISTRICT Branch**

On Friday 15 November at the Hostess Restaurant Mansfield Branch celebrated its 20th year since its Commissioning Certificate was awarded. The event was well attended, and toasts were raised for the King, absent friends and the Branch using the best Navy Rum available. The branch was officially commissioned on 26 November, and the Elected Honorary Chairman, S/M Brian Dykes, has remained in the chair, as voted, for the whole period. Well done, Brian!





**REDRUTH AND CAMBORNE Branch**

Redruth and Camborne Branch held a very successful Pickle Night on 16 November at the Redruth Club in Redruth. There were plenty of guests as the night is becoming a firm and popular fixture for the branch – in fact, branch members were outnumbered by guests,

mostly from the surrounding Royal British Legion clubs. Naval jollity and frivolity abounded, with fancy dress, pasties, tots of rum, a heads and tails game for a bottle of 'Pussers' and even a sing-song. Towards the end, the old favourites 'Aladdin' and 'The Fisherman's song' even got an airing. Oooops...

**BRACKNELL Branch**

Since the beginning of September the Bracknell Branch Standard has been paraded at three funerals, and three Remembrance services in the area, as well as at the Branch Trafalgar Dinner. The latter (pictured right) was held on 18 October and 35 shipmates managed to raise £150 on the main raffle as well as £48 on the rum raffle – naturally, a good time was had by all. The Branch has had a variety of interesting speakers at their monthly meetings, covering a wide variety of topics including 'It's About Time', 'Forensic Science' and 'Defeat in the Pacific'. As usual, Branch shipmates have attended local Armed Forces and Veterans Breakfast Clubs in the area as well as other Area events, including another local Armed Forces Veterans Hub, run by Royal Berkshire Fire & Rescue Service at Newbury Fire Station. A group of 16 shipmates enjoyed a day outing in October to the National Motor Museum at Beaulieu in Hampshire – so much to see (not just motor cars!). And, of course, it was another glorious day with the sun shining! On 23 November the Branch held their annual skittles competition (pictured below); 24 shipmates took part and enjoyed a competitive evening, with the silver



trophy finally going to Robin (Fez) Parker (pictured right), narrowly beating three shipmates. Members had one final meeting of 2024 on 4 December where our speaker was due to be Vice Admiral Sir Alan Massey RN Rtd, the former Second Sea Lord. Bracknell members wish all shipmates and oppos everywhere an enjoyable festive season and are already looking forward to the Special RNA 75th Anniversary Year in 2025.





# OBITUARIES

## **S/M KEITH CRAWFORD MBE, No 9 Area Chairman and RNA Spalding Branch**

**3 January 1938 – 1 December 2024**

It is our sad duty to report that S/M Keith Crawford, No 9 Area Chairman, crossed the bar peacefully on 1 December 2024. Having joined the Royal Navy as a Boy and having served 23 years in the Fleet Air Arm, Keith retired in 1979 as a CPO (AE) and immediately joined the RNA at **Spalding Branch**. In 1980 he was elected Spalding Branch Chairman, a post that he held for the next 44 years, and was elected No 9 Area Chairman in 1999, being the post holder for 25 years until crossing the bar.

In 1995 he was elected Deputy National Council Member for the Area, and in 2003 became National Council Member for 20 years until retiring from the National Council in September 2023. In 2010 Keith was appointed the RNA National Vice Chairman until 2015, when ill health forced his retirement from that position, otherwise without doubt Keith would have been appointed

the RNA National Chairman in 2016. During his time on the National Council Keith became Chairman of the Association's Management Committee, and earlier had volunteered to be a member of the Working Group that reviewed the Association's Royal Charter Rules and Byelaws. Having been awarded Life Membership, in 2018 Keith was awarded a Certificate of Appreciation (CoA). In the Queen's 2014 New Year's Honours, Keith was most proud to have been awarded the MBE 'for voluntary service to Naval Personnel, Veterans and their families'. Keith had the Navy and RNA running through his veins and was always there for everyone, as did his wife Yvonne, who holds a Certificate of Appreciation and was always by Keith's side wherever he went within the RNA. Yvonne serves as No 9 Area Treasurer and Spalding Branch Delegate. Yvonne admits not to be technically minded, so shipmates wishing to express their condolences may do so either via Central Office or by telephone on 01205 460633. On Remembrance Sunday despite his failing health, Keith attended Spalding Remembrance Day commemoration to



*Picture: S/M Nigel Huxtable*

pay his respects to those who had made the ultimate sacrifice.

The RNA has lost one special Shipmate, one who had a vast knowledge of the Association and was a valuable contributor to national debates. He will be extremely hard to replace, and we are most proud to have served alongside him. Duty done, Stand Down Shipmate, we have your Watch.

Funeral details will be promulgated when known.

*S/M Terry Day, Spalding Branch, and S/M Keith Ridley, NCM No 6 Area*

## **S/M John 'Scotty' Brown**

S/M John Brown crossed the bar on 2 November 2024 aged 78.

'Scotty' joined the Royal Navy in 1962, and served in a number of ships and establishments including HMS Ganges, Duncan

and Dolphin, and HM Submarines Oberon, Artful, Cachalot, Rorqual and Olympus.

On leaving the Service in 1974 Scotty joined the MOD Police, and served for a further 30 years.

A member of **Limavady Branch**, Scotty passed away at the Robinson Memorial Hospital in Ballymoney, Northern Ireland, and his funeral took place on 12 November in Coleraine and at the Antrim and Newtownabbey Crematorium.



**HMS Artful. Image from the Imperial War Museum collection © Image: IWM (A 33378)**







## ► DECEMBER 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 Shipmate Lawrie Phillips and published by The History Press ([www.thehistorypress.co.uk](http://www.thehistorypress.co.uk)). The book is issued to all HM Ships and Establishments and is 'probably one of the most well-thumbed and valued books that Captains of HM Ships possess'. It is currently available online for around £45 (search ISBN number 978-0750982665)

### 1 December 1954

Former Royal Yacht Victoria and Albert III, launched at Pembroke Dock on 9 May 1899, was towed from Portsmouth for the breakers on 1 December 1954. Queen Victoria had urged Parliament to build a new yacht for years, finally winning the argument when she pointed out that the Germans and Russians had bigger, more modern vessels. Victoria never got to use it – HMY Victoria and Albert was completed in July 1901, more than six months after the death of the Queen. The 4,700-ton twin-screw steam yacht, built to resemble her predecessor, went on to serve four kings (Edward VII, George V, Edward VIII and George VI), cruising extensively in home waters and on European voyages, but was decommissioned in 1939 and served as an accommodation ship at HMS Excellent, on Whale Island in Portsmouth, during World War 2. She was broken up at Faslane in Scotland in 1954, the year her replacement HMY Britannia – delayed by the war – was commissioned.

### 2 December 1917

New German submarine UB-81 sank off the Isle of Wight in what was possibly an unfortunate accident. It would seem that the new 650-ton German coastal submarine struck a mine while operating in stormy weather in the Channel in the late afternoon of 2 December 1917 some ten miles south-east of Dunnose Head – possibly a German mine snagged by a cable which had remained attached to the boat when her anchor was lost. The submarine, on only her second war patrol, sank in relatively shallow water, allowing her engineers to pump compressed air into forward tanks, bringing the bows just clear of the surface of the sea. Seven of her crew managed to scramble up the steeply-angled submarine and through an open torpedo tube onto her bows in order to fire emergency flares. Several hours later a patrol boat, the 610-ton coastal sloop HMS P32, approached the doomed submarine and started to take the German sailors on board, but a wave pushed the Royal Navy vessel hard into the submarine, sending the sea cascading into the open torpedo tube and sinking her for a second and final time with 29 souls still on board. Her commanding officer, 28-year-old Oberleutnant-zur-See Reinhold Saltzwedel, who died with his submarine, was one of Germany's most successful U-boat aces in World War 1, having sunk 111 merchant ships (total 172,800 tons) and damaged two warships in his previous boats.

### 3 December 1901

Screw sloop HMS Condor foundered in a storm in the Pacific on 3 December 1901 with the loss of her entire ship's company of 140 men. The lead ship

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of her class, the 980-ton Condor was launched at Sheerness on 17 December 1898 and commissioned on 1 November 1900, so had served little over a year when she set out from Esquimalt in British Columbia, Canada, en route to Honolulu on 2 December 1901. She was off the Olympic Peninsula of Washington in the United States when she ran into a severe storm and disappeared, though the exact circumstances are not known. She was officially listed as missing with all hands lost on 3 February 1902, and it was only in May 1949, more than 47 years after she went missing, that wreckage from Condor was discovered – a fishing boat found the warship's binnacle and other items tangled in a net some 40 miles north of Cape Flattery.

#### **4 December 1967**

HMS Plover paid off in Port Edgar on 4 December 1967 after more than 37 years in continuous commission. The 1,020-ton ship was built at William Denny in Dumbarton as a coastal minelayer, but initially fitted with mine recovery gear as well to enable her to conduct mining trials. However, during World War 2 her recovery gear was removed to increase her capacity, and Plover, which was commissioned on 25 September 1937, went on to lay more than 15,200 mines. She continued in service after the war, featuring in the Queen's Coronation Review at Spithead in 1953, but was sold for scrap in 1969, arriving at the Ward breakers yard in April of that year.

#### **5 December 1918**

The first meeting of the Ships' Names and Badges Committee was held on 5 December 1918. The Committee does not choose names, rather acting as an advisory body for the Navy Board, considering names of new classes of warships, often within certain parameters or following a certain theme, as directed by the Controller of the Navy or the Navy Board. The current process sees the Committee make a recommendation to the

Board, including background information on the history of the names; this recommendation may be accepted, ignored, or a request made for further names or themes to be considered. Once names have been agreed on, they go through a final process of approval by the Defence Secretary and, ultimately, the Sovereign.

#### **6 December 1941**

Submarine HMS Perseus was sunk by a mine on 6 December 1941 while she was on patrol in the Ionian Sea off Cephalonia, Greece. The Vickers-built boat, which was launched on 22 May 1929, was operating on the China Station when World War 2 broke out, but she and her sisters of the 4th Submarine Flotilla were reassigned to the Mediterranean in the summer of 1940, where they were often used to carry supplies from Alexandria to Malta, where Perseus underwent a refit from October 1940 to April 1941. The submarine left her home base of Alexandria on 26 November 1941 for a patrol off eastern Greece and attacked a ship on 3 December but three days later struck an Italian mine in the Ionian Sea. Only one of the 61 men on board survived – and he was not a member of the crew. LS John Capes, who was hitching a ride, was one of four men to leave the sunken boat using Davis' 'Submerged Escape Apparatus', but he was the only one to survive the 50 metre ascent to the surface and subsequent five-mile swim ashore. He was hidden by locals on Cephalonia for 18 months before making his way to freedom via Turkey. The wreck of Perseus was discovered in 1997.

#### **7 December 1872**

Steam corvette HMS Challenger left Sheerness on 7 December 1872 on the first stage of a global voyage of oceanographic discovery that would cement her place in the annals of the Royal Navy and establish benchmarks that are of critical use to climate scientists to this day. Challenger, which displaced 2,150 tons, was launched in

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**HMS Condor. See December 3. Image from the Imperial War Museum collection: © IWM (Q 41055)**





February 1858 and had already led an active life on the North American and West Indies Station and the Australian Station before her voyage of discovery. For the Challenger Expedition, the corvette underwent a radical refit, losing all but two of her guns and having her spars reduced to make way for laboratories, store rooms and extra accommodation. She left Portsmouth on 21 December 1872 as her 69,000-nautical mile voyage, organised by the Royal Society, got under way, returning almost three-and-a-half years later. During her travels the 243 members of the combined total of crew members and scientists took almost 500 deep-sea soundings, more than 130 dredges of the ocean floor, and more than 260 serial water temperature readings. She also returned to England with examples of almost 5,000 species of marine life that had previously been unknown. One of her discoveries was the southern end of the Mariana Trench in the Pacific Ocean; later soundings using more modern equipment determined the depth to be more than 36,000ft and thus the deepest such feature on Earth. It now bears the name the Challenger Deep, in the ship's honour, and an American Space Shuttle also took the name Challenger to reflect the corvette's pioneering spirit. The 19th Century HMS Challenger continued in service after her global venture; she spent some years as a Coastguard and RNR training ship at Harwich, and after a spell in reserve she was converted to a receiving hulk on the Medway, where she remained until she was sold for scrap in early 1921.

#### **8 December 1929**

Destroyer HMS Sterling, accompanied by sister ship HMS Sirdar, assisted the crew and passengers of the British steamship Hai-Ching, which had been attacked in the small hours of a Sunday morning while en route from Amoy to Hong Kong by at least 25 pirates who had secreted themselves amongst the passengers. The pirates rushed the bridge but were held at bay, and although they lit a fire in the cabin beneath the bridge they could not take full control of the ship and were gradually forced back onto the ship's stern. They then attempted to flee in the ship's boats, using passengers as human shields, but were prevented from lowering the boats. Some five hours after the attack started the freighter was approached by the 1,200-ton S-class destroyers Sterling and Sirdar, which helped recover control of the Hai-Ching and extinguish the fire. Hai-Ching was towed to Hong Kong by Sterling where her passengers were interviewed; three men were subsequently charged with piracy and murder, but one was later freed while his companions were convicted and executed. Estimates as to the number of casualties in the attack vary, with contemporary reports talking of 30 dead, but it would appear that at least two crew members of the Hai-Ching had been killed in the attack, along with five passengers (believed lost through a boat davit accident in the night) and possibly six pirates.

#### **9 December 1941**

The guns of Fort Bedford on Ascension Island in the Atlantic fired on U-boat U-124 on 9 December 1941 – the only time the fort fired in anger. Fort Bedford is the most modern of the three Naval forts; it was

built overlooking Georgetown between 1903 and 1906, though like its older sisters it was deactivated after World War 1, and its guns removed. The fort was rearmed in 1941 using two 5.5-inch guns that had been removed from HMS Hood during a refit in Malta in 1934, and these weapons gave German submarine U-124, en route to France, a nasty surprise when it approached Ascension on 9 December 1941 to demonstrate to the British they were still active in the South Atlantic. Fort Bedford's guns proved much too accurate for comfort and the U-boat was forced to dive to evade the shells. The fort remained active until 1953, when HMS Sparrow called in and removed all live ammunition, though the 5.5in guns (and the two 6in coastal defence guns that preceded them) remain in situ.

#### **10 December 2010**

Veteran hunter-killer submarine HMS Sceptre, the last of the Swiftsure class of nuclear Fleet submarines, decommissioned after a 32-year career that saw its fair share of incidents. The 4,900-ton boat was launched at the Vickers yard in Barrow on 20 November 1976 and commissioned on 14 February 1978. One of the most significant events in her life was when Sceptre was in collision with a Soviet submarine in May 1981, causing severe damage to her casing and fin, while during power trials in a flooded dry dock at Rosyth in March 2000 her engines, connected to a shoreside steam supply, overrevved and drove the boat forward off her supports, damaging dockside facilities. But she was also a hard-working boat, and by the time she was decommissioned at Devonport on 10 December 2010 she was the oldest vessel still available for front-line service with the Royal Navy.

#### **11 December 1795**

Coastal vessel HMS Shark was given to the French by her mutinous crew at St Vaast la Hougue on 11 December 1795. The 63-ton four-gun Dutch hoy had been bought by the Admiralty in February 1794, and in mid-1795 were serving with a squadron off the east coast of the Cotentin Peninsula in Normandy. The ship's officers were involved in a dispute over a sailor who was said to be slacking, and the commanding officer was replaced, but ill-feeling continued to simmer, particularly as conditions on the ship's forward operating base – two small islands on which British sailors had built gun batteries – were harsh. On 18 September that year two sailors from Shark's crew of 30 stole the hoy's jolly boat and deserted to the French, but that act of betrayal was trumped on 11 December when the majority of her remaining crew mutinied and handed the ship over to the French.

#### **12 December 1782**

Admiral Sir Hyde Parker sailed from Rio de Janeiro aboard his flagship HMS Cato on 12 December 1782, en route to taking up command of the East Indies station. He never reached his destination... Admiral Parker was a well-regarded officer who greatly enriched his family when he captured a Spanish galleon worth £600,000 – more than £100 million in today's' money. In the later 1770s he served in the western Atlantic, waging a skilful campaign against the French in the Caribbean, and

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in 1781 fought a fierce battle with the Dutch near the Dogger Bank, with both forces cancelling each other out and withdrawing with no clear result. In 1782, having just succeeded to the family baronetcy as the 5th Baronet, he accepted command of the East Indies Station, and sailed from England in the new 50-gun fourth rate HMS Cato, calling in at Madeira at the end of October. She sailed from Rio on 12 December 1782 having picked up stores, but was never heard of again. Various theories have been touted, including an explosion at sea, or perhaps a shipwreck on an Indian Ocean shore and the subsequent deaths of the crew at the hands of local populations, but despite reports in the following years of sightings of stores and equipment from Cato being seen in various ports and on vessels in the Indian Ocean and Arabian Sea, no conclusive evidence of her fate has ever been found.

### 13 December 1939

In an action-packed but short war career S-class submarine HMS Salmon torpedoed German cruisers Leipzig and Nurnberg in the North Sea on 13 December 1939, nine days after sinking U-36 in the same area – the first enemy submarine to be sunk by another submarine in the war. The 980-ton submarine was commissioned on 8 March 1935, and scored an early success in World War 2 by attacking German submarine U-36 south of the Norwegian port of Stavanger on 4 December 1939, sinking her with a single torpedo; the U-boat went down with her entire crew of 40. On 12 December Salmon spotted German ocean liner SS Bremen

but declined to attack her as he believed she was not a legitimate target. Having been forced to flee by a German Dornier seaplane, Salmon sighted a fleet of German warships returning from a minelaying sortie the following day and fired a spread of torpedoes, which hit light cruisers Leipzig and Nurnberg, damaging both vessels. Leipzig was badly damaged and out of action for a year, while Nurnberg was not so badly affected and was repaired by April 1940, though both cruisers returned to service as training ships. After the attack, Salmon managed to evade the escorting destroyers, which hunted for her for more than two hours. Salmon's war ended in the summer of 1940 when she and her crew of 41 were lost, probably to a mine in the North Sea on 9 July.

### 14 December 1864

84-gun second rate HMS Bombay was destroyed by fire and a subsequent explosion off Montevideo on 14 December 1864, killing almost 100 of her ship's company. The vessel was launched in Bombay in February 1828 as a conventional ship-of-the-line, but in 1861 was fitted with a steam engine and screws at Chatham Dockyard, an operation which required the hull to be cut in half and a new section added to lengthen her. She went on to act as flagship in South American waters, and it was while she was engaged in gunnery practice that she met her end. While shooting at targets on the River Plate on 14 December 1864 she caught fire, though her engine was not in use at the time and she was under sail. The fire broke out in mid-afternoon in an after hold, and within half-an-hour was out of

Continued on page 40



control, setting fire to the sails. Several ships boats managed to get away, and many men dived into the sea to escape the fire; at around 2030 a gunpowder magazine exploded and the ship rapidly sank in shallow water. It is thought that 93 of her ship's company of almost 620, including more than 30 Royal Marines, died in the incident.

#### **15 December 1914**

Protected cruiser HMS Doris fired on the Turkish coast near Alexandretta, destroying a Turkish defensive installation that was under construction. The Eclipse-class cruiser, launched in March 1896, had already seen service in the Boer War – or, at least, one of her guns had; at least one of her 4.7in quickfire guns was mounted on an improvised carriage and used against the Boers at Magersfontein in 1899 while the ship was on the South Africa Station. At the start of the Great War Doris was in home waters, but in November 1914 she was transferred to the Mediterranean to take on Turkish forces. Her patch was the Syrian coast, keeping watch for enemy ships or land forces and to 'exert general pressure'. That programme of harassment led to action when her lookouts noticed unusual activity on a bluff onshore near Beersheba on 15 December 1914, and when they moved closer they identified it as a defensive position under construction. Using her main 6in guns, Doris swiftly undid the Turks' hard work. The cruiser continued to 'exert pressure' on the defenders over the following days, landing shore parties to destroy lines of communication and railway tracks near Alexandretta – by March 1915 she had carried out a further 12 such landings and numerous bombardments before French ships took over. By now showing her age, Doris was moved to India, where from March 1917 to the armistice she served as a hulk; she was sold for scrap in Mumbai in February 1919.

#### **16 December 1941**

Veteran destroyer HMS Thracian ran aground on 16 December 1941 during the Battle of Hong Kong. The 1,100-ton S-class warship, commissioned in April 1922, was the last remaining destroyer in Hong Kong after HM Ships Thanet and Scout left for Singapore on 8 December 1941. On 10 December she attacked Japanese invasion craft targeting Lamma Island, and three days later she helped evacuate personnel from Kowloon on the mainland to Aberdeen Harbour on Hong Kong Island. Thracian ran aground on 16 December while carrying out further attacks on Japanese invasion craft, and although she was refloated and limped back to Aberdeen Harbour. She suffered several near-misses during a bombing raid later that day, and with little chance of help from the damaged dockyard she was considered too badly damaged to repair. She was beached again the following day, and her ship's company joined the land battle for Hong Kong, suffering heavy losses in the fighting and subsequent captivity. Japanese forces began the process of salvaging the ship on Christmas Eve, and by the following October she appeared on Japanese registers as Patrol Boat No 101. Initially used for convoy escort work around Yokosuka, she

later acted as a training ship for torpedo warfare and as a test bed for new weapons. With the surrender of Japan in August 1945 she was found at Yokosuka having survived an attempt to scuttle her, but once again she was deemed beyond repair and was scrapped back in Hong Kong in February 1946.

#### **17 December 1834**

Ten-gun brigantine HMS Buzzard captured the Spanish slaving brig Formidable off the coast of West Africa on 17 December 1834. Buzzard (240 tons) intercepted the slaver, on the Middle Passage, in the Bight of Benin, and the ships duelled for almost an hour before the Spaniard surrendered, having lost seven sailors. Two sailors on board Buzzard also died in the action. Formidable was taken to Freetown in Sierra Leone, by which time 307 of her 'cargo' of 707 slaves had died from disease or mistreatment. Buzzard spent several years on anti-slavery duties, freeing hundreds more slaves, and was sold in November 1843. The Middle Passage was the second side of the triangular slave trade; the first element was ships sailing from Europe with manufactured goods, which were traded for slaves in Africa. The Middle Passage saw millions of slaves transported across the Atlantic, and the income from selling them were used to buy products such as sugar, tobacco, fur and other raw materials, which were then transported back to Europe, completing the triangle.

#### **18 December 1677**

Qualifying examinations were introduced for lieutenants in the Royal Navy. The Admiralty introduced the exams for prospective lieutenants to test whether individuals had the necessary experience and skills for the role. If successful they were presented with a certificate which normally also recorded information about the sailor's service prior to the exam, including date and place of birth and the names of the ships in which he had previously served.

#### **19 December 1917**

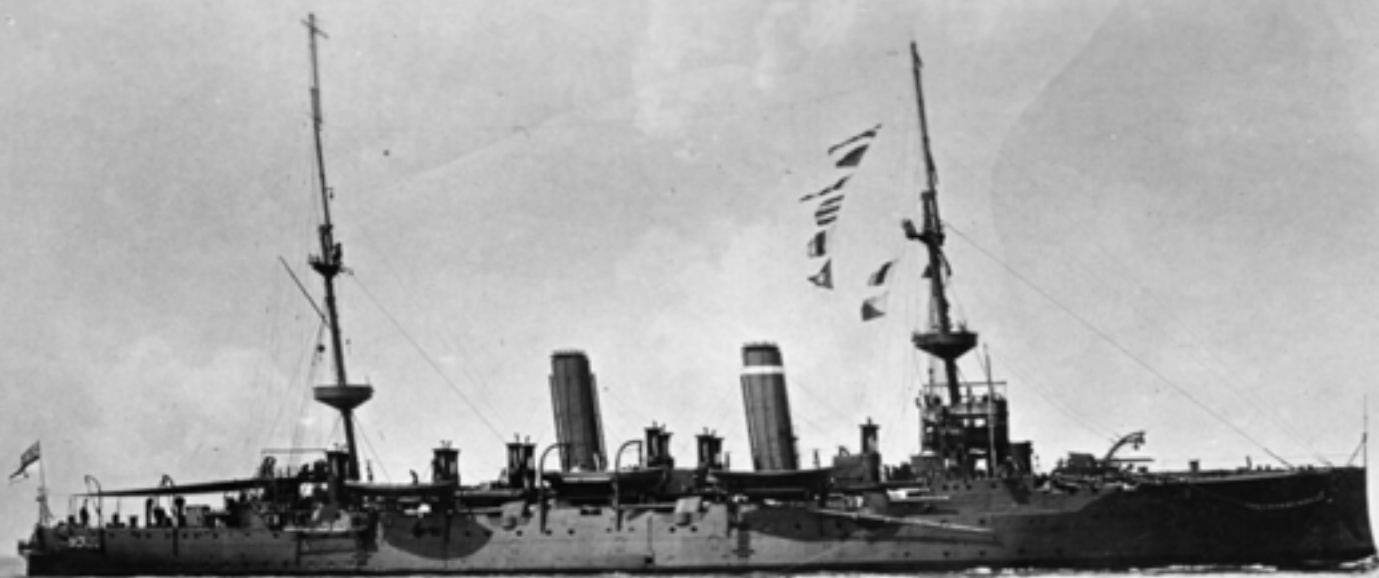
German U-boat UB-56 sank after striking a mine in the Dover Barrage shortly before midnight on 19 December 1917. The 640-ton submarine had only been launched in June 1917 and commissioned into the Flanders Flotilla, operating out of Zeebrugge, the following month – though it had already sunk four ships in a period of little over a week in November. The boat went down with 36 of her crew while submerged and heading westwards in the Dover Strait; the sole survivor was picked up by destroyer HMS Gipsy, which had been close at hand and observed the sinking, but he died shortly afterwards.

#### **20 December 1808**

Cormorant-class sloop HMS Dauntless was launched at Deptford on 20 December 1808, and demonstrated the reach of the Royal Navy at that time – as well as the remarkable distances achieved by relatively modest vessels. The 420-ton sloop, with a ship's company of 120, popped up all around the world at various times of her 16-year career. She began in 1809 as a convoy escort off the

**Continued on page 41**





African coast, followed by a voyage to Arkangel in northern Russia before a couple of years patrolling the coast of Ireland. In 1816 she escorted a convoy from Jamaica to England, parting company during an Atlantic gale. The following year she came across a dismasted transport in the Atlantic and towed her back to Plymouth – an evolution that took almost two weeks. After a refit in 1814, Dauntless was moved to the Newfoundland Station. Following repairs and a refit in 1819, Dauntless served in the East Indies, visiting China, New Zealand, Australia and various islands in the Pacific. The sloop finally paid off in October 1823 in Portsmouth, and was offered up for sale the following January, attracting an offer of £2,330 from a Thomas Smith.

#### **21 December 1796**

74-gun third rate HMS Bombay Castle was wrecked on 21 December 1796 when she grounded in the mouth of the Tagus River in Portugal. The ship was built in 1780-82 at Blackwall on the Thames, with her construction costs being covered by the East India Company by way of a contribution to the war effort, specifically the second Anglo-Mysore War, though Britain was fighting on several fronts at the time. She was lost when she was attempting to enter the shoal-strewn mouth of the Tagus River with the Mediterranean Fleet; the storeship HMS Camel grounded ahead of Bombay Castle and, in trying to avoid Camel, Bombay Castle also ran aground. While Camel, a converted frigate, was successfully refloated, attempts to move Bombay Castle from the shallows was unsuccessful and, after removing as much equipment as possible, the ship was finally abandoned on 27 December the same year.

#### **22 December 1810**

Without wishing to spread too much gloom, December appears to be a particularly difficult month in terms of Royal Navy ship losses. Veteran

74-gun third rate HMS Minotaur was wrecked off the Texel in the Netherlands on 22 December 1810 with heavy loss of life. The ship was built at Woolwich between 1788 and 1793, and took part in three key naval battles – the Nile (1798), Trafalgar (1805) and Copenhagen (1807) – as well as numerous actions in the Mediterranean during the period. Minotaur was lost when she was en route from Gothenburg to England, and was forced off course by heavy weather. She became trapped on the sands of the Haak Bank in the evening of 22 December 1810 and rolled heavily to one side, taking on water. The masts were cut to attempt to lighten the ship but by morning she had sunk even deeper into the bank and high waves were pounding her hull, which began to break apart. More than 100 men took to small boats and made it ashore, but a further hundred or so, along with her commanding officer Capt John Barrett, drowned in another yawl as they made their way towards shore. In the middle of the afternoon of 23 December the doomed ship rolled right over and sank, drowning the remainder of her ship's company. At least 360 men, and possibly as many as 570, died in the wreck, and the incident prompted criticism of Dutch authorities for failing to act promptly when survivors struggled ashore and raised the alarm – it is widely believed that had a rescue operation been mounted, most of the British could have been saved. Those who did make it ashore were sent to France as prisoners of war as the region was part of the Napoleonic French Empire at the time. The disaster sparked soul-searching by the Dutch, who responded by creating their first sea rescue organisation in 1824 in the Texel area.

#### **23 December 1917**

Destroyers HMS Tornado, Torrent and Surprise were lost to German mines near the Maas light

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vessel off the Dutch coast. The 1,000-ton R-class warships were part of the 10th Destroyer Flotilla of the Harwich Force, and one of their tasks was to carry out the so-called 'Beef Run' convoys between England and the Netherlands. The three ships accompanied a Netherlands-bound convoy on 22 December 1917 during which the larger V-class destroyer HMS Valkyrie struck a mine and had to be towed back to Harwich. The convoy continued to the Hook of Holland without further incident, but while awaiting the return convoy in the early hours of 23 December the three destroyers, plus sister ship HMS Radiant, ran into a German minefield. Torrent was first to strike a mine, but while Tornado and Surprise went to her aid she struck a second mine and rapidly sank. As she attempted to withdraw from the area Tornado detonated two mines and also sank quickly, followed by Surprise when she too struck a mine. Radiant, which had been standing off to shield the rescue attempt from possible U-boat attack, was unscathed and picked up survivors from the three ships, though more than 250 sailors from the three unlucky destroyers died in the incident.

#### **24 December 1777**

Captain James Cook visited the North Pacific island now known as Kiritimati on 24 December 1777 during his third voyage, naming it Christmas Island. The island has gone by several names over the years; a Spanish expedition of 1537 placed it on charts as Acea, and four years after Cook's declaration it was described on contemporary maps as Turtles Island. It is believed the island did not have a permanent population before its discovery by Europeans, acting instead as a resource for Pacific Islanders from elsewhere who sought birds and turtles. The voyage of discovery during which Cook named the island turned out to be the great explorer's final adventure – he was killed in a dispute with locals in what is now Hawaii little over a year after sailing past Kiritimati.

#### **25 December 1809**

Brig-sloop HMS Weazle captured a French privateer Eole off Palmas Bay, Sardinia, on Christmas Day 1809. The highly-effective little 18-gun warship was built at Topsham in Devon and launched in January 1805; although she

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**HMS Hesperus returns to Liverpool with damaged bows after ramming submarine U-357 on Boxing Day 1942. See 26 December. Image from the IWM collection © IWM (A 13987)**



accompanied Nelson's fleet off the Iberian coast in the autumn of 1805 Weazle missed the Battle of Trafalgar as she had been sent to search for five British ships-of-the-line which had been sent to Gibraltar to resupply. She then spent some time patrolling the Canary Islands and Madeira in the Atlantic, watching for Spanish privateers as well as men o' war, before witching to the Mediterranean, where she also maintained a watch on enemy shipping. In 1807 she happened to be in Corfu when news broke locally that the island had been transferred from Russian to French control; Weazle fled from the newly-arrived French garrison, destroying some transport vessels as she went. As well as capturing privateers and merchant ships, Weazle proved a capable deterrent – at one point she blockaded a convoy of almost 40 ships in Calabria, amongst them four sizeable gunboats. Shortly after she took part in a combined land and sea assault on the port of Diamante, forcing defenders to flee and capturing the entire convoy as well as a range of ordnance (which was destroyed by the British force), all without a single casualty. She continued to take prizes in 1809, including the 14-gun French privateer corvette Eole, which was captured after a sharp encounter over 90 minutes. As well as taking privateers Weazle proved adept in battle; she accompanied the 74-gun third rate Victorious off Venice in February 1812, awaiting the departure of newly-built French 74-gun warship Rivoli. As Rivoli emerged she was engaged by Victorious while Weazle took on her escorts in the Battle of Pirano; both British ships achieved their goals, with Rivoli subsequently joining the Royal Navy as HMS Rivoli and Weazle hammering the escort ships, one of which – the brig Mercure – blew up. Over the next couple of years Weazle continued to maul convoys (although she took a battering herself from a strong flotilla of gunboats on one occasion, escaping with her hull leaking and her rigging and sails in tatters). The feisty little ship was offered up for sale in Portsmouth in February 1815, and broken up at the end of the same year.

#### **26 December 1942**

Destroyers HMS Hesperus and Vanessa sank German submarine U-357 in the North West Approaches on Boxing Day 1942. The two ships were part of the escort for Convoy HX 219, around 50 ships which left New York and St Johns in mid-December bound for Liverpool. The convoy had no contact with the enemy, though it had to battle gales from 13 December until Christmas morning. H-class destroyer HMS Hesperus picked up a contact around 30 miles from the convoy on the evening of Boxing Day and, with Great War-vintage Admiralty V-class ship HMS Vanessa, carried out a depth charge attack. U-357, on her first war patrol, was forced to the surface, at which point Hesperus rammed it; the submarine rapidly sank, though the two warships managed to rescue six German sailors. Hesperus was forced to head for port with a badly-damaged hull, but the ships of the convoy made it safely to port around 29 December.

#### **27 December 1831**

Brig-sloop HMS Beagle left Barn Pool, just to the west of Plymouth Sound, on 27 December 1831 at the start of a five-year circumnavigation of the globe, known as the second voyage of HMS Beagle. One of those taking passage on the 240-ton ship, which had undergone an extensive refit for the voyage, was naturalist Charles Darwin, essentially a paying passenger, and the author of the seminal work *On the Origin of Species*. Darwin, just 22 at the time, was invited to join the expedition in part as a companion for commanding officer Robert FitzRoy – on her first voyage, Beagle's CO had suffered severe depression and massive mood swings that resulted in him shooting himself, later dying of his wounds. Beagle undertook extensive surveys around the coast of South America and visited New Zealand and Australia before she returned to Falmouth at the beginning of October 1836, and while the Naval parties were busy Darwin was busy making notes and observations on geology, anthropology, sociology and zoology; he wrote a details journal (despite suffering chronic seasickness) and spent long periods ashore in South America. On specific subjects about which he knew little Darwin would collect appropriate specimens and have them shipped back to Cambridge to be studied by experts. Darwin's observations and conclusions on the voyage helped form his theories of evolution and natural selection, which were crystallised in the book *On the Origin of Species*, published in 1859.

#### **28 December 1943**

Light cruisers HMS Enterprise and HMS Glasgow engaged and pursued 11 German destroyers and torpedo boats 270 miles south-west of Ushant on 28 December 1943 in the Battle of the Bay of Biscay, sinking T-25, T-26 and Z-27. Enterprise, an Emerald-class ship of 9,600 tons, and Glasgow, an 11,300-ton Town-class ship, benefited from the German flotilla had been earmarked as an escort for blockade runner Alsterufer, which had been sunk in air attacks the previous day, and were no match for the British cruisers. Torpedo boat T-26 – a 1,700-ton vessel, much larger than British torpedo boats – was struck by gunfire and finished off with a torpedo from Enterprise, while sister vessel T-25 was similarly dispatched, having suffered a withering attack from Glasgow's guns. Helped by the high seas, with which the cruisers coped far better than the smaller German ships, Enterprise scored a direct hit on the 3,600-ton destroyer Z-27, whose boilers gradually failed. Seeing the stricken destroyer lying dead in the water, Glasgow closed to point-blank range and sank her with gunfire. When the confused, unequal action was over, more than 530 German sailors had been killed and three vessels of the flotilla had been sunk, with another torpedo boat badly damaged and barely made it home. The British cruisers suffered two men killed and slight damage to Glasgow.

**Continued on page 44**



### 29 December 1861

101-gun screw-assisted line-of-battleship HMS Conqueror, on passage from Port Royal, Jamaica, to Bermuda, was wrecked on Rum Cay in the Bahamas on 29 December 1861. Commissioned in April 1856, the 3,230-ton ship served first with the Channel Squadron before moving to the Mediterranean, where she served during the Crimean War. In late 1861 she was sent across the Atlantic ferrying troops in support of the French intervention in Mexico. While on passage through the Bahamas a navigation error of around 20 nautical miles put the ship aground on the Sumner Point Reef of Rum Cay, though there was no loss of life amongst the 1,400 souls on board. The wreck lies in around nine metres of water and is now a popular dive site.

### 30 December 1780

HMS Bellona and HMS Marlborough captured Dutch warship Princess Carolina near the Goodwin Sands on 30 December 1780. Chatham-built Bellona, a 74-gun third rate launched in 1760, was a forerunner of a series of highly-successful Royal Navy warships designed by Sir Thomas Slade that formed the mainstay of Nelson's navy – including Marlborough, which was built a Deptford and launched seven years after Bellona. After an initial burst of activity (including a successful duel with the French ship Courageux at the Battle of Cape Finisterre in 1761) Bellona paid off for 18 years, and the first action she saw on being reactivated was the incident with the 44-gun Princess Carolina. Both Bellona and Marlborough continued to serve with distinction after the Goodwin Sands capture, with Bellona clocking up more than 50 years. Marlborough's career was considerably shorter; the ship was driven by storms onto rocky shallows

off the Brittany coast on 3 November 1800, and although Marlborough was wrecked, all 600 of her ship's company were rescued. Princess Carolina was put into service by the Royal Navy (under the Anglicised name Princess Caroline) and after a spell as a receiving ship she was sunk as a breakwater at Harwich in 1799.

### 31 December 1943

Bangor-class minesweeper HMS Clacton was mined and sunk off the east coast of Corsica on the last day of 1943, with more than half of her ship's company losing their life in the incident. Clacton was built by the Ailsa Shipbuilding Co at Troon in Scotland, one of a class of around 60 cheap, easy-to-build ships that served with the Royal Navy, the Royal Canadian Navy and the Royal Indian Navy. They were notoriously poor seakeepers and cramped, but they served their purpose at a time when some materials and machinery was hard to come by and space at specialist military shipyards was at a premium. Clacton, which was commissioned on 4 June 1942, was constantly in action, involved as an escort in the Torch landings in North Africa in November 1942 and the Op Corkscrew capture of the islands of Pantellaria and Lampedusa in June 1943, and also carrying out minesweeping and general escort duties between Allied ports in the Mediterranean, including Casablanca, Gibraltar and Malta. She was tasked with escorting a convoy in the Christmas period in 1943, but was sunk while on passage from Sardinia to Bastia in Corsica when she struck a mine at around 0830 on 31 December 1943. In cold conditions, with hail and sleet falling, the minesweeper sank rapidly, and 32 of her ship's company of 65 died in the sinking.

HMS Clacton under way See 31 December.  
Image from the Imperial War Museum  
collection: © IWM (FL 8129)



## 2024 -25

<b>18 Jan 2025</b>	4 Area AGM, Dorchester
<b>8 Feb 2025</b>	Area 5 Quarterly Meeting and AGM hosted by Cromer branch
<b>28 Mar 2025</b>	CONA meeting, Portsmouth Historic Dockyard
<b>3 May 2025</b>	Army v Navy rugby match, Twickenham
<b>15-18 May 2025</b>	Londonderry Battle of the Atlantic 80th Anniversary Commemoration
<b>17 May 2025</b>	4 Area meeting, St Austell
<b>20-22 June 2025</b>	RNA75 Annual Conference 2025, Portsmouth
<b>14 Sept 2025</b>	Biennial Parade, Whitehall
<b>22 Oct 2025</b>	Fisherman's Friends Charity Fundraising Concert, Portsmouth

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



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



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<b>Sea Urchin's Gin</b>	10% to RNA from the sale of each bottle
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## Delegate to Annual Conference 2025 - PORTSMOUTH

Branch secretaries should note the following before submitting their application.

*No Branch shall be permitted to send a delegate to the Conference unless it has observed the regulations of the Association in regard to the return of balance sheets, the Branch Annual Report and the formation of Branches. This provision has no application to the right of, and expectation for, ships and establishments to send a delegate to the Conference. Associate members are eligible to act as a Branch Delegate at Area meetings and Conferences, provided that they have completed three years continuous membership of the Association immediately prior to election as Delegate.*

Each Branch which has been in commission for at least three months by the date of a Conference shall be entitled to nominate one eligible Association Member as its Delegate to attend a Conference.

Each Branch nominating a Delegate shall send details to the Council **to arrive not less than one week before the date of Conference**. A Branch may change its nominated Delegate provided the Council is notified not less than twenty four hours before the Conference.

<b>Branch</b>		<b>Area</b>	
<b>Name of Delegate</b>			
<b>Delegate's e-mail</b>			
<b>Number of Observers if known</b>			
<b>Name of Branch Hon Secretary</b>			

**NB:** A Delegate will not be confirmed as such unless or until the Branch Balance Sheet for 2024 and Branch Annual Report for 2024 have been received in RNA Central Office.

Should either not have been received in Central Office, the Delegate's Status will be deemed to be that of an Observer.

Branch Secretaries are to ensure that their nominated Delegate, receives the copies of the agenda and minutes of the previous years' AGM prior to representing their Branch at the AGM. Copies will be made available at the AGM, but sight of these prior to the day is considered essential. Branch Secretaries will be forwarded this paperwork from Central Office as soon as it is finalised.

Please forward the completed form to RNA Central Office, Lanyard House, Scott Road, HM Naval Base, Portsmouth, PO1 3LU or email to [ams@rnassoc.org](mailto:ams@rnassoc.org)

**To check ahead of Conference, please call Sara on 023 92 723747**



## PROPOSED MOTIONS AND AMENDMENTS FOR ANNUAL CONFERENCE 2025

Proposals must reach The General Secretary by **1600 28 February 2025**

Name of Proposing Branch: .....

### Motion / amendment

**Explanation of the Motion / Amendment** (To be included in the notes for Conference)

Hon Secretary .....(signed).....(dated)

---

Name of Seconding Branch: .....

Hon Secretary .....(signed).....(dated)

---

### Notes

- a. A motion is submitted in the name of a Branch. Secretaries of proposing and seconding Branches are **certifying** that the motion or amendment reflects the view of the Branch meeting (not a committee); and that voting was conducted in accordance with Rule 20.
- b. A separate form is required for each Motion or Amendment
- c. A manuscript copy is acceptable for additional Motions or Amendments if the printed form is not available.
- d. The Motion or Amendment should be as short and precise as possible avoiding ambiguity. A Motion should normally start with the word 'THAT'
- e. The explanation is to assist the scrutiny of the Standing Orders Committee in understanding the intention behind the Motion so that they may be able to consider its presentation so it can be improved and implemented as soon as possible (Conference Bye Law C4)
- f. Motions may be submitted at any time but must reach the General Secretary by **28 February 2025**.
- g. Motions of Urgency should reach the General Secretary not less than 48 hours before Conference. (In accordance with Conference Bye Law C6.) and include an explanation about the urgency.
- h. Amendments to Motions should also normally reach the General Secretary not less than 7 days before Conference. The provision for the submission of amendments during Conference is in the Conference Bye-Laws.
- i. Bye-Laws. A Motion to Conference may propose that a Bye-Law be set aside or it may ask the Council to consider making or amending a Bye-Law.
- j. The Branch Proposing a Motion **must** have it Seconded by another Branch before forwarding it to the General Secretary. (Conference Bye Law C3a)

**NOMINATION FORM**  
**ELECTION OF MEMBERS AND DEPUTY MEMBERS OF THE NATIONAL COUNCIL 2025**  
**(Revised RNA Bye-Law 7)**

**For the attention of All Branch Secretaries:**

**NCM in Areas 1, 6, 7, 8, 11, Scottish and DNCM in Areas 1, 2, 3, 6, 7, 8, 9, 11, Scottish**

Each Branch may nominate **one full or life member** from any Branch within its own Area, as a Candidate for election to the National Council, and **one full or life member** for election as the Deputy National Council Member **subject to the approval of the Branch to which both persons belong.**

Please note that our current governance construct means that National Council Members are automatically Trustees of the Royal Naval Association (Charity no: 266982). Nominees for NCM should therefore ensure that they are not in any way disbarred from holding a trusteeship. If unsure, please check the Charity Commission website.

**Names of Nominees**

**NCM** ..... **DNCM** .....

**Proposed by** ..... **Branch** ..... **Area**

**Address of Nominee**

**NCM**.....

..... **e mail** .....

**DNCM**.....

..... **e mail** .....

**Brief history of nominees in the Association.** (Continue on separate sheet if necessary)

**NCM-**

**DNCM -**

Chairman ..... (signed) .....(dated).....

Secretary..... (signed) .....(dated).....

If the Candidate is **not** a member the proposing Branch, this section is to be completed by the Chairman and Secretary of the Candidate's **own** Branch.

Candidate's Branch .....

We are aware of the above nomination.

Signature of Chairman (Candidate's Branch) .....

Signature of Secretary (Candidate's Branch) .....

**Candidate**

**I accept the nomination and promise to attend as many National Council Meetings as is possible and to sit on any Committees to which I may be elected.**

Signature of Candidate ..... Dated .....

The envelope containing this completed form should be marked **NOMINATIONS FOR NATIONAL COUNCIL** and must reach RNA HQ no later than **1600 on 28 February 2025.**

Alternatively, you can scan the fully signed form and email it to [ams@massoc.org](mailto:ams@massoc.org)



**Nominations for Governance Standing Orders Committee 2025**

For the attention of All Branch Secretaries

Applications are sought for the Governance Standing Orders Committee.

Each Branch may nominate **one member** as a candidate for election to the Standing Orders Committee, **subject to the approval of the Branch to which the candidate belongs.**

Applicants should be Full or Life members. A nil return is not required.

NAME OF NOMINEE .....

PROPOSED BY ..... BRANCH

ADDRESS OF NOMINEE .....

.....

.....

E mail ..... Post code .....

**Brief history of nominee in the Association.** Continue on separate sheet if necessary.

Chairman ..... (signed).....(dated)

Secretary ..... (signed).....(dated)

If the Candidate is **not** a member of the proposing Branch, this section must be completed by the Chairman and Secretary of the Candidate's **own** Branch.

Candidate's Branch .....

We support this Nomination.

Signature of Chairman (Candidate's Branch) .....

Signature of Secretary (Candidate's Branch) .....

**Candidate - I accept this nomination and undertake to attend as many Standing Orders Committee Meetings as is possible.**

Signature of Candidate .....

This form should be forwarded to Central Office to be received no later than **28 February 2025**  
Nominations received after this date cannot be included in any Ballot required if more than two apply