



SEMAPHORE CIRCULAR



A LITTLE HELP FROM OUR FRIENDS

The famous Fisherman's Friends have agreed to raise funds for the RNA by performing a charity fundraising concert in Portsmouth on 22 October.

The band, who went stellar with the depiction of their lives on film, twice, said they are committed to supporting all those who have lived a life on the seas. The Friends will perform alongside the RNA's Community Choir, which comes from all over the UK, and also His Majesty's Band of the Royal Marines Collingwood. Expect sea shanties, sing-a-longs and

rousing military tunes...

If you are a RNA member discounted tickets are on sale right now with these links:

For the matinee performance (2pm) use <https://tinyurl.com/4zppaw3j> while for the evening performance (7pm) use <https://tinyurl.com/y4y6bezy> You can join now for free through our website and enjoy this offer, but it is only available until **16 February**, when the tickets will go on sale to the general public.

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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 7 March, with Branch Notes on 14 February and Semaphore Shorts published on 21 and 28 February.



VETERANS TAKE VIP TRIP TO LONDON

Two World War 2 veterans were invited to make a VIP trip to London last month.

RNA member Ken Benbow, aged 99, and centenarian Richard Brock, a soldier from the East Lancashire Regiment, were invited to the Radio Times Cover Party at Claridges in Mayfair. The two guests had featured on the magazine's covers for D-Day last year.

Ken, from Garstang, Lancashire, joined the Royal Navy as soon as he was old enough, initially serving on Atlantic convoy escort duties. He was then involved in supporting the D-Day Landings in June 1944, and ended up in the Pacific theatre leading up to VJ Day in August 1945. His ship, the sloop HMS Crane, covered 147,000 miles and was twice hit by torpedoes which failed to detonate.

Richard, from Preston, joined the Army as an infantryman and trained hard for the D-Day landing on Gold Beach.

He spent his 20th birthday on a Navy warship in the Thames Estuary riding out the storm which delayed the landings.

The two men were in close proximity on D-Day itself as HMS Crane was one of the ships escorting the invasion fleet into Gold Beach. His unit took part in the bitter fighting at the Battle of Normandy and onwards through France and into Germany.

The two veterans travelled to London in style, being treated to first-class train travel by Avanti – where they ran into Ben Wallace, former Secretary of State for Defence – and were then whisked across London by the Taxi Charity for Military

Veterans, to their suites as guests of Claridges.

They enjoyed an evening of wonderful entertainment, meeting numerous celebrities who were delighted to chat to the war heroes. Ken said, "It was a really wonderful night and we were treated like royalty. We even met Sir Lenny Henry!"

The following day they met with Al Carns MP, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Veterans and People, and their local South Ribble constituency MP, Paul Foster, a former Royal Engineer. Mr Carns talked about Ken and Richard's military careers, and his own as a former Royal Marines officer.

The pair were then treated to lunch in the sumptuous Naval and Military Club before returning home for a well-earned rest.

➤ CONTACTS



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

Find Semaphore Circular online at

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

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RNA Website / About / News / Semaphore Circular

Snail Mail – Postal Address

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

CHAIRMAN'S CHAT

Dear Shipmates,

Very sadly I must start my 'Chat' with the news that our former National Chairman, Shipmate Chris Dovey OBE, has crossed the bar.

Chris, as you'll all agree, was a superb Chairman whose idea it was to commission the RNA's Naval Service Memorial at the Arboretum – and what a marvellous day that was!

Chris was also instrumental in reforming RNA governance, in 2011, when along with S/M Keith Crawford, they amended the Charter and By-Laws which included AGM/Conference.

Chris will be much missed.

Shipmates and Life Vice Presidents John McAnally and Keith Ridley, along with the National Standard, were in attendance at Shipmate Chris's funeral.

Our heartfelt sympathies and thoughts are with the Dovey family at this sad time.

Church Notices...

For your information, our former National Chairman S/M Peter Godwin has taken up the reins as the National Council Member at Area 8 again. Welcome back to the National Council and thank you for your commitment.

BZ to S/M Gordon Williams, who has stood down as Area 7 Chairman. Thank you for your dedication and effort during your period in office, which was very impressive.

On behalf of all of us, BZ to S/M Steve Champion, our National Standard Bearer, for his immaculate bearing whilst attending the funerals and final deployments of Shipmates Chris and Keith.

Shipmates, a request – please may I highlight the need to review dates in the RNA National events diary when planning your own Area/Branch events.

Unfortunately, if this is not done it can result in date clashes and senior RNA guests become unavailable, which is avoidable.

Personally, I would like to say a huge thank you for kind invitations I have received from far and wide. I am attending the Area 11 AGM in March (ear defenders at the short trail!).

Sadly, I couldn't make it to the Area 5 AGM in Cromer which is a pity because there was a galley buzz that the NVCh S/M Chivs was going to open his wallet! Rumour has it that it would have been the first time since he transferred a travel warrant during a visit to Port Stanley when the Cash Office was open in 1983!!



Two Ret'd Vice Admirals with S/M Yvonne Crawford

BZ to the Central Office crew on advertising Navy v Army Rugby Tickets on Facebook – well worth a look. We have already sold over 450 tickets, but the more the merrier. For information, Central Office are not organising specific coaches, but if your Area or Branch want to organise one then please approach Central Office for financial support...over to you.

I would also like to congratulate Central Office staff Sarah Bewley and Mike Gray for their outstanding production of this year's Yearbook, which received many plaudits, Well done, Sarah and Mike.

The RN Football team will be playing the Army in an Inter-Services football fixture at Aldershot on Wednesday 26 March, kick off 1930. It would be great to see a few shipmates supporting the boys in blue. The General Secretary and I will be in attendance singing 'Heart of Oak' in the 'Jutland Cop' – see you there!

Talking football, can you believe it... my beloved Saints won a game! Now for the greatest of all escapes, I can hear you saying (and pigs might fly...)

Don't let the truth get in the way a good dit... Overheard during a recent RNA deployment whilst visiting a Greggs outlet – one very senior RNA Shipmate (Ret'd Vice Admiral) asked another very senior RNA Shipmate (Ret'd Vice Admiral) "You must be a Greggs virgin?" "No actually," said the other "I'm partial to a Greggs sausage roll" What goes on tour stays on tour...

Best wishes,

Andy

FROM THE GENERAL SECRETARY

Ahoy Shipmates!

Firstly, many thanks to Aldershot Branch for your hospitality last week when you had me round – it was much enjoyed and much appreciated. You have a great group there.

February already and I apologise if it looks expensive; we're flogging tickets for the Army v Navy match (3 May) and also the Fisherman's Friends Charity Fundraising Concert (22 October) albeit both events are still subsidised for RNA members – only until **16 February** though for the concert, after which they go on sale at full cost to the general public, and only until **3 March** for the rugby.

You can use **this link** to go straight over to buy your rugby tickets (or go to www.rnagizzet.co.uk).

And for concert tickets, for the **matinee** go to <https://tickets.portsmouthguildhall.org.uk/webshop/webticket/shop?kassierer=webpre&event=1607>

while tickets for the evening show are at <https://tickets.portsmouthguildhall.org.uk/webshop/webticket/shop?kassierer=webpre&event=1608>.

I know there has been some push back about the price of the AGM/Conference weekend – at £120, it is a bit more than some were expecting. However, this covers three social events including a drinks reception on HMS Warrior on the Friday night, a Conference Dinner on the Saturday night and a post-church garden party at Admiralty House, home of the Second Sea Lord.

We think it's great value, but the way we've negotiated the catering support makes it difficult to break down into individual events. We are listening, however, so if you want to break the cost of it into instalments and pay 3 x £40 or 2 x £60 we can certainly help with that. The split tickets are now on sale in the RNA shop, link **here** or use the www.rnagizzet.co.uk URL.

If you are still waiting on your Yearbook, they are in the process of being delivered in batches now. Mine hasn't arrived yet but Kate Aldous, some five streets away, has



hers! Not sure if it works alphabetically or by postcode, but please let us know in Central Office if, by the end of the month, you haven't received one.

I've written to the rail operators to ask if they might give us free rail travel on 14 September for the Naval Associations Parade in London. In the 80th anniversary year of the end of the war, this will undoubtedly be the final occasion for veterans of World War 2 to attend a meaningful anniversary, so please plan to come to London that day and take part. That amazing generation deserve our support.

Finally, best wishes to the Plymouth element of the RNA Choir who are meeting for their first rehearsal this Sunday.

STOP PRESS!

I've just been to the launch of the Soldiering On Awards Nominations in London. Please see the details in this Circular for the various categories (**link is here**) and please nominate individuals from your Branches either directly or through Central Office. I'm pictured (left) with other delegates at the launch – from left, Jim Holland of CARMA, Sean Connachie from Oracle, Lt Col Ren Kapur, CEO of X-Forces Enterprise and the Soldiering On Awards, and Charlotte Fiander (COBSEO).

Cheers,

Bill

INVITATION TO FALKIRK ARMED FORCES DAY AND FAMILY DAY

The Ancre Somme Association (ASA) Scotland Board of Trustees would like to invite the Armed Forces, military families, veterans, tri-Cadet

Forces, and communities to their planned Armed Forces Day and Family Day on 5 July. Organisers have planned a short parade at

11.15am from the Band Stand Falkirk to Callendar Park, after which there will be a full day of activities.

The park event commences at midday and ends at 5pm, and is organised by ASA Scotland (Charity SCIO SC048597).

Please note, no raffles or tombolas are permitted.

Stall prices are as follows: Registered charities – £25, 3 x 3 stalls – £30, 4 x 3 large stalls – £35. Stall fees are non-refundable after booking is made.

Organisers will require a copy of your Booking Form, Public Liability Form, Risk Assessment Form, Food Certificates (if applicable) etc, upon which they can then allocate you a stall and space.

All proceeds for this event support the work of ASA Scotland, which supports our Armed Forces, Military Families, Veterans, Tri-Cadet Forces, Communities and Schools across Scotland.

A booking form and joining instructions are available at the end of this Circular. For details email info@asascotland.org and for more on the charity and its work see their website at www.asascotland.org



Following a recent meeting at Central Office, RNA General Secretary Bill Oliphant presented Greenwich Hospital's Director of Grants Jonathan Ball with Honorary Membership (above), cementing an ever closer working relationship between the two organisations

CONFERENCE DEADLINES

Deadlines for documentation associated with the Annual Conference in Portsmouth on 20-22 June fall at the end of this month. Nominations for NCMs and DNCs, members of the Governance Standing Orders Committee, and proposed motions must be in by 28 February – please see the documents at the end of this Circular – click [here](#).



RNA Central Office held a minute's silence to mark the funeral of former National Chairman S/M Chris Dovey OBE. General Secretary Bill Oliphant said: "On the occasion of Chris Dovey's funeral, Central Office staff mustered to half mast the RNA house flag. Chris will always be remembered with affection and respect."

NOVEL(IST) ENTERTAINMENT

As well as being a much-loved novelist, Hampshire-born Jane Austen had strong Naval connections – two of her brothers attained the rank of Admiral, and the Royal Navy is a leading theme in two of her novels, Mansfield park and Persuasion. This year is the 250th anniversary of the world-renowned author's birthday, so the Mayor of Basingstoke and Deane's team has combined that celebration with the 80th anniversary of the end of World War 2 in order to create their Spring Charity Concert on 1 March (7.30pm) at The Anvil, Churchill Way, Basingstoke RG21 7QR.

The Mayor's charities are the North Hampshire Prostate Cancer Support Group and the Hants and Isle of Wight Community Foundation.

Tickets for the concert, which promises to be "a wonderful show, with some super surprises highlighting the amazing music that is planned", can be bought from <https://www.anvilarts.org.uk/book/instance/574001> but don't delay – tickets have been selling quickly and are likely to be in short supply.

ASSOCIATIONS NETWORK

RNA General Secretary Bill Oliphant was joined by Matt Jackson of the RMA – the Royal Marines Charity (centre) and Simon Howell of the Association of Royal Navy Officers (ARNO) (right), the trio representing the dark blue at last month's meeting of SCAN - the Single Cap Badge Association Network – in Woolwich Barracks, London.

Briefings from the Office for Veterans' Affairs (OVA) on veterans policy and the NHS were top of the hoist.



NOMINATE A SHIPMATE FOR AN AWARD!

Nominations have now opened for the 2025 Soldiering On Awards, and it's your chance to shine a spotlight on a shipmate, a branch or group that you think deserves credit for their achievements in the Armed Forces community.

The 15th Soldiering On Awards, a brand of X-Forces (XF) CIC, are the latest chapter in a programme that recognises outstanding achievements by serving personnel, veterans and family members in 12 separate categories.

Nomination workshops set the ball rolling in the next few weeks, and the whole process finishes with a spectacular awards ceremony in London which attracts national attention.

The 12 categories are:

- **Animal Partnership Award**, in partnership with Pets at Home (public vote)
- **Education, Training and Development Award**, in partnership with Reed in Partnership
- **Family Values Award** – in partnership with Pinnacle Service Families



- **Healthcare and Rehabilitation Award**, in partnership with Redwood Technologies Group
- **Defence Inclusivity Award**, in partnership with Barclays
- **Inspiration Award**, in partnership with NatWest (public vote)
- **Employee Champion Award**, in partnership with Landmarc
- **Working Together Award**, in partnership with Forces in Mind Trust
- **Business Start-Up Award**, in partnership with GKN Aerospace
- **Business Scale-Up Award**, in partnership with LSEG Foundation

- **Community Impact Award**, in partnership with BAE Systems (new for 2025)
 - **Lifetime Achievement Award**, in partnership with Oracle.
- 'Who Do You Know?' Nominations Workshops will be held online on 19 February and 10 March – you can find more details of these at <https://soldieringon.org/events/> Nominations can be made through the Soldiering On Awards Nominations Portal, which is at <https://soldieringon.org/soldiering-on-awards-2025-nominations-portal/> Nominations close on Sunday 30 March, with judging by a distinguished and wide-ranging panel taking place in April, May and June.
- Finalists in each category will be announced on 23 June, and they will be celebrated at a reception in the House of Lords the following month. The overall winner will be announced at the Awards Night in London in October.
- For full details see the Soldiering On Awards website at <https://soldieringon.org>

HMS IRON DUKE HEADS WEST

Type 23 frigate HMS Iron Duke is pictured arriving at her new home base of Devonport early in January (image ©UK Ministry of Defence Crown Copyright, 2025).

The frigate is the last to move west from Portsmouth, completing the project to gather all Duke-class ships in Plymouth.

Fresh from monitoring Russian Navy activity in the Channel last year, the ship had made a beeline for the eastern Baltic to take part in Freezing Winds.

The nine-day exercise, in the

Baltic and Gulf of Bothnia – the waters which separate NATO's two newest members, Sweden and Finland – saw both of the alliance's northern European task groups converge: Standing Maritime Group 1, comprising larger warships (such as Iron Duke), and Standing Mine Countermeasures Group 1. Freezing Winds, which involved some 4,000 people from 15



nations, was designed to help the Finns integrate into NATO with a series of exercises, training serials, port visits and diplomatic events.

INSTALMENT PLAN FOR CONFERENCE TICKETS

Some shipmates have been enquiring about the possibility of spreading the cost of the Annual Conference evening entertainment ticket. We listened, and engagement manager Dave MacAskill has come up with a plan!

A full ticket costs £120 and covers a drinks reception on board HMS Warrior on Friday 20 June, Conference dinner on the Saturday and a post-church garden party at Admiralty House on Sunday.

You are now able to pay in three instalments of £40 between now and May.

Please note, though, that these three payments are NOT for each of the three events – payment for one full, combined ticket will only be considered to have been



made when £120 has been paid. The ticket is non-refundable and a space will be reserved for you when you pay your first instalment, so please make sure you can complete the full £120 payment before initiating the first instalment.

Security details for entry to events will only be completed once you have made the full payment.

Purchases can be made through this link – www.rnagizzet.co.uk

If you have any queries about the instalment scheme, or about the Conference Evening Entertainment ticket, contact Dave on engagement@rnassoc.org or call 07596 530499.

FLORRIE'S ASHES ARE BROUGHT HOME

Richard Arthur (Florrie) Ford joined the Royal Navy on 24 September 1963 and served until 29 April 1977. In the early part of 1964, over a period of some months, more than 80 Communications Officers and Men joined the fleet aircraft carrier HMS Eagle.

Eagle was recommissioned on 14 June 1964 and undertook lots of work-up trials and exercises, with brief visits to Brest and Gibraltar, until 1 December 1964, at which time Eagle and crew departed for the first leg of their foreign deployment.

This first leg took them away for almost six months, returning to Devonport on 24 May 1965.

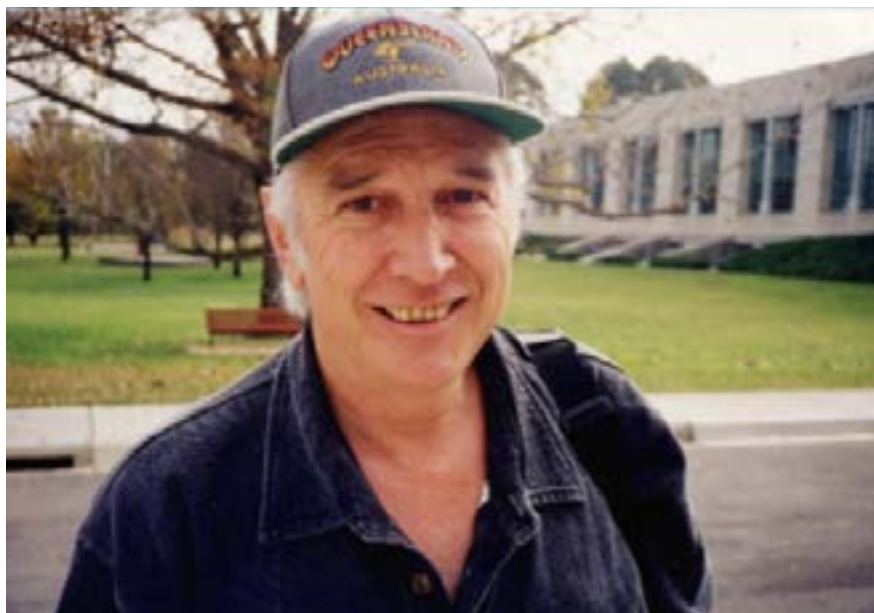
They were only back for three months before Eagle departed the UK for the second leg on 24 August 1965, arriving back in Devonport on 22 August the following year.

Many of the Communications Staff having finally completed their time in Eagle departed the ship in November 1966.

A great ship and a great bunch of lads!

Sadly, Eagle is no longer with us, having been scrapped in 1978.

At the end of their time in Eagle, the Communications Officers and Men went their separate ways; some staying with the carrier for her next Commission, others drafted to serve in other ships or shore establishments, throughout the remaining years of their Service life. Since then, each of the lads have



lived their lives in various ways, some remaining in the RN whereas others either returned to Civvy Street or, in some cases, joined other parts of the Armed Forces.

Many returned to and stayed here in the UK, whereas others decided to settle abroad, mainly in Australia and New Zealand.

At some point, Richard decided to emigrate and make his home in Melbourne, Victoria, Australia.

Some years before the year 2000, one of the old lads, Dave (Tiny) Brighton, decided that he wanted to try to find his old mates, and after a number years of trying (difficult when he only knew most of the lads surnames and nicknames but in

many cases had no idea of their first and middle names), Dave's dedication and persistence paid off and he gradually managed to find a good number of the old guys – so much so that in 2000 he was able to organise the first of the Eagle Reunions in Weymouth, attended by no fewer than 25 of the lads, plus their better halves in many cases.

Over the years, since that time, there have been a number of good reunions, but life takes its toll and in the past 24 years a good number of the lads have 'crossed the bar'.

In 2001 they lost Colin (Mowler) Mowles, and several of them attended

his funeral.

Only a small number of his family were present, so they gave them permission to take Mowler's ashes to their reunion which was to be held several days later in Weymouth.

They put Mowler's ashes on a table at the reunion, with a matelot's cap and Eagle cap tally and a pint of beer by the side of him, so their mate was with them throughout the reunion.

The day after the reunion, they took Mowler out into Weymouth Bay and scattered his ashes.

Keeping in touch with their old mates over the years has, of course, become so much easier with the advent of the Internet and social media, so they do try to keep the contact going, and they have an Eagle email address that includes many of the lads (many because, of course, not every ex-Forces man or woman wishes to remember).

Again, all of this was courtesy of their very own Tiny Brighton.

In the late part of 2023 they were advised by Frank and Averil Chadwick (Australia) and Pete and Caren Fox (NZ) that they were hoping to come back to the UK for a visit in August 2025 and suggested someone arrange a reunion for them all, to take place whilst they are here. Here in the UK they jumped at the chance and determined the reunion would be held in Dorchester/ Weymouth on 15-16 August.

To add to the mixture of events, it turned out that UK-based Alan and Sally Keenes were planning to visit their family out in Australia



Continued on page 10

early in 2025 and that they would be meeting up with Tex and Barb Scott (Sunnybank Hills, Queensland, Australia) and Frank Chadwick and Averil Traill (Townsville, Queensland, Australia), and maybe even Fred & Caren Fox (Wellington, New Zealand) to hold a mini reunion at VAPIANOS, Garden City, Mount Gravatt, Queensland.

In September of 2024, in response to a general 'how are you all doing' message to the guys, Alan (Pincher) Martin received an email from Jean Ford, in Melbourne, Australia (the wife of old mate Richard (Florrie) Ford), asking if they had heard that Richard had crossed the bar earlier in the year. Pincher replied that they had heard, and were so very sorry for her loss.

Pincher asked Jean if she wanted to be removed from the Eagle mailing list but she said NO!, she and daughter Rebecca had laughed and joked with Richard on many occasions about his antics in the Royal Navy and so was happy to continue to receive

our emails. During this exchange, Jean mentioned that it had been Richard's wish to have his ashes scattered into the sea but only by the Royal Navy.

They were very quickly able to contact the Chaplaincy, at HMS Nelson, HMNB Portsmouth, on behalf of Jean and Rebecca, and they very kindly advised them that the RN would carry out the Committal for Jean and her family. They sent the forms that Jean would need to fill out to provide them with the necessary RN Service Record of Richard.

It turned out that they could get the Royal Navy to scatter Florrie's ashes from either Portsmouth or Plymouth. However, their reunion was to take place in Dorchester, just north of Weymouth (it looks like they will have 30+ attending, including wives and other members of families) and a number of the lads wished to be present at the scattering. So in discussion with Jean, she was happy for the guys to scatter the ashes in Weymouth

Bay as she considers his old mates to still be Royal Navy. As they all do themselves.

You may begin to see a strange coincidence of things coming together, and maybe fate was helping them to arrange to carry out Florrie's wishes.

It has now been agreed that: Frank will visit Melbourne (a long trip from Queensland) and pick up Florrie's ashes from Jean and Rebecca;

Frank will then transport the ashes to the mini Eagle lads reunion that is to take place this month at VAPIANOS, Garden City, Mount Gravatt, Queensland; At that meeting Florrie's ashes will be handed over to Alan Keenes and his wife Sally, who will then transport Florrie back to the UK. Alan & Sally will also bring the ashes to our Reunion in Dorchester in August this year.

On Sunday 17 August they will embark all those who wish to attend the Committal, onto one or more boat(s) in Weymouth and, when ready, depart out to sea to scatter the ashes of Florrie Ford.

Pincher said they will do everything necessary to ensure that the wishes of Jean and Rebecca (and, of course, Florrie) are carried out. He said it goes to show that once a matelot, always a matelot.

"It is now 60 years since we first joined HMS Eagle and we are probably stronger mates now than we were back in the day," he said.

"Without the very strong dedication and determination of the founding father of our reunions, Dave (Tiny) Brighton, who now lives with his wife Diane in France, none of this would have been possible.

"As such, we asked Dave if he would be the one to scatter Florrie's ashes and he agreed, saying it will be his honour.

"These days we receive lots of information, good and bad, via social media and the newspapers and TV news. Much of it is bad news as bad news has always sold newspapers and now draws massive viewer figures for the owners of social media channels and newspapers/TV.

"In an increasingly difficult world, it is wonderful to think that friendships made over a fairly short period of time (2.5 years on one ship together) can and does result in long-lasting memories and friendships.

"By all pulling together our lads have shown the true spirit of the comradeship that is developed in all of our Armed Forces. As true today as it has been throughout time."

HMS Eagle on sea trials following an extensive refit in Devonport in 1964. Image from the Imperial War Museum collection © Crown copyright reproduced under delegated authority from The Keeper of Public Records. Image: IWM (A 34830)



WHO'S WHO IN CENTRAL OFFICE



General Secretary/CEO
Bill Oliphant
ceo@rnassoc.org



Chief of Staff
Chris Trevethan
cos@rnassoc.org



Plans Manager
Malcolm Little
dcos@rnassoc.org



EA to CEO/Governance Lead
Kate Aldous
ceo-ea@rnassoc.org
gso@rnassoc.org



Membership Secretary
Sara Field
ams@rnassoc.org



**Finance/Deputy
Membership Secretary**
Kathryn Brindley
dams@rnassoc.org



**Welfare and Wellbeing
Support**
Jon Everett
wws@rnassoc.org



Engagement Manager
Dave MacAskill
engagement@rnassoc.org



Comms Media Lead
Sarah Bewley
cml@rnassoc.org



Head of Communications
Alice Farrow
hoc@rnassoc.org



Semaphore Editor
Mike Gray
comms@rnassoc.org

RNA Central Office:
Lanyard House,
Scott Road,
HMNB Portsmouth
PO1 3LU

admin@rnassoc.org

023 9272 3747

www.royal-naval-association.co.uk

ASSOCIATION PROMOTIONAL MERCHANDISE AND MATERIAL

Shipmates, this was first sent out to Branch Officials in early 2024 and I would like to provide you with an update, writes S/M Chris Trevethan, RNA Chief of Staff.

I will try and keep this as concise as possible, and am very aware that Gizzets/Promotional Merchandise and Material are a hugely contentious issue.

Firstly, please note the title of this section – Promotional Merchandise and Material.

Without wishing to sound condescending, this is Merchandise and Material used to promote the Association and encourage individuals to join.

In the past, when there was a regular income from subs, the budget was large enough for the Association to have gizzets – items that were given away to whoever wanted one with little consideration of the likelihood of that individual, or a close relative, joining the Association, becoming active within the Association and donating money.

An example is an annual large-scale event where a Branch liked to compete against one of the Emergency Services to see how many paper hats they can give away.

In the past two years they have given away around 6,000 paper hats at a cost to the Association of over £2,000. Having researched this in depth with the Admin Team (Sara and Kathryn here in Central Office) it turns out this expense resulted in zero new joiners in the two weeks after either of these events.

In an attempt to develop a more co-ordinated and cost-effective approach to how the Association does Engagement and what Promotional Merchandise and Material is needed, I emailed all NCMs and Branch Secretaries in August 2023.

I asked what activities they had planned in 2024, what Promotional Merchandise and Material they would require and also reminded them that the National Engagements Advisor (SM Steve Caulfield) and/or the National Recruitment and Retention Advisor (SM Gareth Booth) were available to support.

Unfortunately, the response was very limited, despite sending a second email in late September 2023.

This meant that there was little money allocated in the Central

Budget for Promotional Merchandise and Material for 2024, and Central Office did not order large volumes of Promotional Merchandise and Material.

As this is our 75th Anniversary year some money has been put into the Budget for Promotional Merchandise and Material, and I would ask NCMs, Area and Branch Chairs to contact engagement@rnassoc.org with an aspirational list of items they require to support their activities in 2025. Not all items will be labelled with the RNA75 logo, but all items will be identifiable as RNA items. Once a list has been compiled, manufacture will take place with items being available on the RNA-owned and Central Office-run www.rnagizzet.co.uk.

Three Levels of Support

This initiative progressed through the AMC and FAC and was approved by the National Council on 8 March 2024, and will be used to provide financial support to the Branches and Areas that need it the most. Branches that have sufficient funds to support their own activity will not be supported by the Central Budget. Postage and Packing will be included

in the Grants to Branches.

Level 1

Branches with less than £2,000 where the Area has less than £3,000 (14 Branches) are supported by the Central Budget with a Grant of up to £200 of promotional merchandise and material.

Level 2

Branches with more than £2,000 but less than £5,000, where the Area has more than £3,000 but less than £6,000 (18 Branches) are supported by the Central Budget with a Grant of up to £150 of promotional merchandise and material.

Level 3

Branches with more than £5,000 where the Area has more than £6,000 but less than £10,000 (10 Branches) are supported by the Central Budget with a Grant of up to £100 of promotional merchandise and material.

As ever, Central Office is here to help, not hinder, and if you wish to contact the engagement team their phone number is 07596 530499 or email on engagements@rnassoc.org



The RNA started its 75th anniversary year with some excellent cross-charity collaboration. Pictured above is the team on a Working Together Workshop with the Royal Naval Benevolent Trust at Castaway House in Portsmouth, discussing the many opportunities to work together and tap into each others resources to help assist those of our members who might need help



RESULTS



Comp No.

4 CHRISTMAS 2024 COMPETITION



See the objects marked by the pink dots.

The winner receives

- 2 night stay for 2 at the Maritime Hotel, Portsmouth
- Bed & Breakfast
- Champagne & Chocolates
- Dockyard day visit for 2

Thanking the Maritime Hotel

And the winner is....

THANK YOU FOR YOUR ENTRIES

ANDREW MARSHALL

LOOK OUT FOR THE NEXT COMPETITION IN APRIL'S CIRCULAR



MIGHTY HOOD REMEMBERED

A ceremony to remember those who died with the sinking of battlecruiser HMS Hood in 1941 will take place on Sunday 25 May from midday at Bellingham Ex-Servicemen's Club, 10 Allerford Rd, London SE6 3DD.

Local Sea Cadets units will be attending, along with the London District RAF(C) Band led by the Glenduart Pipes and Drums. All are welcome to attend. HMS Hood – 'the Mighty Hood' – was the pride of the Royal Navy between the war, and a ship well-known to the British public. She was sunk in a catastrophic encounter with German battleship Bismarck and heavy cruiser Prinz Eugen in the Battle of the Denmark Strait on 24 May 1941, when a German shell detonated a magazine, ripping the ship apart and killing all but three of her ship's company of 1,418. The Bellingham club's link with Hood came about when a framed letter



was discovered in the local Royal British Legion clubhouse in 2006 by Tony Green, former vice chairman. With a little research, it was discovered that ten families in just one street – Kentwell Close – lost a loved one in the sinking, Mr Green set up the Battlecruiser HMS Hood South East London Memorial Group, based at the Bellingham club, and a renovated memorial was unveiled in the Club's memorial gardens last year – the gardens are open to the public. For more on the club see www.bellingham-exservicemens.club

SURVEY WILL HELP PLANNING

The Forces in Mind Trust (FiMT) is seeking ex-Service personnel and spouses/partners of ex-Service personnel who left the Forces in the past five years in order to take part in a virtual interview.

FiMT has commissioned QinetiQ and RAND to undertake a study to explore the transition from military to civilian life, in order to further understand what the transition process looks like today.

It is intended that the outputs from the study will be used to inform the planning, development and delivery of services in the charitable sector and within local and central government.

During the interview you will be asked questions about your experiences of the transition process and how the process was communicated to you.

The interview will take no longer than one hour and will be conducted virtually (over the phone or via video call) at a time and date that suits you.

In order to take part you must also be aged between 16 and 60 years old.

If you are interested in taking part please complete the demographic questionnaire here: <https://online1.snapsurveys.com/t6nwkm>

Please be aware that not all personnel who volunteer for the study can be selected to take part.

In terms of time frame, interviews will largely be conducted in February.

If you would like more information about the study please contact Natalie Fisher at nfisher2@qinetiq.com

RACE ACROSS THE UK FOR RNRMC

The Royal Navy and Royal Marines Charity (RNRMC) has launched the Race Across the UK - an exciting new challenge to help support Naval families. This exhilarating event invites participants to race in pairs from Edinburgh to Dartmouth, covering the length of the UK in just four days.

You'll need to partner with someone you trust – someone who will motivate you and help power through when the journey gets tough.

Together, you will tackle the UK's stunning and diverse landscapes, testing both your physical endurance and teamwork.

But here's the twist – there are no navigation apps, no cars, and no planes.

You will rely solely on your wits, a traditional map, and whatever you can carry on your back as you make your way from

one checkpoint to the next.

This challenge offers a unique opportunity to test your limits, all while raising vital funds for an exceptional cause.

The Race will take place from 2-5 September, and there is a strict limit of 50 participating pair – 100 people in all.

There is a fundraising target of £1,500 per person, and RNRMC will give you plenty of support to reach and smash that target. Participants must be 16+.

By signing up for Race Across the UK, you will play a significant part in improving the lives of those who serve our nation.

With spaces limited to just 50 pairs, apply now to secure your place and help the RNRMC make a difference.

For more details of what the event entails, see <https://lupine.co.uk/race/2025-rnrmc-race-across-the-uk.html>

SEE RN TAKE ON RAF FOR FREE

The Royal Navy's senior men's team takes on the RAF at Fratton Park in Portsmouth on Wednesday 19 March.

And you can watch this top-level Inter-Services football clash for free!

Gates open at the ground at 1745, with kick-off at 1900.

Competition between the Service teams is always fierce, and there is even more at stake this year as the Royal Navy holds the prestigious Inter-Services football title.

Last year's competition saw the Dark Blues take the Mercury Cup by beating a strong Army side 2-1, again at Fratton Park, before travelling to the Croud Meadow Stadium in Shrewsbury, where they notched a 2-1 victory against the RAF to lift the championship for the first time in eight years.



MORE POWER TO THEIR ELBOWS...

The Royal Navy's powerhouse performers were out in force last month – and the RNA was there to play its part.

And it would appear that sailors from RNAS Cudrose in Cornwall are the strongest in the Senior Service as they took the top titles at the Royal Navy Powerlifting Championships at Devonport. PO Jimmy Cain smashed the existing powerlifting record by 12.5kg, making him the strongest man in the Navy – Jimmy is pictured in action below.

And LH Katie Milne proved herself the strongest woman (above right), with another RNAS Cudrose sailor, AB Elisha Jenkins, taking second place.

PO Cain, who works in the air station's armoury, lifted

a total weight of 755kg, consisting of a 285kg squat, 195kg bench press and staggering 275kg deadlift. LH Milne, who works with the Merlin helicopters of 824 Naval Air Squadron, came first with a 310kg total, which is almost five times her bodyweight. Meanwhile AB Jenkins, who has only recently joined the Navy and is still in Phase 2 training, lifted a total of 315kg which included an 80kg bench press. This meant



she came second, due to her bodyweight compared to weight lifted using the good-lift points system.

Pictured above left congratulating PO Cain is Chris Trevethan, Chief of Staff at the RNA, which sponsored the championships.

PO Cain said: "I was over the moon to break the record. I had trained really hard for this and have been competing for and representing the Navy for five years. "I was previously the strongest man in the Navy, as the old record was held by someone who doesn't compete anymore, but this now makes me the strongest man to have ever competed in these championships.

"I'm constantly trying to encourage people into powerlifting, so to take such a prestigious record from people I have competed with, and who have helped me grow in the sport myself, really means a lot to me."

Of the 25 serving personnel who took part in the championships, nine came from RNAS Cudrose. PO Cain praised the efforts of PO Charlie Hollamby, who set up Cudrose Powerlifting Club to prepare people for the event and drum up participation. Members met every afternoon in the air station's gym for an hour and a half, going over technique, devising training programmes and working together to make sure everything was done safely.

One of those taking part was RNA member Wes McGuinness, who said he was "delighted to be collaborating with the Royal Naval Association, offering to support this year's Royal Navy Powerlifting Championships 2025 and future events. "Your dedication and commitment to the Naval community are truly inspiring, and we deeply appreciate your support.

"We look forward to building a strong partnership and working together on many exciting initiatives to come."

BZ to everyone who competed, including S/M Wes, who beat his personal best and bench pressed 197.5kg.



WELFARE AND WELLBEING UPDATE

In August 2024, a focus group was set up to investigate how the RNA delivers Welfare and Wellbeing. This group, known as the Welfare & Wellbeing Implementation Group (WWIG), was led by volunteer shipmates from branches across the country with extensive experience in Welfare & Wellbeing. The RNA's Welfare and Wellbeing guidance, policies, and procedures have now been developed and updated by the WWIG.

The WWIG will now meet periodically to ensure that we continue delivering Welfare and Wellbeing in the best way for our volunteers.

As you will soon see from the updated handbook, the National Welfare and Wellbeing Support Team (NWWST) has now been established, comprising some shipmates from the WWIG along with others with relevant experience. Branches are encouraged to engage with this update to safeguard Branch Welfare Officers and support shipmates, ensuring they are aware of current processes and practices. Rest assured, there is no proposal to alter the way Branch Welfare Officers operate; they should continue signposting and offering support to their shipmates.

The updated version of the Welfare and Wellbeing Volunteers Handbook will soon be sent out to Branch Chairs.

You may be wondering why it is being sent to Chairs. Well, while every branch has a Branch Chair, not every branch currently has a Welfare/Wellbeing Officer (BWWO). Therefore, the Branch Chair will be able to pass it on to their BWWOs or Secretaries. All updated documents will also soon be available to view on the RNA website.

Branches are also asked to update and inform Central Office of any changes in BWWOs – please email Jon Everett, the Welfare and Support Coordinator, at wws@rnassoc.org. Jon (pictured above) is also the point of contact for the RNA regarding Welfare/Wellbeing. However, please ensure that your BWWOs contact their Area Welfare Officer first to keep their information updated.

For any shipmate who doesn't know Jon, here is a little about his background.

Jon is a Shipmate from the Salisbury Branch. He served in the Royal Navy in the 1990s and saw service in HMS



Ark Royal, HMS Illustrious, and was part of the Hong Kong Handover to China in 1997, to name a few of his drafts.

Jon has grown his experience in Welfare and Wellbeing through involvement with the Royal British Legion and training as a SSAFA caseworker.

He is the current Salisbury Branch and Area 3 Welfare Officer.

Jon also works with other veterans and Service leavers, supporting their transition to civilian life, which can be a difficult process.

He is trained as a Mental Health First Aider and holds qualifications such as Safeguarding Level 3 and Advice and Guidance Level 2.

"I certainly feel that since joining the RNA, I have become part of another Naval Family that has helped

me through some dark times. My involvement in different aspects of the RNA has also helped me come through difficult times in my life and made me the person I am today," said Jon.

The RNA offers that opportunity for fulfilment, and any shipmate can be part of any aspect of the association, and they will always find a kind and friendly welcome."

"I truly believe that the updated way the RNA offers Welfare and Wellbeing will ensure that we reach as many shipmates as we can.

My role within Central Office is to offer support and guidance, to act as a central point of contact for shipmates, and to signpost them to the best area that may be able to help.

"But I encourage all Branch Welfare Officers to get to know their Area Welfare Officers so that we can once again build a Welfare and Wellbeing family and be proud of the great work we all do.

"I, for one, am very proud to be part of the Welfare and Wellbeing team, and it's an honour to support Branch and Area Shipmates and be part of the Central Office team as well."

Jon can be contacted at wws@rnassoc.org or 023 9272 3747.

RNA General Secretary Bill Oliphant said: "The RNA is not structured or resourced to provide financial welfare support to its members but is the eyes and ears to be able to assist those in need find the required support from partner charities and organisations who are funded to operate in this space, eg SSAFA, RBL, RNBT, etc. So, as far as the definition of Welfare support is concerned, the RNA provides a handrailing service to those charities who are equipped to be able to support our members in need but everything we do (lunches, meetings, trips) contributes to improved Wellbeing."

Organisation	Telephone	Website
Samaritans	116 123	www.samaritans.org
SSAFA	0800 260 6780	www.ssafa.org.uk
Naval Children's Charity	02392 639 534	www.navalchildrenscharity.org.uk
Royal Marines Charity	-	www.navalchildrenscharity.org.uk
Association of WRENS	02392 725 141	https://wrens.org.uk
RNBT	02392 690 112	www.rnbt.org.uk
RNRMC	02393 871 520	www.rnrmc.org.uk
RBL	0808 802 8080	www.britishlegion.org.uk
Naval Families Federation	02392 654 374	https://nff.org.uk
COBSEO	-	www.cobseo.org.uk
Seafarers UK	020 7932 0000	www.theseafarerscharity.org
CRISIS	0300 636 1967	www.crisis.org.uk
REFUGE	0808 2000 247	https://refuge.org.uk/
Veteran Outreach Service	02392 731 767	https://vosuk.org/
PTSD Resolution	0300 302 0551	https://ptsdresolution.org/
White Ensign Association	-	www.whiteensign.co.uk
GOV.UK for all OPs	0808 802 1212	www.gov.uk/support-for-veterans
Officer Association	020 7808 4175	www.officersassociation.org.uk
Fighting with Pride	-	www.fightingwithpride.org.uk
Help for Heroes	0300 303 9888	www.helpforheroes.org.uk
The Poppy Factory	-	www.poppyfactory.org
SAIL	0800 160 1842	https://sailine.org.uk/

VALKYRIES SWEEP ACROSS ATLANTIC

The HMS Oardacious Valkyries swept into Nelson's Harbour, Antigua, at the end of last month to become the first all-woman Royal Navy team to row across any ocean.

The quartet set out from the Canary Islands in early December on the annual World's Toughest Row, facing a gruelling 3,000-mile haul across the Atlantic.

Alongside skipper Lt Cdr Izzy Rawlinson (Marine Engineer - Submariner) was PO Aaby Aldridge (Survival Equipment Technician), Lt Cdr Nic Hall (Warfare Officer) and Lt Cdr Ali Aindow (Mine Clearance Diver Officer).

And after the trials and tribulations of life on the ocean wave (think 40ft waves, salt sores, sleep deprivation –rowing two hours on, two hours off, all day every day – and sea sickness...) the team made landfall in the Caribbean after 46 days, 12 hours and 26 minutes at sea. They made the crossing in a 28ft long Ocean Rowing Boat named Captain Jim in loving memory of Royal Navy Capt Jim Simpson, who tragically took his own life in



Image: Atlantic Campaigns

2020 – mental health is one of the key themes the HMS Oardacious organisation works to raise awareness around. The HMS Oardacious name was established in 2018, and had already completed three successful record-breaking Atlantic crossings by the time the Valkyries left La Gomera.

The British Army also contributed a pioneering all-woman team for the race, and the 'Force Atlantic' crew just beat their Senior Service rivals to the finishing line by a matter of hours.

They have been fundraising for two charities – the Royal Navy and Royal Marines Charity (RNRMC) and the Young Women's Trust – this crossing alone saw them raise £17,000 in just over a month for these organisations.

For the full story of the Valkyries, including previous Oardacious teams, see their website at www.hmsoardacious.com



Image: Atlantic Campaigns

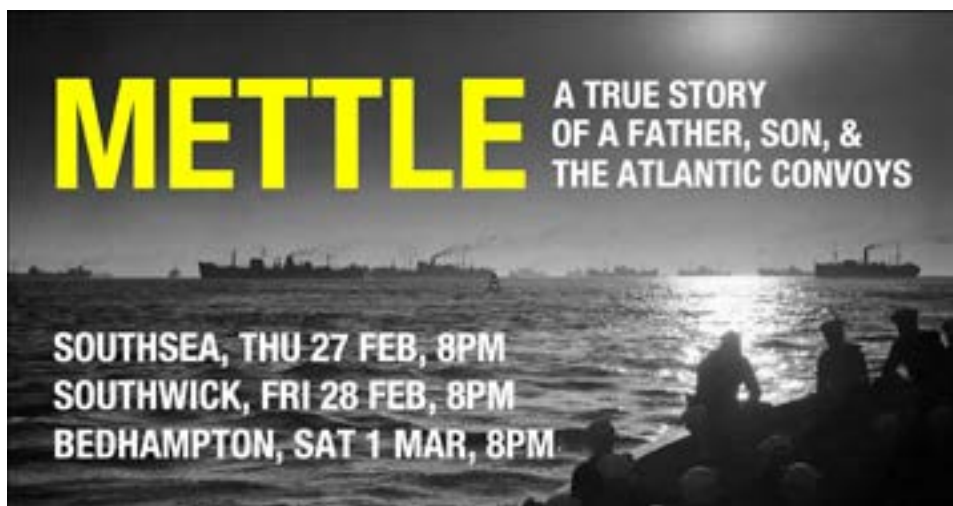
DRAMATIC ACCOUNT OF CONVOY LIFE

Multi-award-winning actor Nicholas Collett brings Mettle, a stirring true story, to the Portsmouth area, celebrating a man and his service on one of the most infamous Atlantic convoys of World War 2.

Presented by People and Stories, Mettle is also an observation of a past generation who, although quietly wrestling with demons, remained silent about their service for many years.

From his childhood through to the present day, Nicholas Collett takes us on an epic journey, retracing his father's steps: from England to the USA, Sierra Leone and Nova Scotia, reliving the utter terror of U-boat attacks and the storm-tossed ocean, and a close encounter with Glenn Miller!

Collett's father served in the battle-scarred destroyer HMS Vanessa,



an escort to Convoy SC 107, which suffered the heaviest losses of any Atlantic convoy in the winter of 1942-3. Mettle is a tale of love and loss, both moving and funny, and above all life-affirming and a salute to those we miss most.

The production was created with the support of the Daparian Foundation and the V&W Destroyer Association. The three performances, which start at 8pm, are at:

27 Feb – Dockyard Club, Southsea

28 Feb – D-Day Memorial Hall, Southwick

1 March – Bedhampton Community Centre

For more information on the show and tickets see www.peopleandstories.co.uk/mettle

RNA members can buy tickets at the special discount price of £10 each, using the code **RNADISCOUNT**, which is applied at checkout. There is no limit to the number of tickets that members can book.

DRAMA REFLECTS ON IMPACT OF THE WAR

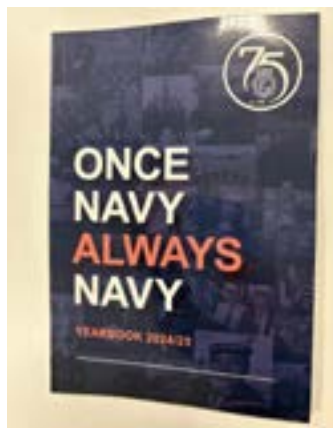
Bromley-based Burnt Ash Drama Association are staging a play to mark the 80th anniversary of the end of World War 2.

Taking Sides by Ronald Harwood serves as a poignant reminder of the lingering impact of the war on individuals and societies. Set in the immediate aftermath of the conflict, this gripping drama delves into the complexities of navigating moral dilemmas and confronts the choices made during wartime, prompting audiences to reflect on questions of collaboration, resistance, and the pursuit of truth in the face of historical injustice.

With powerful performances and thought-provoking dialogue, Taking Sides challenges audiences to confront the grey areas of history and ethics.

The play will be staged 20-22 February, 7.45pm, at St Andrew's Hall, Burnt Ash Lane, Bromley BR1 5AF.

Tickets available from www.ticketsource.co.uk/bada or by calling 07482 952550.



Last year was a busy one. This year will be even more so. The RNA 2024/25 Yearbook aims to capture what the Association is all about – and you should have your copy by now. If you are a member of the RNA and haven't received your copy yet, please let Central Office know.

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

VIRTUAL NETWORKING FOR MILITARY ENTREPRENEURS

A networking event for businesses led by members of the military community is to be held online next month.

Force For Business: Virtual Networking for Military Entrepreneurs will be staged on Thursday 20 March, from 10am – 11am.

This is part of a unique joint partnership between X-Forces Enterprise (XFE) and the Federation of Small Businesses (FSB) to provide regular opportunities to bring together business owners from the Armed Forces community to network, exchange knowledge, and build contacts across the whole of the UK.

Whether you are new to networking and looking for a friendly place to start, or seeking an opportunity to grow your contacts within a community of inspiring business leaders, this could be just the ticket.

The event will feature a brief presentation from Suzanne Brock, a former member of the Armed Forces community who is now active in the business environment.

Suzanne's career, spanning bomb disposal to founding a leading pet food brand,

exemplifies resilience and the power of reinvention.

Following this, the meeting will move into breakout rooms, allowing attendees the space for further discussion on the theme or to share any other topics of interest.

This is a space to network in a friendly and supportive environment.

The networking sessions are open to all businesses - both FSB members and non-members, XFE beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries.

Although this event could be particularly useful to veterans, Service leavers, reserves, cadets and their families, everyone is welcome to embrace the wider business community, grow community cohesion, and exchange knowledge.

For help and support regarding this event, please telephone the dedicated events helpline (01253 336028) or email csdeventsupport@fsb.org.uk
BOOKING: <https://www.fsb.org.uk/ems-event-booking-page.html?id=6FF829FC-A808-4F15-B33645FBF9CFE00D>

REMEMBERING THE LOSS OF HMS VESTAL

This year marks the 80th anniversary of the sinking of HMS Vestal on 26 July 1945. She was the last Royal Navy ship lost in World War 2, and also the only RN vessel lost to a Japanese Kamikaze attack. 20 men died as a result.

David D'Arcy's father, S/Lt Michael D'Arcy RNVR, was on board Vestal that day

and David is hoping to visit the memorial at Portsmouth which recognises Vestal and those lost.

Are there were any other relatives of the men who served in Vestal who would like to meet up on Saturday 26 July in Portsmouth.

He wondered if there might even be some veterans from

the ship still around to join in as well?

The National Museum of the Royal Navy have the Ship's Bell and Battle Ensign, which could be a good picture opportunity.

If anyone is interested, please email David on davidmhd.dd@gmail.com or call him on 07739 025021.

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 for more details

BUILDING A CAREER IN CONSTRUCTION

Skills Launchpad Plymouth are delighted to support The Forces Employment Charity in partnership with Building Plymouth to host an important regional networking event at the National Marine Aquarium in Plymouth on 11 March. Pathways into Construction and The Built Environment is a fantastic opportunity in the heart of the city for the Armed Forces community to meet employers and learn more about a career in this wide-ranging sector.

The evening will include two panel sessions featuring experts in the sector, followed by an 'employment marketplace' where delegates can network with companies who are actively hiring across the South West.

For more information and to book your place follow this link: <https://tinyurl.com/45tmp2je>

Also see the poster at the end of this Circular – click [here](#).

The Forces Employment Charity (FEC) provides life-long, life-changing support, jobs and training opportunities to Service leavers, veterans, reservists and their spouses, partners and children.

See <https://www.forcesemployment.org.uk> for more details.

THANK YOU, SHIPMATES!

S/M Yvonne Crawford has written to Central Office and asked us to pass on the following message.

"Re Keith Crawford MBE.

Dear Shipmates, On behalf of myself and all of Keith's family a big thank you to all who sent cards, letters, telephone calls, to standard bearers, Guard of Honour and all who attended his funeral.

"You did him proud."

Ex-Military

Tired of your health affecting the **cost** of your travels?



Sign up to our 40+ travel insurance scheme to enjoy
worldwide cover with no medical declaration required.

*TERMS AND CONDITIONS APPLY. ALL INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHEME AVAILABLE AT:
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 Naval community. Once players have registered online they will be entered into the draw every Friday they are in credit (£1 per line, per week).

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

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

Visit www.RNALottery.co.uk to sign up.

EMPLOYMENT BRIEFINGS

If you are looking for life-long, life-changing support, jobs and training opportunities for Service leavers, veterans, reservists and their spouses, partners and children, then you might like to try the Forces Employment Charity (FEC). For their latest briefing, and details on how to register, see <https://tinyurl.com/tk38sth5>

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

SPORTS AND COMRADESHIP GROUPS

Different name but same objectives... Shipmates might be interested to become involved with the popular and successful RNA Sports and Comradeship Groups (SCGs), formerly known as Special Interest Groups (SIGs). Whether you are already a part of a group or are yet to join one we recommend you get involved and see what it's all about. For more information on each group please contact the designated leaders, listed below:

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

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

Cricket – Mark Smith : Markmiff1962@gmail.com

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

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

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

Genealogy – Mike Wilkinson: mike.j.wilco@gmail.com

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

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

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

RNA Football Club – scc@rnassoc.com

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

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

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

MONDAY NIGHT FIRESIDE CHATS

The subject of next Monday's Fireside Chat (10 February) will be the RNA's new Sailing Sports and Comradeship Group, and will be delivered by David Monks.

The programme on the right shows confirmed talks; more dates are being added – keep an eye on the Circular, the Semaphore Short and our Facebook page for more details as they are confirmed.

■ **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](#)

Date	Presenter	Subject
Mon 10 Feb	David Monks	RNA Sailing Sports and Comradeship Group
Mon 17 Feb	Bill Oliphant	Plans for RNA75
Mon 10 March	Audrey Stevenson	RN aircraft engineer and beyond
Mon 28 April	Charlie Knight	Raring to Row
Mon 19 May	Rob White	HMS Hood – the recovery of the bell
Mon 2 June	Mike Milne	HMS Kelly and the Crete Campaign

* Lecture subjects may change at short notice.

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



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**

royal-naval-association.co.uk



➤ BRANCH NEWS

CHRISTCHURCH Branch

Christchurch Branch stepped in to support the Christchurch Food Bank after a recent break-in and theft of food intended for needy people. Branch President Rick Squibb and Chairman Cliff Espin presented a 'cheque' for £100 to Food Bank Manager Tracy Blick and Support Worker Deborah Marshall at their recent branch meeting. Tracy thanked the members of the Branch for the Donation which would help greatly in replacing the stolen stock.



FROME Branch

Frome Branch has organised a Charity Concert in the town, featuring the talents of the HMS Heron RN Volunteer Band. The concert, on Saturday 15 February, will be staged at Frome Assembly Rooms, starting at 7.30pm. Tickets cost £15 per person, and net proceeds will go to the Frome Branch Charitable Trust. For more details on the evening contact info@fromememorialtheatre.org.uk or call the box office on 01373 462795.



AREA 7

A spot of standard bearer training is undertaken by members of Area 7 at Swansea, including S/M Gordon Williams (second right), who has recently stood down as Area 7 Chairman.

ST NEOTS Branch

Sadly, St Neots Branch has lost Anne Sanders, who passed away after a long illness. Anne was the daughter of Lt Cdr Robert Evans Sherwood RNR (Atlantic Convoys). Anne had kindly presented the RNA with her late father's sword which has become the Sherwood Trophy and is presented at National Conference each year. This was presented to St Neots Branch at Conference in 2024 for which Anne was immensely proud. She will be sadly missed by our members.

At the December Branch Meeting three cheques were presented to nominated good causes.

Every year the Branch presents a box of Heroes chocolates to St Neots Ambulance, Fire and Police Stations, and also the A&E Department at our local Hinchingbrooke Hospital to thank them all for their services to the community. This year they also included Huntingdon Ambulance, Fire & Police Services, and Huntingdon paramedic Katherine Bayley is pictured above.



STOWMARKET Branch

Some news from the rather good Stowmarket branch newsletter Gen Dit.

The new Naval Memorial in the Rose Garden in Bury St Edmunds will be dedicated in a ceremony at 1300 on Sunday 4 May.

This memorial has been made possible thanks to shipmates and friends of Stowmarket branch. While full details are still to be confirmed, mark the date in your diary, as it will be a significant and meaningful event to commemorate our Naval history and honour those who have served.

4 May already holds much significance, of course, as it is the anniversary of the deadly attack on destroyer HMS Sheffield, which was struck by an Exocet missile

during the Falklands War in 1982 killing 20 sailors, and sank while under tow almost a week later. This will be a poignant reminder of those who have died as a result of conflict and wars since the end of World War 2.

On another matter, members of Stowmarket branch were delighted to learn at the beginning of January that S/M Dave Heffer has received the honour of being made a Freeman of the City of London, one of the oldest traditional civic ceremonies still surviving today, and believed to have been first presented in the 13th Century. The medieval term 'freeman' meant someone who was not subject to a feudal lord but enjoyed privileges such as the right to earn money and own land.

Town dwellers protected by the charter of their town or city were often free – hence the term 'freedom' of the City. From the Middle Ages and the Victorian era, the Freedom was the right to trade, enabling members of a Guild or Livery to carry out their trade or craft in the Square Mile in London.

A fee or fine would be charged, and in return the livery companies would ensure that the goods and services provided would be of the highest possible standards. In 1835, the Freedom was widened to incorporate not just members of livery companies but also people living or working in the City or those with a strong London connection.



NORWICH Branch

Norwich Branch shipmate John Kett joined other hardy (and slightly mad) souls for a bracing dip at Happisburgh Lifeboat Station (Eccles-on-Sea) in Norfolk for one of the nationwide Cold Dip Commando events in aid of the RMA Royal Marines Charity and other military charities. Inspired by former RM Commando Tim Crossin, who died shortly before

Christmas, the Dip was part of a UK-wide challenge to complete a cold-water dip or swim every day in January, going to a new location clockwise around the coast of the UK. The rules are simple – no wetsuit, just standard swimwear and a beret (green or otherwise – see above!) and a smile are all that are required. Norwich Branch have also

sponsored the second veterans 'Coffee and Comrades' event at the Community Sports Foundation, pictured below. Plenty of chat, laughter, brews and bacon rolls, plus information about support and initiatives to ensure local veterans are not left isolated or forgotten.



OBITUARIES

S/M CHRIS DOVEY OBE

A Memorial Tribute by Shipmates Mick Kieran, Paul Quinn and John McAnally

While at the well attended and moving funeral of former National Vice Chairman Shipmate Keith Crawford MBE we received the sad news that his colleague, former National Chairman Lt Cdr Chris Dovey OBE had crossed the bar. This is, I think, the first time Chris's rank has been mentioned in an RNA document. Thoroughly imbued with the spirit of the RNA, he never flaunted it any more than he did the Green Beret he had gained through passing the arduous All Arms Commando Course before serving as the Education Officer of 42 Commando RM.

Chris was not born with a silver spoon. Far from it. He had four younger brothers and was raised by a farm labourer's daughter and a lorry driver. He began earning his own money from the age of 11, working his way through grammar school. Highly intelligent, he was the only pupil of 45 to achieve all A grades at A-Level in the challenging subjects of Maths, Physics and Chemistry. The A* grade did not exist then, but if it had I am sure that is what Chris would have got.

He spent 35 years of his life in defence of his country, serving 16 in the RN and RM and 19 as a civilian technical lecturer with the Army and RAF.

Chris never forgot his roots, and this and his warm and self-effacing personality enabled him to establish an easy rapport with all ranks while serving and with all Shipmates.

These aspects of his personality are beautifully described by Mick Kieran who writes: "As you go through life, sometimes you are lucky enough to encounter a very special person. I had that privilege when many years ago I met Chris Dovey.

"He was a man who believed in the common good, not self.

Whether he was driving the local community bus or carrying out duties locally or nationally for the RNA he had the ability to meet people at their level, be it lord or lowly OD such as me.

"If you had a RNA problem, it was his problem and he would never belittle you for your point of view.

"If an idea was presented and was worthy of pursuing he would push it forward but he would make it known that it was your idea not his.

"He had the knack of making everyone feel as if they were valued, whether their contribution was great or small, and he was always first to congratulate members for even the smallest of achievements.

"His aim was to make us look good and he did. So, my friend, as your watch has now ended and your duty

is done – and done well – rest easy. BZ, which for those of us whose recollection of the operational brevity code is a bit rusty translates as 'manoeuvre well executed or well done'."

Chris joined the RNA in 1992, four years after leaving the Active List. Returning to his home town of Tenbury Wells he found a Branch formed three years earlier and served as Branch Secretary for 12 years, social events organiser for 15 and Branch delegate to Area and Conference for five years, after which he became the Area Treasurer for another seven years. Some of these must have been concurrent.

Following that he became Area Deputy NCM and then NCM for 8 Area. He also served as a District Counsellor, and as Mick said earlier, used to drive a minibus taking aged local residents on social outings.



Elected National Chairman in 2012 Chris served in that office until 2018. He stood down to a well-deserved standing ovation at Conference when Paul Quinn, General Secretary, wrote: "Chris has been an outstanding NCh.

"I have seen for myself his sheer dedication, driving the length and breadth of the country to put himself in the firing line at Area and Branch meetings. Always polite, respectful and a great listener, Chris is a passionate and devoted member of the RNA who believes in saying it as it is.

"The RNA is a great place for conspiracy theories, with 'HQ' accused of many dastardly plots. Chris has led the RNA and National Council to be an organisation of complete openness, transparency and honesty.

"It was his idea to champion the change of emphasis to a



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Central Office responsible for support and to emphasise the role of the National Council in making decisions, underlying the democratic accountability of all RNA activity.

"I reckon that I email him at least ten times a day with a phone call twice a week to discuss issues and for him to give me guidance – he has had his hands on the tiller very firmly for six years.

"I shall miss his wise advice, comradely arm round the shoulder when I need a hug, and massive common sense. A big thank you to Gail too, who has supported him throughout and is a much loved member of the team."

Perhaps one of Chris's greatest achievements was the Naval Service Memorial at the National Arboretum. It was Chris's idea that one should be established to mark the 50th anniversary of the grant of a Royal Charter to the RNA.

The product of three entrants in a nationwide competition for the design, it is strikingly original, consisting of a set of different sized glass panels coloured to represent the five oceans and so shaped that as the sun moves through the sky it casts a shadow on the granite platform which resembles a ship.

At one end stands a figure looking westward with head bowed – at the going down of the sun we will remember them.

The figure is dressed in what look like bell bottoms and is holding a cap behind him and thus resembles a sailor.

This much-visited and admired structure can be Chris's memorial too. The day after his funeral a number of Shipmates accompanied his family to lay a wreath there in his memory.

Sadly, in later years Chris was afflicted with Parkinson's disease, but few have lived such a life of service to Nation, Community and the RNA. His OBE was very richly deserved. Rest in peace Shipmate.



S/M MICHAEL GRAVES

S/M Michael Graves Crossed the Bar during the night of 19 January at the age of 99, having been admitted to Frimley Park Hospital in Surrey a few weeks ago with a severe chest infection.

Michael finally joined Bracknell RNA (after saying he would do so for many years!) in January 2021, and he would have reached his hundredth birthday on 1 July this year.

He joined the RN as an Ordinary Seaman in 1944 and over

the years undertook various training at HMS Ganges, HMS Royal Arthur, and HMS Sultan in Port Said, Egypt. He served in HMS Sheffield, HMS Chiddingfold, HMS Bigbury Bay, ML1387 in the British Pacific Fleet and in UK waters around the Clyde and Dunoon. He then retired from the Navy as an Acting Lieutenant RNVR.

Michael was a 'larger than life' character with a huge heart – a real gentleman – and will be greatly missed by all who knew him.

CAPTAIN TONY HALLETT

Capt Tony Hallett, who managed to create two careers of great impact, has died on 21 January at the age of 79.

Born in Bognor Regis and educated at Ipswich School, Capt Hallett joined BRNC Dartmouth in 1963, the start of a distinguished 30-year career in the Senior Service that saw him working at the heart of the Royal Navy at significant moments.

A rugby man through-and-through, Tony played for the RN senior XV, making his Twickenham debut in 1966 and going on to captain his team to victory against the Army four years later. In 1971, while serving as Flags for CinC Hong Kong, he won a 'cap' for the colony side against a touring England team, losing 26-0.

Tony, a pusser, served in several ships, including HM Ships Eskimo, Invincible and Illustrious; he was a junior Secretary to the Admiralty Board, and was Secretary to COS at HQ in Northwood during the Falklands Campaign.

He was, naturally, a driving force behind Navy and military rugby, particularly adept at finding novel ways of funding the sport through sponsorship, and that drive was harnessed by the Rugby Football Union at a critical period in the development of the modern game. Tony fought hard to oversee England's move from 'shamateurism' to the professional game, opening the way to lucrative broadcasting deals and commercial investment, and he was also a crucial voice backing the creation of European club rugby competitions.

He switched from the RN to the RFU full-time in 1995, when he took on the position of Secretary of the RFU for two turbulent years, setting a course to what we recognise as modern rugby union. His pusser's training always served him well – he initiated several infrastructure and development projects at Twickenham, modernising famous old stadium in South London, and was a key member of teams that overhauled outdated processes within the RFU which still operate successfully today.

Tony also managed to serve as Chief Executive of several companies, and was part of the team that saw the current Richmond Rugby Club emerge from their financial difficulties in the 1990s.

S/M JIM TILLER

When he signed up for the Royal Navy in the midst of war, little did S/M Jim Tiller know that he would be party of one of the most significant moments in the conflict.

Jim, from the East End of London, and who died at the age of 99 last month signed up as a 17-year-old in 1942 at Devonport, where he was working at the time helping to build an airfield for the Americans.

He opted to be a stoker, like his father, who served in HMS Britannia during World War 1.

Jim joined the brand-new 2,300-ton Paladin-class destroyer HMS Petard on the Mersey, and began by escorting a convoy to South Africa in late July 1942. Petard then joined a northbound convoy into the Mediterranean, detaching en route and making her way to Alexandria, from where she carried out anti-submarine patrols and convoy protection duties.

It was while operating here that Petard made a name for herself.

Alerted to the presence of the German U-boat U-559 70 miles off the Nile Delta, Petard, along with HM Ships Pakenham, Dulverton and Hurworth, scoured the waters for the enemy submarine, then helped press home a ten-hour depth-charge attack, forcing the damaged boat to the surface where she was peppered with gunfire.

As the Germans scrambled from their doomed submarine, three brave souls from Petard headed in the opposite direction.

Petard's First Lieutenant Lt Tony Fasson and AB Colin Grazier – whom Jim knew – dived into the sea and climbed aboard U-559, going below to see if there was anything that could be salvaged. Spotting an Enigma coding machine – an essential element of the Germans' secret maritime code system – the men took the moveable parts, some documents and charts and handed them up to NAAFI civilian canteen assistant Tommy Brown, who had jumped aboard the submarine in the dark and managed to pass the precious items to Petard's seaboat, which was lying alongside the U-boat.

Fasson and Grazier were still searching for more when the boat suddenly sank, taking them down to their death.

16-year-old Brown managed to jump from the casing, but would die in a house fire back home in 1945 while attempting to rescue his young sister – a true hero to the end.

Their gallant action resulted in the Enigma elements finding their way to Bletchley Park, allowing the Allies to read the enemy's encrypted signal traffic within weeks and thus route Atlantic convoys around U-boat wolf packs, saving countless lives and



protecting vital supplies.

Just before Christmas 1942 Petard evaded torpedoes from Italian submarine Uarsciek, then joined Greek warship Queen Olga in forcing the boat to the surface, where the Allied ships fired at her before Petard sank her by ramming.

In early 1944 the destroyer sailed with a convoy through Suez to the Far East. On 12 February that year Petard was involved in an action with the giant Japanese submarine I-27, which had torpedoed Allied troopship Khedive Ismail. After another prolonged attack, in company with sister ship HMS Paladin, the Japanese boat was destroyed, giving Petard the rare honour of being directly responsible for the sinking of submarines from all three main Axis powers.

Jim was then transferred to American lend-lease landing ship HMS Highway, and expected to take part in the final assault on Japan when the atomic bombs brought the war to an end in August 1945.

Jim left the Navy in 1946 at Devonport and headed back to London – the first time he had been home in four years. He considered signing on again, but instead joined Express Dairies as a driver, rising to become transport manager.

He still kept in touch with shipmates from Petard, including one who emigrated to Australia after the war, and whom he visited more than once. Jim's funeral is at 10.30am on 26 February at Easthampstead Park Cemetery and Crematorium, South Road, Wokingham RG40 3DW.



FEBRUARY 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). 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 February 1953

Submarine HMS Sirdar, in a dry dock in Sheerness with part of her hull plating removed, and Castle-class corvette HMS Berkeley Castle, foundered when the sea defences of Sheppey were breached on 1 February 1953 during the North Sea Flood. 1,010-ton S-class boat Sirdar was built on the Clyde at Scotts of Greenock and commissioned in September 1943. Sirdar spent most of her war in the Far East, sinking a number of minor enemy vessels including a Japanese guardboat. Retained after the war, Sirdar joined sisters HM Submarines Scorchier and Scythian in the hunt for missing submarine HMS Affray in 1951, at one stage sitting on the seabed for hours to allow ASDIC-equipped vessels to recognise a submarine on the bottom. Sirdar was undergoing a refit in dry dock at Sheerness when the North Sea flood of 1953 inundated the dock caissons in the early hours of 1 February 1953. On a bright moonlit night, in gale force winds, sentries had spotted that water was surging over the dockyard jetties despite the fact that it would not be high water for another two hours, and as a small party of seven men went to investigate, the floodwater displaced the main lock caissons and caused a rush of water into the dock, knocking the shoring blocks away and causing Sirdar and frigate HMS Berkeley Castle to capsize. A somewhat more valuable boat – trials submarine HMS Seraph, which was afloat at the far end of the dockyard – was boarded by the rescue party and her engines started, along with them to keep the boat alongside under her own power until the tide began to ebb once more. Accounts vary as to Sirdar's fate;

some say she was a write-off, others that she was refloated and returned to service before being broken up in the summer of 1965. Berkeley Castle, a 1,660-ton convoy escort which was commissioned just a month after Sirdar, served on Atlantic convoys and in home waters during the war, and went into reserve after a spell as an air-sea rescue vessel. After the Sheerness capsizing she was refloated but was deemed beyond repair and broken up in 1956. The North Sea Flood, which affected the Netherlands, Belgium and the UK on the night of 31 January to 1 February 1953, was an exceptional storm surge caused by a severe storm and spring tides that overwhelmed sea defences and inundated low-lying land; more than 1,800 people died in the Netherlands, 326 died in the UK and there were 28 casualties in Belgium.

2 February 1942

Veteran destroyer HMS Westcott sank U-581 south-west of the Azores on 2 February 1942. The W-class destroyer was built during World War 1 and commissioned seven months before the Armistice, but saw little action in her role supporting the Royal Navy's Battlecruiser Force out of Rosyth. After the war Westcott deployed to the Baltic with the Second Destroyer Flotilla as part of British operations in the Russian Civil War, and the following year spent some months in the Mediterranean, attacking Turkish forces ashore in the Greco-Turkish War. Reassigned to the new Sixth Destroyer Flotilla, Westcott was refitted in 1930-31, and reduced to Reserve status in April 1935. She was briefly reactivated in September that year because of the Abyssinia Crisis; on 18 March the following year one of her sailors died and a further ten were injured by an accidental explosion during exercises in the Med. On the outbreak of war Westcott was attached to the Fourth Submarine Flotilla on the China Station, but switched back to the Mediterranean in early 1940. Within weeks she was back in home waters, and took part in operations in the Norwegian Campaign before escorting convoys in the North Atlantic – in September 1940 she was escorting inbound Convoy SC 2 when it was the victim of

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the first successful 'wolfpack' U-boat attack of the war. Westcott was also the test bed for Hedgehog anti-submarine mortars, and the first warship to be fitted with the system to be deployed against enemy submarines. On the night of 1-2 February 1943 Westcott was one of three destroyers tasked with escorting damaged troopship MV Llangibby Castle from Horta in the Azores to Gibraltar, and came under attack from U-581 which was loitering around one of the entrances to the harbour. Technical problems forced the submarine to surface, at which point Westcott first attempted to ram the boat, then dropped shallow-set depth charges around her. A second ramming attempt finished off the U-boat, which sank with four of its crew, although 40 German sailors scrambled aboard Westcott and HMS Croome and another man managed to swim ashore. Westcott escorted a number of crucial convoys to Malta in 1942, several of which delivered a large number of Spitfires to the besieged island; she was also an escort for Operation Pedestal in August that year. During Operation Torch, the Allied landings in North Africa in November 1942, she and destroyer HMS Achates combined to sink two Vichy French submarines. On her return to the UK Westcott was converted to a long-range escort and saw out the rest of the war before being scrapped in 1946. U-581 was a novice submarine; commissioned on 31 July 1941 she only sailed for her first patrol on 1 December the same year and was sunk at the end of her second war patrol, having one possible victim to her name – armed trawler HMT Rosemonde.

3 February 1847

Wooden paddle sloop HMS Thunderbolt grounded on Cape Recife when entering Algoa Bay in South Africa. The ship was run ashore at the mouth of Baken's River, and the ship's company lived in tents ashore. Salvage was abandoned on 21 May. A court martial found that the commanding officer ignored charts and trusted his eye instead. The reef is now known as Thunderbolt Reef, and the ship's wreckage is under reclaimed land.

4 February 1949

Battleship HMS Royal Sovereign was returned by the USSR on 4 February 1949 after five years' service as Arkhangelsk. The 30,500-ton Revenge-class warship was completed just before the Battle of Jutland in May 1916 and joined the Grand Fleet, but never saw action during the Great War. She served with both the Mediterranean and Atlantic Fleets in the 1920s, and although refitted in 1929 Royal Sovereign was never significantly modernised, thus by the outbreak of World War 2 she was already somewhat outdated. Early in the war she was responsible for patrolling the Iceland-UK gap for German shipping, then transferred to Nova Scotia on convoy escort duties. In 1940 she moved to the Mediterranean, based at Alexandria, but her slow speed meant she missed out on the heat of battle more than once. Another spell on Atlantic convoy duty ended when she was transferred to the Far East to deter Japanese ambitions, operating in the Indian Ocean from early 1942 until the beginning of 1944, leaving the theatre for a six-month refit in Philadelphia in the United States in mid-1943. On 30 May 1944 Royal Sovereign,

at that time in Scapa Flow, was loaned to the Soviet Navy as the Arkhangelsk, making her the largest ship in the Red Fleet. She sailed to Kola with Convoy JW 59, narrowly avoiding being hit by torpedoes from U-711, and anti-torpedo netting also prevented subsequent attacks by German submarines while the battleship was moored at Kola. She spent the rest of the war escorting Arctic convoys into Kola, a Russian crew having taken over completely from the end of August 1944. She is thought to have run aground in late 1947, and was returned to the Royal Navy on 4 February 1949, although the Soviets had claimed the ship was not sufficiently seaworthy for the voyage back – it is thought the Soviet Navy would have liked to have kept the battleship for themselves. Once back in Rosyth the elderly battleship was given a thorough inspection and found to be of little use to the Royal Navy. She was scrapped at Inverkeithing from May that year, though part of the mechanism from her main gun turrets was repurposed for the iconic 76m Mark I radio telescope at Jodrell Bank in Cheshire, a hugely important structure in the exploration of space.

5 February 1836

14-gun schooner HMS Pike was wrecked on Bare Bush Key, off the south coast of Jamaica, on 5 February 1836. Official records state that the 250-ton sailing vessel, also described as a cutter, was lost through the negligence of her commanding officer Lt Brooking, who was dismissed from service at a court martial in Bermuda in June 1836; a Master's assistant, Mr Stokes, was also dismissed, while a Mate, Mr Mitchell, was found to have torn a page or pages out of the ship's log, and was given a three-month spell in the Marshalsea prison in London. Pike began life in New Orleans in Louisiana as the privateer schooner Dart, launched in 1813 and captured later that year by the powerful 38-gun frigate HMS Niger. Dart was taken to Devonport where she was fitted out as HMS Pike and commissioned for the Newfoundland Station. She underwent at least two refits and spent much time surveying the coast of Ireland and the west of Scotland before being paid off in 1835, but was back under the White Ensign at the start of the following year, just weeks before she was lost on the Pelican Reef in Bare Bush Key while en route from Port Royal to Montego Bay. Her crew and most of her stores and equipment were saved.

6 February 1845

HMS Terrible was launched at Deptford Dockyard on 6 February 1845 – designed to be the largest wooden steam-powered paddle frigate ever designed for the Royal Navy. Originally named HMS Simoom, and renamed just before Christmas 1842, the ship was made of mahogany, teak and oak, and sported three masts and four funnels; her armament originally consisted of 16 guns, half of them 68pdrs, the rest 56pdrs. She saw service in the Channel and Mediterranean, then in late 1853 sailed from Portsmouth for the Crimea, taking part in the bombardment of Sevastopol. She was also given some unusual special tasks. In 1866 she helped Isambard Kingdom Brunel's SS Great Eastern complete the first successful transatlantic cable

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between the British Isles and the United States – one part of the cable, which had been lost in mid-Atlantic on an earlier endeavour, was grappled from the seabed and after several attempts was spliced in to complete the transatlantic link. Three years later Terrible acted as the 'rudder' when a specially-constructed floating dry dock was towed across the Atlantic from Madeira to Bermuda. The dock was towed by HM Ships Warrior and Black Prince, while Terrible was lashed astern to steer the unwieldy vessel in a voyage that took 39 days. Terrible was broken up in 1879.

7 February 1919

Paddle minesweeper HMS Erin's Isle was struck by a mine in the Thames Estuary early in the morning of 7 February 1919 – more than three months after the end of World War 1 – and sank rapidly, killing more than 20 sailors. The ship began life as the Glasgow-built paddle pleasure steamer PS Erin's Isle, plying her trade on Belfast Lough in Northern Ireland for the Belfast and County Down Railway starting in July 1912. She spent four summer seasons shuttling between Belfast, Bangor and Larne, but in October 95 the Admiralty took a close look at the 630-ton vessel and decided she could be used as an auxiliary minesweeper, requisitioning her for £400 per month from 20 November. She successfully negotiated her way through the war, and was retained after the Armistice to help clear the multitude of mines that had been sown around the British coast – one of which caused her destruction. On 6 February 1919 she left Sheerness and moored for the night in the Edinburgh Channel at the mouth of the Thames Estuary, just off the Nore sandbank. Shortly after 0600 on 7 February, while the steamer was still

at anchor, a drifting mine struck her starboard side, causing extensive damage. Erin's Isle sank in around two minutes, taking 23 men down with her, though 28 survived. Although the Admiralty paid compensation, she was not replaced by the railway company.

8 February 1919

The decision was made that all Royal Navy cruisers on the East Indies station should be painted white, with primrose yellow (not buff) masts and funnels. White had been a popular colour for warships – particularly capital ships – in the Victorian navy, allowing them to be polished and burnished within an inch of their lives for maximum pleasing effect on the eye. The basic camouflage greys, achieved in World War 1 by mixing black and white pigment, were also altered during the inter-war period by the addition of subtle hints of blue, with ships in warmer climes than the Home Fleet having lighter tones than those used in the North Atlantic, North Sea and the like. With the threat of war in the latter part of the 1930s the glossy finishes found on many warships were once again abandoned for matt surfaces, and the white and yellow colour scheme of the East Indies cruisers was gradually replaced from around 1938 with the standard Admiralty Pattern 507C (Light Grey)

9 February 1937

The first flight of the Blackburn Skua, a pioneering Fleet Air Arm aircraft, took place on 9 February 1937. The Air Ministry issued a requirement in 1934 for the first Naval dive bomber, and the Blackburn Aircraft company took a leap into the future with their B-24 Skua, an all-metal monoplane with an enclosed cockpit – a world away from predecessors such as

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the Hawker Osprey light bomber biplane. Designed to operate from aircraft carriers, the Skua was also required to fulfil a secondary role as a fighter, though the necessities of war and rapid technological developments meant the stocky aircraft had a relatively short service life. After its maiden flight, at Brough in Yorkshire, the two-man Skua (which did not officially take on the name until six months after it first flew) was introduced to the front line in November 1938, and by the outbreak of war the following year the Fleet Air Arm had more than 30 Skuas in operation. The aircraft proved itself a more than useful dive bomber in the early years of the war. Skuas were credited with one of the first aerial combat kills by British aircraft in the war, downing a Dornier Do 18 flying boat over the North Sea in September 1939, while Skuas of 800 and 803 Naval Air Squadrons sank the German cruiser *Konigsberg* at Bergen in Norway on 10 April 1940 – the first major warship sunk in war by air attack and the first major warship to have been sunk by dive bombers. Skuas supported the Dunkirk evacuation in June 1940, and attacked German battleship *Scharnhorst* in Norway the same month, while continuing to enjoy success against German bombers and seaplanes in the Norwegian and Mediterranean campaigns. But its ability as a fighter was rapidly being called into question – configured primarily as a dive bomber, the Skua was a heavy and somewhat cumbersome aircraft with a poor rate of climb, inadequate firepower and a low speed (225mph maximum), and by 1941 it was struggling to keep up with modern German and Italian bombers, while proving no match for land-based fighters. It was withdrawn from front-line service in 1941, though many continued to serve as target tugs or training aircraft. The last Skua left service in March 1945.

10 February 1944

Swordfish LS368 ('A') of 842 Naval Air Squadron, operating from HMS *Fencer*, sank U-666 in the

Western Approaches on 10 February 1944. The U-boat, which carried a 'fallen angel' badge in accordance with her number (666 being the Biblical 'number of the beast' and a sign of the Antichrist or the devil), was launched in Hamburg in July 1942 and commissioned just over a month later. In four war patrols U-666 sank River-class frigate HMS *Itchen*, killing all but three of her crew of 233, and damaged a Greek freighter, and is also thought to have shot down a Halifax bomber on 9 May 1943, killing its crew of eight. The submarine met her end while attacking joint outbound convoys ON 223 and HX278 to the west of Ireland. Swordfish 852/A, operating from American-built Lease-Lend escort carrier HMS *Fencer*, dropped depth charges on the submarine, which was lost with all 51 hands. Swordfish from *Fencer* went on to sink three more U-boats (one each day from 1-3 May 1944), and the ship was eventually reconfigured for troop-carrying duties, ferrying military and civilian personnel in the Indian Ocean and to the UK. After the war, having lain in reserve back in American hands, she was converted to a well-appointed and very comfortable passenger ship, initially running between Italy and Australia as the *Sydney*, then as a cruise ship in the Mediterranean under the Greek flag. She was scrapped at the end of 1975.

11 February 1945

Destroyer HMS *Pathfinder* was damaged by a Japanese aircraft off the coast of Burma (now Myanmar) on 11 February 1945. The 2,300-ton ship was built on the Tyne by Hawthorn Leslie and commissioned in April 1942. She played a full part in the war, sinking or helping to sink Italian submarine *Cobalto* (August 1942) and German U-boats U-162 (September 1942) and U-203 (April 1943) as well as helping rescue almost 5,000 survivors from troopship *Strathallan* after it was torpedoed off Algeria. In early 1944 she sailed for the Indian Ocean for operations out of Trincomalee in Ceylon (now

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A Fairey Swordfish aircraft about to take off from HMS Fencer in a snowstorm in May 1944 during Russian convoy duties. See 10 February. Image from the IWM collection © IWM (A 23576)



Sri Lanka), mostly escorting convoys. In December that year she deployed in support of operations off Burma, landing troops and bombarding shore positions. On 11 February 1945 Pathfinder came under air attack south of the port city of Akyab (now Sittwe) and a near miss wrecked her starboard engine and damaged her hull, though she suffered no casualties. After emergency repairs she sailed back to Trincomalee then Colombo on her port engine, and further lengthy repairs allowed her to sail back to the UK, though she suffered further damage when encountering a storm in the Red Sea. She arrived in Plymouth on 16 June and was immediately paid off, and the following month she was towed to

Dartmouth where she was beached to await her fate. She spent 1947 as a bombing trials ship, and was finally broken up at Milford Haven in late 1948.

12 February 1942

Destroyer HMS Maori was sunk by aircraft in Grand Harbour, Malta, on 12 February 1942. Built by Fairfield at Govan and commissioned on 5 December 1938, the 2,600-ton Tribal-class destroyer spent most of the first two years of her war service in home waters, including the unsuccessful Norwegian Campaign. She also took part in the attack on Bismarck in May 1941 and rescued 26 of the survivors from the German battleship after it was sunk in the

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HMS Pathfinder. See 11 February. Image from the IWM collection © IWM (ADNO 8722)



North Atlantic. Maori switched to the Mediterranean in the summer of 1941, screening capital ships, bombarding shore positions and escorting convoys, though she also underwent a refit in the UK in the autumn. She was back in the Mediterranean by the end of the year and in February 1942 she was part of Force K, based in Malta. Early on 12 February, while moored in Grand Harbour, Valletta, she was struck by a bomb during a night-time air raid, starting a fire which detonated explosives in the torpedo head magazine. Maori sank at her mooring, taking one sailor down with her, and the explosion damaged the nearby destroyer HMS Decoy, which was undergoing a refit at the time. Later that year the wreck was raised and moved to Sliema Creek, where it was scuttled. At the end of the war the wreck was moved once again, with the bow section now lying a few hundred metres off Valletta and providing a popular dive site, surrounded by white sand and well-populated by marine life. The stern sank in deeper water during her final tow.

13 February 1943

Requisitioned auxiliary anti-aircraft ship HMS Pozarica sank, having been damaged by an air-launched torpedo on 29 January off Bougie in Algeria. The 1,900-ton ship was built in 1938 as the civilian vessel MV Pozarica by William Doxford and Sons on the Wear at Sunderland, and requisitioned by the Admiralty in August 1940, who had it converted to an anti-aircraft auxiliary. Pozarica was one of the close escort ships that sailed with doomed Convoy PQ 17 to Arkhangelsk in July 1942, reaching the northern Russian port unscathed, although the convoy lost 23 of the 34 merchantmen that had set out from Iceland after heavy escort ships

were withdrawn and the convoy left at the mercy of U-boats and the Luftwaffe. On the afternoon of 29 January 1943 the flak ship was escorting coastal convoy TF 14 along the coast of Algeria when the group was attacked off Bougie by two squadrons of torpedo bombers, one German and one French. The Germans attacked destroyer HMS Avon Vale, wrecking her bows and forcing her to run ashore, while the Italians attacked Pozarica, damaging her stern but failing to stop her. The flak ship managed to make her way into Bougie Roads where attempts were made to salvage her, but on 13 February she suddenly capsized and sank. The wreck was raised after the war and towed to Italy, where the ship was scrapped in 1951.

14 February 1813

Boats of fifth rate HMS Bacchante captured the French Alcinous and a convoy of eight vessels 20 miles ENE off Otranto, in southern Italy. The frigate was launched at Deptford on the Thames in March 1811, and throughout her service life proved adept at capturing enemy vessels, starting in July 1812 with the taking of the French privateer Victoire in the Mediterranean. On 14 February 1813 Bacchante's boats captured and destroyed the French gun vessel Alcinous, and reportedly took eight merchant vessels in the French ship's convoy as well as a small gunboat. 1813 was a particularly fruitful month for the frigate; in May she bombarded the port of Karlebago in Istria, at the northern end of the Adriatic, destroying a fort and defensive works, in June she captured a number of gunboats off the coast of Abruzzo in Italy, and she was involved in a number of actions in the Mediterranean in July, August and October. The start of 1814 saw Bacchante, long with other

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HMS Maori lies half submerged after being bombed in the early hours of 12 February 1942 in the Grand Harbour, Malta. She sank a few hours after the picture was taken. See 12 February. Image from the Imperial War Museum collection: © Image: IWM (A 9512)

Royal Navy warships, capture forts in the Adriatic and in Sicily, before the frigate crossed the Atlantic with a convoy. She spent the next year operating on the North American coast, taking the occasional privateer, before returning to England with another convoy in the summer of 1815. She was reduced to harbour service in 1837, and acted a quarantine ship in Standgate Creek, on the Medway, from 1842. Bacchante was broken up back where she was built, in Deptford, in 1858.

15 February 1797

Sixth-rate Enterprise-class frigate HMS Lapwing, 28 guns, captured the Spanish privateer San Cristobal (St Christopher) 30 miles SW of St Kitts on 15 February 1797 – one of a string of 16 French and Spanish privateers the small Dover-built warship captured, either alone or with HMS Concorde, in 1797-8 in the Caribbean. Her finest moment came on 3 December 1796 when she captured French corvette Decius (26 guns) and destroyed French brig Vaillante (four guns), which had been leading a force attacking Anguilla. Lapwing took more than 150 men prisoner, while at least 80 Frenchmen died in the action, for the cost of the life of one British sailor. The arrival of two French frigates the following morning forced Lapwing to burn Decius and slip away to St Kitts. Lapwing had spent the first years after her commissioning in 1790 in the Mediterranean, but the

first years of the 19th Century saw Lapwing cruising in the Channel and Western Approaches, as well as escorting convoys, before recrossing the Atlantic – though that passage was to prove somewhat costly, as Lapwing encountered two French men o'war and reportedly had to jettison her guns overboard to outrun them. She undertook further convoy escort work in home waters and between England and the Mediterranean before being reduced to harbour service in 1813 and being broken up at Plymouth 15 years later.

16 February 1937

Three ships of the 3rd Destroyer Flotilla, Mediterranean Fleet – HM Ships Active, Worcester and Antelope – collided on 16 February 1916 during exercises in heavy weather near the Hurd's Bank, north-east of Valletta in Malta. Active, an A-class destroyer of 1,800 tons built by Hawthorn Leslie at Hebburn and commissioned in February 1930, had previous form. On 4 April 1942 she collided with sister ship HMS Achates off St Tropez in France, though little damage was done. Not so on 16 February 1937 when Active's steering gear failed while she was running at speed, causing her to collide with HMS Worcester, also damaging sister ship HMS Antelope and putting herself out of action until June of that year. Despite the mishaps, Active went on to prove her worth during World War 2, taking part in

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**HMS Pozarica pictured off Algiers.
See 13 February. Image from the
IWM collection © IWM (A 12715)**

operations in the Mediterranean, home waters, the North Atlantic and Indian Ocean, sinking four enemy submarines (two U-boats, one Italian and one Vichy French) and taking part in the hunt for Bismarck. She was decommissioned in May 1947 and broken up in Troon, Scotland, shortly after..

17 February 1805

Amazon-class frigate HMS Cleopatra (32 guns) attacked the 40-gun French frigate Ville de Milan 240 miles south-east of Bermuda on 17 February 1806, an action she lost but ultimately won... The Bristol-built frigate, completed in 1780, had already proved an effective ship by 1805, capturing several privateers on both sides of the Atlantic. By 1800 she had become a familiar sight cruising the coast of North America from Nova Scotia to the Caribbean. She was under repair at Woolwich from 1802-4, after which she returned to the Caribbean. Cleopatra was on her way back to England on early 1805 when she spotted Ville de Milan off Bermuda. The French ship was carrying vital despatches and at first set off to outrun the smaller British ship as the French captain had orders to avoid combat where possible. But after an overnight chase of nearly 200 miles Cleopatra was overhauling Ville de Milan so the French ship reluctantly joined battle. After more than two hours of exchanges between the two gun crews both ships were badly damaged, and the French had lost their commanding officer, but Cleopatra's wheel was shot away and her rudder destroyed. The French managed to board Cleopatra at the second attempt, and it took nearly three days for the ships to be made ready to sail and a prize crew put on board Cleopatra. Just two days later the pair were spotted by 50-gun fourth rate frigate HMS Leander, which rapidly retook Cleopatra with just a single shot fired. With Cleopatra restored to her original

crew, Leander set off after the fleeing Ville de Milan, which was in such a poor state after the battering she received from Cleopatra that she was quickly caught and surrendered without a fight. The French ship was repaired and put into service as HMS Milan. Four years later, on 22 January 1809, Cleopatra again took on a more powerful opponent, this time the 40-gun French frigate Topaze. This time Cleopatra had help in the form of fifth-rate frigate HMS Jason (32 guns) and 16-gun sloop HMS Hazard, and the Frenchman was captured and later put back to sea as HMS Jewel, and later HMS Alcmene. Cleopatra was paid off in July 1814, and the frigate was broken up on the Thames at Deptford later the same year.

18 February 1916

Allied forces complete the conquest of the Cameroons on 18 February 1916, a campaign that had begun in the first days of the Great War. In the thick of the action off the west coast of Africa were cruisers HM Ships Cumberland and Challenger, which both survived the war. Monmouth-class armoured cruiser HMS Cumberland (10,000 tons) was launched at Govan in December 1902, while the Challenger-class protected cruiser HMS Challenger (5,900 tons) preceded her by around seven months. Cumberland was sent to 'German Kamerun' on the outbreak of war and quickly made her mark, capturing ten enemy merchant ships at the main port of Douala at the end of September 1914, while the two ships both bombarded port defences in support of troop movements. Challenger arrived at the Cameroon River on 23 September 1914 and initiated a blockade, then made its way upriver to Douala, beginning to fire on the town at 0600 on 26 September. By 1000 the following morning the town had surrendered, and was occupied by a detachment of Marines by the evening. On 7 October Challenger

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HMS Challenger in harbour during the German East African Campaign of World War 1. See 18 February. Image from the IWM collection © IWM (Q15483)

and Cumberland contributed to a Naval party of around 1,000 that probed deeper inland for four days, during which time Challenger was struck by sickness, thought to be dysentery, which killed several sailors and laid many low; the illness was not finally stamped out until the ship reached Cape Town in early 1915. During her time in Douala Challenger's crew managed to salvage numerous small boats and convert them to gunboats or claim them as prizes before the cruiser moved back towards the sea in May 1915. German Kamerun (which consisted of modern-day Cameroon, and tracts of Chad, Gabon, Nigeria, the Republic of the Congo and the Central African Republic) was invaded by British, French and Belgian forces from surrounding territories, outnumbering the German defenders by a ratio of more than four to one, and the coastal strip was in Allied hands by early 1915. Fighting in the mountainous and largely unmapped interior proved hard work, with the Allies taking most of 1915 to force the Germans back into the territory around their new capital Jaunde (modern-day Yaounde). The final fortress at the mountain of Mora surrendered in mid-February 1916, with German troops and civilians fleeing to neutral Spanish Guinea, now Equatorial Guinea. Much of the rest of Cumberland's war was taken up with convoy escort duties and patrols on the lookout for German raiders. Chatham-built Challenger started her Naval career in Australia on training duties, and on the outbreak of war joined Cumberland off West Africa, later switching to the continent's east coast. Both cruisers were scrapped

shortly after the war; Cumberland in Briton Ferry, Wales, in 1923 and Challenger at Preston in 1920.

19 February 1917

Q-ship HMS Lady Olive (Q18) sank German submarine UC-18 to the west of Jersey on 19 February 1917, but the Royal Navy ship was also sunk in the action. UC-18 was a minelaying submarine which was commissioned in August 1915, and over the course of six war patrols was credited with the destruction of 34 ships, either by torpedoes or through mines laid. On 19 February 1917 the German boat attacked the 700-ton British Q-ship Lady Olive, formerly the steam coaster Tees Trader, built in Dundee in 1913. The attack is thought to have been by torpedo, causing considerable damage. Despite being ordered to abandon the Lady Olive, AB Dumaresq found the German boat in his gun sights and managed to put several shots into its hull, causing it to sink with all 28 hands. Lady Oliver did not last much longer, and sank at 0930, though all her crew managed to scramble off before she went down and were rescued by the French naval ship Dunois. Q-ships were decoy vessels, also known as special service ships, which tended to be merchantmen equipped with concealed heavy armament. Guns were hidden behind false panels, and they would look like a lone tramp steamer, presenting an easy target. Their job was to lure submarines into an attack on the surface, and when a U-boat ventured too close they would drop the false panels and open fire with an array of guns before the submarine had time to dive.

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Legendary U-boat killer Capt Johnnie Walker, on the bridge of HMS Starling, shouts encouragement to sloop HMS Woodpecker through a loudhailer as she goes in to attack a German submarine during the famous 'six in one' patrol in February 1944. See 20 February. Image from the Imperial War Museum collection: © IWM (A 21988)



20 February 1944

Sloop HMS Woodpecker was torpedoed by U-256 to the south of Ireland on 20 February 1944, and foundered during a tow back to port. The Black Swan-class vessel was one of the legendary 2nd Support Group of U-boat hunters under the command of Capt Johnnie Walker, and took part in the sinking of six German submarines during her short service career. Built at Denny's in Dumbarton, the 1,350-ton sloop was commissioned on 14 December 1942 and immediately put to work on Atlantic convoy protection duties. Woodpecker was one of the original six members of the 2nd Support Group (formally known as the 2nd Escort Group), one of five such flotillas that joined convoys en route to provide extra protection, and were capable of prolonged and aggressive actions against U-boats. One of the most significant parts of her two years of service was the so-called 'six in one trip' period, when Woodpecker took credit for a share of three kills over 11 days in February 1944, including a seven-hour hunt on 19 February which accounted for U-264. Unfortunately it was to be the final chapter in Woodpecker's story. On the following day the sloop was hit in the stern by a torpedo from U-256, crippling the warship. She was taken in tow, but was caught in a storm on 27 February and foundered, though her skeleton crew were all saved. Woodpecker was the only ship in the 2nd Escort Group to be sunk during the war. She was also the sole victim of U-256; the submarine completed five wartime patrols before she was decommissioned in Bergen in October 1944, and was broken up by the Allies later the same year.

21 February 1790

HMS Guardian arrived in Table Bay, South Africa, on 21 February 1790 after a barely-believable voyage of almost two months, having been all but wrecked by an iceberg on Christmas Eve. The Roebuck-class frigate, originally of 44 guns, had been built at Limehouse in London and completed in May 1784, but with the American War of Independence over she was of no immediate use and lay in ordinary for five years. Guardian was then converted to a storeship and convict transport. Loaded with supplies, livestock and around 300 people, including a large group of convicts, Guardian set off from Spithead on 8 September 1789 bound for Australia, and all was going well when she reached South Africa on 24 November. She sailed again three weeks later, having taken on more supplies and livestock, and 12 days – on Christmas Eve – out the ship spotted a large iceberg. Her commanding officer, Lt Edward Riou, decided to use the ice to replenish the ship's freshwater supply, so manoeuvred the frigate towards the berg before using her boats to gather the ice. With the boats safely back as night fell, a thick fog materialised which shrouded the iceberg. With lookouts posted, the ship edged away from the ice, but after a while a wall of ice was spotted ahead and the ship turned sharply away. The danger seemed to have been averted when she struck an underwater shelf of ice and a gust of wind forced the ship around, smashing her stern into the berg.

The collision broke away her rudder and shattered the stern frame, gashing a large hole in her hull. Although Riou managed to pull the ship clear there was water gushing into her hold and a storm was brewing, with the sea steadily rising. The ship's pumps were failing to keep up with the flood, and as Christmas Day arrived the hold carried more than six feet of water. A sail patched over the hole slowed the ingress of the sea, and the pumps reduced the water level to less than two feet, but by midday the patch had failed and the ship was sinking again. By evening the level had risen to 7ft and the ship was rolling violently. Stores, livestock and guns were thrown overboard to lighten the load, but by Boxing Day the situation seemed hopeless. Around 260 people took to the ship's boats, while just over 60 opted to stay with the stricken frigate. With 16ft of water in the hold, Guardian was barely afloat, but barrels in the hold were providing enough buoyancy to keep her above water, and another sail was used to patch the hull. With what little sail they had left they set out on a 1,200-mile voyage back to the Cape in what was described as little more than a raft. Nine weeks later, on 21 February 1790, they sighted land, and were helped into Table Bay by seven boats from the assembled whalers. The following month Riou sent a letter from Table Bay to the Admiralty, saying he would attempt to bring what was left of Guardian round to the more sheltered Saldanha Bay to salvage what they could, but a gale on 12 April drove Guardian ashore and finally wrecked her for good. She was sold as a wreck the following February. Those who took to the boats on Boxing Day did not fare so well – only 15 people survived, as they were rescued by a French merchant ship. A group of 21 convicts who had stayed with Guardian eventually completed their journey to New South Wales, but because of their subsequent exemplary conduct, 14 of them were pardoned.

22 February 1894

Iron screw frigate HMS Raleigh landed an anti-slavery force of men in The Gambia on 22 February 1894, and although the expedition itself did not go too well, the overall aim was achieved. Raleigh was launched at Chatham Dockyard on 1 March 1873 and commissioned some 16 months later. Displacing 5,200 tons, the ship was designed as a sailing ship with an auxiliary steam engine, capable of 13 knots under sail and an impressive 16 knots under engine power, and were equipped for long-range deployments. In 1874-5 she served with the Detached Squadron, which deployed to the Falklands and India. She later served with the Mediterranean Squadron, running aground in the Dardanelles in February 1878, and on the Cape of Good Hope and West Africa Station. On 22 February 1894, along with HM Ships Magpie and Widgeon, Raleigh provided a party of men for an expeditionary force to the interior of The Gambia to suppress the slave trade. The following day one of the two main columns of the force, consisting of 250 sailors, was ambushed at Madini Creek; 18 men died, including two officers from Raleigh, and 46 men were wounded. The incursion did, though, play its part in bringing slavery

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HMS Vandal under way. See 24 February. Image from the Imperial War Museum collection: © IWM (FL 5608)

in the area to an end. Raleigh ended her days on the Royal Navy list as 'available for the training service', and she was broken up in the summer of 1905.

23 February 1942

Submarine HMS Trident torpedoed German cruiser Prinz Eugen off the coast of Norway on 23 February 1942, destroying 30ft of her stern. The T-class submarine, launched on the Mersey at Birkenhead by Cammell Laird on 7 December 1938 and commissioned on 1 October the following year, travelled widely during her wartime career, operating from the North Sea to the Far East. During her spell in home waters she managed to sink a number of enemy merchant ships and auxiliaries, but perhaps her most successful attack was on German cruisers Prinz Eugen and Admiral Scheer. Trident fired a total of seven torpedoes, one of which struck the stern of Prinz Eugen and wrecked her steering gear, also damaging her engines. Some 50 men died in the explosion. The ship limped into Trondheim, and over the next three months emergency repairs were carried out, which involved cutting away her entire stern and creating makeshift manually-operated rudders. She underwent a further five months of repairs in Kiel before two months of sea trials, and it was only in January 1943, almost a year after Trident's attack, that she was ready for action again. Trident also gained fame through one of her crew – a young reindeer named Pollyanna, a surprise gift from the Russians in August 1941, which spent a long

period on board during the boat's war patrols. The animal apparently thrived on table scraps and condensed milk once her original supply of lichen ran out, and she reportedly had a bit of a taste for navigation charts as well... She left the boat when it returned to the UK, and spent the rest of her life in a zoo. Trident went on to serve briefly in the Mediterranean, sinking a handful of small vessels and just missing three or four larger targets, and ended the war in the Far East. She was sold for scrap on 17 February 1946 and broken up in South Wales soon after.

24 February 1943

New submarine HMS Vandal failed to surface after deep dive trials in Holy Loch on 24 February 1943, giving her the unwelcome record of having the shortest service life of any Royal Navy submarine. U-class submarine Vandal was launched by Vickers Armstrong at Barrow-in-Furness on 23 November 1942 and commissioned on 20 February 1943. Originally named Unbridled, the crew were informed that she would henceforth be known as Vandal just before they sailed or the last time – and those of a superstitious nature believe that a name change for a vessel can bring bad luck (although plenty of Royal Navy vessels have undergone a change of name with no ill effect). Vandal underwent initial acceptance trials in the relative shelter of the Gareloch, passing them with ease. She then set out on an unescorted three-day deep diving work-up trial based at Lochranza.

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On 24 February, the final day of the trials, she headed out into the Firth of Clyde at 0830 – and that was the last that was seen of her until her wreck was discovered by mine countermeasures vessel HMS Hurworth in 1994. Her absence was not officially reported until the following day, and there were conflicting reports at the time about her fate. Submariners reported hearing tapping and seeing a smoke candle near Inchmarnock, off Bute, while a spotter plane saw an oil slick ten miles away, just north of Arran – a clue that was ignored by an inquiry at the time, which concluded the submarine had been lost with all 37 hands during a deep dive scheduled for that day near Inchmarnock. And there she lay on the seabed until veterans of the Scottish branch of the Submariners Association finally persuaded the authorities to search the location of the oil slick near Arran, where trawlers had occasionally reported their nets being snagged. The Hurworth team found Vandal in 100m of water in the area the oil slick had been spotted, and subsequent inspections of the wreck found that she had been lost while on the surface, though the exact cause has been determined. There is speculation that she could have flooded during log calibration on a measured mile, which was done in the area in which Vandal was lost, and the forward escape hatch was open, indicating some of her crew may have attempted to leave the boat either before or after she sank, though no bodies were ever found.

25 February 1781

Frigate HMS Cerberus captured Spanish warship Grana 60 miles west of Cape Finisterre, in just 15 minutes, on 25 February 1781. The 38-gun Active-class fifth rate frigate, a Rotherhithe ship launched in 1779, sailed first for the Portuguese coast in February 1780 then crossed the Atlantic to join the American War of Independence. She captured a couple of smaller brigs in 1780, then on 25 February 1781 Cerberus spotted the 30-gun Spanish frigate Grana of Cape Finisterre. The Royal Navy ship gave chase and caught the Spaniard, which although she mounted 30 guns they were of a light calibre – 22 6pdrs and eight 4pdrs compared to Cerberus's 26 12pdrs, six 24pdrs and six 6pdrs. The encounter was heavily one-sided, and Grana was taken within a quarter of an hour, losing seven men with 17 wounded, while two British sailors were also injured. The Spaniard was put back into service with the Royal Navy as a sixth rate 28-gun warship, and was sold on in September 1806. Cerberus went on to take a couple more privateers, but sank in Castle Harbour, Bermuda, on 24 April 1783 after her hull was holed, though none of the crew were lost.

26 February 1915

A Victoria Cross was won by daredevil officer Lt Cdr Eric Gascoigne Robinson, of HMS Vengeance, at Gallipoli for single-handedly destroying a Turkish heavy gun emplacement under heavy fire – and that was not the only action he took that could have merited the highest military honour. Robinson, the son of the chaplain at Greenwich

Royal Naval College, joined the Royal Navy aged 15 at Dartmouth, and by 18 he had seen his first action on board cruiser HMS Endymion during the Boxer Rebellion in China, being Mentioned in Despatches for his bravery and being wounded in the process. He continued to serve in gunboats on the Yangtze River until returning to Portsmouth to specialise in torpedo warfare. On the outbreak of war Robinson was serving in the elderly battleship HMS Vengeance, which was deployed to the Gallipoli Campaign in January 1915. A mission had been created to assault a gun battery known as Achilles' Tomb which had not been knocked out by naval bombardment, so a commando raid was deemed necessary – and Robinson was nominated to lead it. The combined Navy/Royal Marines force landed early on 26 February and quickly destroyed a couple of artillery posts, but by mid-afternoon had been pinned down near the main battery by Turkish snipers. With reinforcements closing in, Robinson led his party through gullies to a point behind the battery, which lay across open ground from the British position. Robinson handed command to a junior colleague and then climbed across the open ground, dodging bullets as he went. He reappeared on the crest of a rise a few minutes later and made his way, almost casually, to his men. The battery had been unmanned, and Robinson had laid charges that destroyed the main 9.4in gun that commanded the seaway, as well as two anti-aircraft emplacements. He then marched his team safely back to the ships and, for good measure, directed gunfire from the allied fleet onto an enemy garrison, causing carnage. All this had been observed from battleship HMS Queen Elizabeth offshore by Admiral John de Robeck, who recommended Robinson for the VC. The following March Robinson again put his life on the line, this time leading a flotilla of Navy-manned minesweeping trawlers into the minefields that were blocking the Dardanelles for the Allied warships – on one sortie Robinson's vessel was struck more than 80 times by small-calibre shells. This mission failed, however, and rows of mines across the narrows continued to cause the Allies huge problems. On 18 April he topped this by leading a party in two steam-powered picket boats, each armed with makeshift torpedo systems and two torpedoes each, in an attempt to destroy the captured submarine HMS E15, which lay in an exposed position below the heavily-armed Fort Dardanus. Under cover of darkness the boats edged towards the submarine until they were illuminated by Turkish searchlights, at which point they came under a hail of artillery and machine gun fire. A searchlight beam fell on E15, allowing two torpedoes to be released, the second of which wrecked the submarine. One of the picket boats was struck by a heavy shell which blew off the stern and killed one sailor; Robinson, in the other boat and still under heavy fire, steamed over to take off the crew then escaped back down towards the open water. It was noted at the time that this action would have also qualified for a VC, but he was instead promoted to Commander

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by special decree. Robinson continued to display inordinate amounts of bravery throughout his Service career. He was wounded on the front line at Anzac Cove, and was only overlooked for the Zeebrugge Raid of April 1918 because of his war wounds. He forced the withdrawal of a pair of enemy destroyers in the Russian Civil War when he sailed his makeshift Coastal Motor Boat carrier – a converted merchant ship – straight at them, and later led a squadron of CMBs in an attack on the harbour at Fort Alexandrovsky, forcing the garrison to surrender. He retired at 53 as a rear admiral, but stepped forward again when World War 2 broke out, commanding Atlantic Convoys for three years before ill-health forced him ashore. He still managed a further three years as Naval Officer in charge of Dundee from 1942-4. Robinson died in Haslar Naval Hospital, Haslar, in August 1965 at the age of 83.

27 February 1899

Eight sailors returning to destroyer HMS Bruizer in Samos Bay, Kefalonia, drowned when their collapsible Berthon boat was swamped in a squall on 27 February 1899. Bruizer was an Ardent-class destroyer, built by Thornycroft at Chiswick and commissioned on 12 December 1895. Displacing just over 300 tons, the ship had a complement of around 50 and a top speed of 27 knots. Bruizer was deployed to the Mediterranean in 1896, where she remained for a number of years, and it was during this period that the incident in Samos Bay claimed the lives of eight sailors, four of whom are buried in a cemetery on the Greek island. The destroyer

returned to the UK in 1911 and served with the Sixth Destroyer Flotilla, then a submarine flotilla in Arran, Scotland, until 1913. She was broken up for scrap in South Wales in 1914.

28 February 1866

Grapeshot was declared obsolete in the Royal Navy on 28 February 1866 – an obvious step as technology had fast overtaken this ancient weapon. Grapeshot is essentially the artillery version of a shotgun; a canvas bag packed with small round shot is fired using an explosive charge, and as the bag leaves the muzzle the grapeshot scatters over a relatively wide arc. On land it was used as an anti-personnel weapon, cutting down massed infantry on a battlefield. At sea grapeshot had a similar effect in the packed decks of old wooden warships (as happened when Nelson's ships fired through the sterns of the Franco-Spanish fleet at Trafalgar, causing much death and destruction), but that could be mitigated by the use of hammocks packed along the decks. But grapeshot also damaged the men o'war themselves, cutting rigging, tearing sails and destroying spars, blocks and pulleys – ships used this capability to the full by firing a broadside of grapeshot on the up-roll to do maximum damage to the enemy ship and thereby disable it. By the 1860s ships were increasingly built using iron, and steam power was taking over from sails. In both cases grapeshot was of much less value – small-calibre iron balls would not pierce an iron hull (meaning sailors tended to be better protected) while a ship equipped with an engine was not disabled by having spars and sails damaged.

HMS Bruizer. See 27 February. Image from the Imperial War Museum collection: © The rights holder (Q 74981)



HMS BRUIZER

IWM

➤ LONGCAST

2025

8 Feb 2025	Area 5 Quarterly Meeting and AGM hosted by Cromer branch
28 Mar 2025	CONA meeting, Portsmouth Historic Dockyard
3 May 2025	Army v Navy rugby match, Twickenham
15-18 May 2025	Londonderry Battle of the Atlantic 80th Anniversary Commemoration
17 May 2025	4 Area meeting, St Austell
20-22 June 2025	RNA75 Annual Conference 2025, Portsmouth
28 June 2025	HMS Collingwood Open Day, Fareham
14 Sept 2025	Naval Associations Biennial Parade, Whitehall
22 Oct 2025	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



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A 10% discount on food, selected drinks and hotel rooms for members of the Royal Naval Association

The Royal Maritime Hotel is a stone's throw from Gunwharf Quays, the Spinnaker Tower and Portsmouth Historic Dockyard, HMS Victory, The Mary Rose Museum and HMS Warrior. Facilities include Horatio's restaurant, the Victory bar, a small swimming pool, sauna, spa pool and skittles!

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



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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

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



Scan to register!



In partnership with:



Part of the Employment Pathways series

Pathways into Construction and the Built Environment

Tuesday 11 March 2025
The National Marine Aquarium, Plymouth
6.00 - 8.00 pm (doors open 5.30 pm)



THE KEPPELSHEAD HOTEL

Since being bought in 1999 this beautiful hotel has been refurbished back to its former glory. The Georgian dining room is the centrepiece of the hotel.

We currently have 20% off your total bill until the end of February.

Our fusion menus are a choice of Japanese and seasonal dishes.

www.keppelshead.co.uk



Battlefield Tours

Embark on a journey of remembrance and discovery on one of our Leger Battlefield Tours, visiting the WW1 battlefields, WW2 battlefields and sites from other significant wars, including Waterloo and The American Civil War. Each coach or air tour is accompanied by a Specialist Battlefield Guide, whose knowledge and passion will inspire and enhance your experience and truly bring history to life. They will help you to decipher the legacy left behind, and understand the military history that touched us all; whether it relates to Flanders Fields, the Somme battlefields, front line of the Ypres Salient, the sandy beaches of Normandy in France or the concrete walls that once surrounded Berlin.

And, with an ever-expanding range of itineraries, specially selected by our Head Battlefield Guide, Paul Reed, and his team of guides, we aim to ensure you get the most from this memorable experience. So join us as we 'remember them', maybe even at the emotive Last Post Ceremony at the Menin Gate, and ensure that the legacy is never forgotten.

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Armed Forces Day & Family Day Event – organised by ASA Scotland Charity SCIO SC048597

Booking Form

Company Name					
Name					
Address					
Mobile Tel number:					
Email:					
Business Website address:					
Public Liability insurance details					
Describe what products/services will you be selling?					
Size of Stall Area Required					
Food	Food hygiene Cert Yes No	Gas/Elec safety Cert Y N	Risk Assessment Y N	Certificate of Compliance Y N	
Signature					
Payment amount		£			
Bank Details to send payment to		Ancre Somme Association Scotland SC 82-68-30 ACC 40103891			

Questions: Email: info@asascotland.org

Visit web: www.asascotland.org



Armed Forces Day & Family Day

Callendar Park, Falkirk, Saturday 5th July 2025

Organiser: ASA Scotland Charity

Dear participant,

Thank you for being part of ARMED FORCES DAY & FAMILY DAY community celebration event.

As you will no doubt be aware, there must be a huge amount of planning and organisational work completed to ensure that this event runs as safely and seamlessly as possible for all attendees.

To that end ASA Scotland event management team are and have been required to work closely with our **Falkirk Council and Falkirk Culture and Leisure** to agree a list of core requirements we need from all participants including stalls.

ASA Scotland do not regard these requirements to be onerous and to that end and to assist and ensure that the planning, and management of the event encourages cooperation and coordination between all relevant agencies, we are providing the following information and instruction we have agreed with Falkirk Council.

Where appropriate ... and as required by the Local Authorities we require all participants to ensure that their licenses and Risk Assessments are in place and copied to the ASA Scotland event management team.

These should include a basic understanding of the participants' impact on the event, including:

Please be aware of the strict requirement for adherence to the no moving vehicles while the event is taking place between 11.30 and 17:00

By request and prior to 11.30, there will be an opportunity to 'drop off' only at the car park entrance. Blue Badge holders will be directed to the area designated.

There are no other spaces within the park available for long stay parking, also be aware that apart from Emergency Services vehicles on operational duties, there will be no exceptions to this instruction, and the local authorities will monitor.

Vehicles will not be able to move between 11.30 and 17:00 after the 11.30 cut-off.

If you require a pass for this drop-off only, please contact ASA Scotland.

Long stay parking can be found at Callendar Business Park on a first come, first serve basis.

* Adherence to time slots on access and egress, arrival, and departure to the event.

*Each stall, vendor, participant etc. will receive a pitch location on the day.

* Each stall/tent should take all necessary steps to peg and weight stalls/tents encase we have any light/medium wind or rain on the day.

* Lost and found inclusive of person's or children, please be aware that the stage is the meeting place, where we will assist.

- * The strict requirement for no moving vehicles while the event is taking place between 9am-4pm while the event is open.
- * The parameters and safe usage of the designated area provided for the participant, inclusive of any trip, slip, and fall hazards and methods being utilised by you to avoid these.
- * Waste disposal and leaving your designated area as you found it. ASA Scotland have provided 2 waste skips onsite.
- * Where appropriate ... if any electrical or fire equipment is being used and the intended safety management of these.
- * The fencing off and non-refuelling on site of any generators which are being used.
- * Please be aware of where the First Aid tent is situated when you arrive, should you require any assistance.
- * ASA Scotland Event Management Team will be wearing High Viz vests on the day, should you need any assistance or if you have any concerns.
- * ASA Scotland holds the right to cancel the event, please ensure you have all our contact details and check social media 48hrs before the event.

Falkirk Council have required ASA Scotland to provide copies of all operators Public Liability Insurance, Risk Assessments and Safe Systems of Work along with a record of agreement to adhere to the guidelines, guidance, rules and instructions provided by both the ASA Scotland event management team and Falkirk Council who will attend and be present on the day of the event to monitor and participate.

Please feel free to ask any questions you may have by contacting ASA Scotland event management team: email info@asascotland.org

Finally, and most importantly, ASA Scotland charity wants to thank you for your attendance and convey our sincere wishes that you have an enjoyable and successful day at our event.

I have read and understood the terms and conditions, as outlined above and I hereby confirm that I agree to abide by these:

Name of Business/Group:

Contact Mobile: **Stall Number Allocated:**

Stall Product Details:

Charity Number:

Business Address:

.....

Email: **Website:**.....

Print Name:

Signature: