

# SEMAPHORE CIRCULAR

## PORTRAIT WINS TOP AWARD

A member of the Ilkley Armed Forces & Veterans Breakfast Club has been recognised in a prestigious photographic competition.

Chris North, a well-known figure within the Ilkley veterans' community, won the Veterans category in the Royal Navy Photography Awards.

Chris bagged top honours with his striking photograph featuring fellow club member and Royal Navy veteran Geoffrey Hogben (pictured right) – an image the judges felt captured character and demonstrated the art of composition.

The RNA category of the Awards comprised three sections, with Chris also winning a 'Highly Commended' in the same category.

The winner of the RNA Amateur category was ET(WE) Simon Evans, while two Royal Navy photographers took the top places in the third category of RNA Professional – the winner was LPhot Ollie Leach, with LPhot Damo Bye awarded a Highly Commended.

Judging was carried out last month by a panel of highly-respected professionals from the photographic industry, including Simon Dawson, Chief Photographer at No 10 Downing Street, Harland Quarrington, Defence Imagery Editor, Simon Hill, the President and Chair of Trustees, Royal

Continued on page 3



# CONTENTS

RNA winners in Royal Navy's photographic competition	1
Contacts	5
Chairman's Chat	6
RNA Trustees set to share the burden	7
Special prints available for purchase	8
Could you take on the role of standard bearer?	8
French students pay visit to RNA Central Office	9
19-gun salute in honour of Admiral of the Fleet	9
Accommodation details for National Conference	10
Government-backed veterans centre network launched	12
HMS Ganges museum opens for 2026 season	13
Seating and bar details for Army v Navy match at Twickenham	14
Commendation for RNA's HMS Raleigh mentors	17
RNA membership survey – you could win £100	22
Sports and Comradeship Groups	25
Welfare and Wellbeing	27
Welfare contacts	29
Branch news	30
Obituaries	34
Employment and training	38
April Swinging the Lamp	39
Longcast	40
Offers	40

**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 1 May, and the deadline for material is 1000 on Wednesday 29 April. Branch Notes will next be published on Friday 8 April and Semaphore Short on Friday 15 April, with a members' email on 22 April.**



## PEREGRINE AWARDS

Continued from front page

Photographic Society, Joe Sene, Head of Pictures at the Press Association and Matt Fearn, Head of Pictures at The Times. The Awards are known in the Navy as the Peregrines, named after the former RNAS station at Ford in Sussex – HMS Peregrine – which was once home of the RN

Photographic Branch.

Images on this page are by Chris North (above), Damo Bye (left) and Ollie Leach.

On the next page is the winning Amateur category image by Simon Evans (top), and a winning image by the RN Photographer of the Year PPhot Alex Ceolin





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

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# CHAIRMAN'S CHAT

Dear Shipmates,

Hope you are all well and in fine fettle as we head into Spring, with the time sprung forward and plenty of light! This month's Chat, I am sure you will agree, illustrates several Shipmates who have contributed so much to our Association. As we salute and honour their contribution, I am aware of so many more of our Shipmates who go under the radar. Later in the Chat you will note that a new Certificate of Recognition (CoR) is being introduced so that we can properly recognise locally some of those Shipmates. So...

Shipmates, as we reported in last month's Circular, we were deeply saddened to hear that our National Standard Bearer, S/M Steve Champion, had crossed the bar. Steve represented our RNA at several national events, including lining the streets next to the Cenotaph during the late Queen's funeral and at the King's Coronation. His personal drill and stature was exemplary and of the highest standard. The National President and I will represent the RNA at his final deployment on 17 April in Kent. BZ and thank you Steve for your outstanding service to the RNA – you will be hugely missed by everyone. Finally, I know the National Standard Bearers competition Shipmates will also honour Steve and have his family in their thoughts on Saturday 9 May at HMS Collingwood.

In late February, I was delighted and honoured to travel to RNA Spalding to present S/M Yvonne Crawford with an Associate Life Membership. Yvonne joined RNA Spalding Branch in 1979 after her late husband S/M Keith retired from the RN, immediately assuming an active role with Branch affairs. She arranged functions, trips, collections, and calls to unwell Shipmates. She took on the Branch Welfare Officer role which she kept for well over 20 years, also stepping forward to become Area 9 Treasurer for 14 years! Oh, by the way, she was one of the first Associate members to be awarded a CoA in 2003.

When Keith was promoted to Branch Chairman, then Area Chairman and National Vice Chairman, Yvonne was by his



side, always supporting him wherever she could with his duties across the country and abroad. Despite him sadly crossing the bar last year Yvonne has not slowed down – in fact, far from it, as last September she accepted the role of Area 9 Life Vice President and at the Spalding Branch AGM a matter of weeks ago, she was offered and accepted the role of Spalding RNA Branch Vice President. S/M Yvonne Crawford has been an incredible asset to her Branch, Area and the Royal Naval Association for almost 50 years. BZ Yvonne and thank you for your commitment, time and effort towards our Association – you are a superb example and asset to the RNA Community.

As I stated previously regarding the 'recognition' of Shipmates, the Association Management Committee (AMC) agreed that Branches and Areas may approve a local award of a 'Certificate of Recognition'. The CoR should be produced locally and will not require authorisation by the National Council (NC) or Central Office. The rules for Certificate of Appreciation awards remain the same and must be authorised iaw Rule 6 (i). Only Shipmates who have been awarded a CoA may wear the appropriate blazer and lapel badges, and the AMC have drafted a new Bye-law pending approval at the forthcoming April NC.

Hopefully you are now all aware that the important Appeal for donations towards the Naval Service Memorial has been launched – the smallest denominations will be very welcomed so please get Shipmates to empty their deepest pockets towards our Association's worthy cause. Thank you, Shipmates. Please forward donations to Central Office or Naval Service Memorial at the **National Memorial Arboretum – JustGiving**

You may wish to know that I have kindly been invited to attend the 70th Anniversary of Portland Branch's commissioning, which I am very much looking forward too. So, may I take this opportunity to wish them a memorable event from the entire RNA Community for a 'monumentous' achievement. BZ!

Finally, and sadly, I am unable to join in with everyone at the forthcoming Army v Navy rugby at 'Twickers'. BZ to the Central Office team for selling over 1,000 tickets to Shipmates, and also the RNRFU for allowing us to attend. And with the RNA Bar (probably the largest in the stadium) next door it sounds like it will be an amazing RNA community event. Enjoy...

Best wishes and a restful Easter,

*Andy*

# TRUSTEES BOARD WILL SHARE LOAD OF NATIONAL COUNCIL MEMBERS

Delegates to the National Conference in Cardiff in 2024 gave the green light for investigations into how the Association could separate the role of National Council Members (NCMs) from that of Trustees, bringing the Association into line with Charity Commission guidance.

Our Charter dates from 1954, and the regulation of charities has changed enormously since then, particularly with reorganisation of the Charity Commission under the Charities Act of 2006.

As a charity, the RNA was obliged to assess whether to follow Charity Commission guidance on the management and leadership of charities in England and Wales and if not, to explain why. The Association's NCMs – effectively the Trustees under the old structure – decided compliance with Charity Commission guidance was the way ahead, allowing Trustees to focus on “strategy, performance and assurance rather than operational matters”, with the new Trustees Board having “the skills, knowledge, and experience it needs to govern, lead and deliver the charity's purposes effectively.” The separation of roles means that NCMs will in future be able to represent their Areas' interests more effectively, concentrating on the grass-roots activities of the RNA, while a new Trustees Board can focus on the RNA's strategic, long-term needs. It also means that the RNA will benefit from specific skillsets of invited members of the Trustees Board, better equipping the Association for future challenges. Since the 2024 Conference a working party of NCMs, led by Deputy National President S/M Mark Slawson, has identified what changes need to be made and how they can be achieved. The switch is not a simple admin task – rewriting the RNA's Royal Charter, Rules and Bye Laws must be carried out in consultation with the Privy Council legal team, as the resulting document will ultimately be signed off by the King. The new document will, in all likelihood, shape the governance of the Association for the next 50 years or so, so it has to be right first time!

The working party engaged with the Privy Council and other charities with Royal Charters to understand the process, then took a close look at the current Charter and Rules,



**Members of the National Council gather at Portsmouth Naval Base during the RNA National Conference in Portsmouth last summer**

identifying where change was needed and redrafting the document, ready to be signed off by the National Council and sent to the Privy Council for consideration.

The new Trustees Board will assume responsibility for the long-term future and sustainability of the Association, freeing NCMs to concentrate on operational matters. Changes will be seen at the national strategic level, but it has also been a principle from the outset that, to the greatest extent possible, there would be no changes made to the ways that Areas and Branches operate. It is important to note that this reorganisation will not change the Association's Charitable Objects, values (Unity, Loyalty, Patriotism, Comradeship) and ethos. Some details in the current Charter and Rules will be included in Bye Laws instead, giving the Association greater control of its own governance by reducing the frequency of changes to the main Charter and Rules, which requires Privy Council approval on each occasion.

The proposed Trustees Board will include the National President, Deputy National President, National Chair, National Vice Chair, two members of the Association (elected by Conference and not NCMs), and three invited Trustees with specific required skills and experience. This Board will be responsible for the broader picture – legal compliance and the financial wellbeing of the RNA, for example. The two Association Members will be elected from the wider RNA – they cannot be members of the MOB – and the three invited Trustees will be selected for relevant skills, such as fundraising or finance.

Also in attendance at the Trustees Board, as non-voting members, will be the Association's Honorary Treasurer, Head of Governance and Chief Executive/General Secretary. Our current elected NCMs will be known as Area Members of the subsidiary Members Operating Board (MOB), responsible for ensuring effective operations of the Association from day-to-day and in the short term. Thus, the MOB and Central Office staff will manage the in-year budget, organise national events such as the Conference, and supporting Branches and Areas.

As with the current National Council, each member of the MOB will represent one Area, with an additional member

representing foreign branches and the Lanyard Roll membership. Board members will elect the National Chair and Vice Chair from among their number. Members of both Boards will be time-limited in post, serving for a maximum of three terms of three years, with one exception – should the National Chair or Vice Chair be holding office at the end of their third term they will be allowed to serve a fourth, thus retaining corporate knowledge on the Board. This review of the Charter and Rules also allows a number of more minor changes, such as clarifying the roles of members of Area and Branch committee members (Area Byelaw A3c, and Branch Byelaw B11a), updating terminology and reflecting changes of practice that have occurred since previous amendments. A programme of face-to-face briefings to Area meetings giving more details on the proposed changes is already under way, with S/M Slawson or General Secretary S/M Bill Oliphant fielding the questions. They also encourage members to express their thoughts and opinions on the proposed fundamental changes to the governance of the RNA. Online webinars are also planned (including a Fireside Chat on 13 April) for anyone wishing to hear more or pose questions – details will be promulgated on social media channels and in the Semaphore publications as and when they are finalised. A final draft of the Charter and Rules is expected to be considered by a specially-convened Conference, probably in November this year, and if it is ratified this draft will return to the Privy Council for approval before receiving the King's signature, which will activate the new structure.

# SPECIAL PRINTS AVAILABLE SOON

In January 2026, the Royal Navy Trophy Fund changed its name to the Royal Navy Heritage Collection (RNHC) and the old 'Trophy Store' became the Royal Navy Heritage Collection Centre (RNHCC).

This is because it is now a registered charity and able to work with a lot more stakeholders than it used to do. Hence, the name change.

In December 23, the Trustees of the RNHC agreed they would fund two commissioned paintings – one of the funeral of the late Queen Elizabeth II in Westminster Abbey in September 2022 and the other of the King's Presentation of the New Colour to the Royal Navy, held in Buckingham Palace in April 2023. Once completed, they were to be part of the Royal Navy's collection, for the benefit of Royal Navy personnel,

both now and in the future.

From a list of current Royal artist, the Trustees commissioned the paintings from two contemporary artists – Fraser Scarfe (the Queen's funeral) and Gideon Summerfield.

Both paintings were presented to the RNHC on board HMS Queen Elizabeth in May 2025. The Queen Elizabeth II funeral painting is now in the Defence Attache residence



in Washington, DC and the King's painting is in HMS Prince of Wales. Prints will be available from the RNHCC for veterans, military associations and the general public, from June 2026, with the funeral being a standard size A3 print, unframed, for £49 plus postage and packing, and the King's painting being a standard size A4

print, unframed, for £29 plus postage and packing.

Framed versions are available for £169 and £99 respectively, which includes the cost of the print, but not the cost for postage.

Frames are made individually not order, by a professional framer, and are available in either a contemporary gold or black frame, glazed, and with hanging equipment.

All prints will come with a Certificate of Authenticity with information about the artists and signed by the Chairman of RNHC Trustees.

For anyone interested in buying one or both prints, unframed or framed, please email the RNHCC at [NAVYNBCP-CoB-RNHCCMailbox@mod.gov.uk](mailto:NAVYNBCP-CoB-RNHCCMailbox@mod.gov.uk)

Once your email has been received, a member of the staff will be in touch about the options mentioned above.



## FIRST STEP TOWARDS BEARING THE STANDARD

The RNA Standard Bearers Competition takes place at HMS Collingwood in May – and it could prove to be the first step on a new path for some shipmates.

Because while the event will see experienced standard bearers battle it out for top honours, it could be the start of something big for shipmates who are considering learning the skills required – there will be valuable training opportunities for all, whether you take part in the competition or not.

The Fareham training establishment will host the contest on Friday 8 and Saturday 9 May, with the Friday being set aside for training.

That will take place during the First Dog Watch – 1600-1800 – when experienced standard bearers and parade marshals will be on hand to offer advice and coaching to participants whatever their experience, whether they are competing the following day or not. All interested shipmates are encouraged to attend this stress-free training to take up or hone their skills and confidence.

The stress levels rise the following day when the competitors take centre stage.

Participants will muster at 0900 in the WO & SRs Mess

to draw lots for order of parade, and will then march to the Drill Shed at 1000 for inspections.

On completion, the standard bearers will march back to the Mess and then, as required, individual competitors will be marched back to the Drill Shed for their turn to perform.

On completion, all will remain in the Mess of results, prize-giving and refreshments.

Please note, under current rules, it is unlikely that there will be Service accommodation available at any MOD establishment. However, information on accommodation available locally will be promulgated closer to the event.

All personnel wishing to participate should contact both the National Ceremonial Adviser, S/M Mike Smyth, at [nca@rnassoc.org](mailto:nca@rnassoc.org) and Sara Field at Central Office on [ams@rnassoc.org](mailto:ams@rnassoc.org)

Please indicate whether you are attending the training, taking part in the competition or both.

In addition, competitors should advise if they are a 'Novice' – competing for the first time.

Also please provide the name of anyone accompanying as a spectator.



## DON'T MENTION THE BATTLE...

The RNA said 'Bonjour' to a group of French schoolchildren from Normandy and gave them a trip around the Historic Dockyard in Portsmouth (which this time did not include the ubiquitous Battle of Trafalgar re-enactment...).

The children, from Saint-Louis Middle School in Cabourg, have a long-standing tie to their own French Navy, and extended that relationship when they started to write letters to British World War 2 veterans.

The relationship began in 2017, when a group of veterans spoke at the French school. The teens gave the guests vials of sand or soil, depending on whether they stormed the Normandy beaches or dropped from planes.

The students later visited the Imperial War Museum in London, accompanied by the veterans.

Now the school regularly visits the UK, this time visiting the RNA Central Office and later in the week Southend-on-Sea Branch before heading off to Chatham Dockyard.

Vive la différence!

## GUN SALUTE HONOURS ADMIRAL

The Royal Navy honoured the memory of Admiral of the Fleet Sir Benjamin Bathurst GCB, DL with a 19-gun salute at Portsmouth Naval Base last month.

The Admiral, who died on 12 October last year at the age of 89, served more than 40 years in the Navy, commanding two ships and holding a number of senior positions, including First Sea Lord (1993-95) and Vice Chief of Defence Staff. A memorial service for the officer took place at St Margaret's Church, Westminster Abbey, at 1100 on 17 March.

And ten minutes before that service began, the main channel in the southern part of Portsmouth Harbour was closed to shipping to allow the Royal Navy to carry out the time-honoured tradition of a gun salute.

Clad in anti-flash gear, seven ratings marched onto a site at the southern end of the South Railway Jetty in Portsmouth Naval Base, with six of them taking up their positions at three 3pdr saluting guns.

The ratings, from Close Range Weapon Training at HMS Collingwood in Fareham, then waited patiently as the clock ticked round to 1100, when the order came for the first round of gunfire – this was "the cool stuff", in the words of an onlooker.

A further 18 rounds were fired at roughly five-second intervals, each one neatly ticked off on a senior rate's clipboard, before the seven gunners marched off the site, allowing normal business to resume in the harbour.



Sir Benjamin Bathurst, born in 1936, joined the Navy in 1953 and qualified as a pilot in 1960.

During the course of his career he commanded 819 Naval Air Squadron, as well as Leander-class frigates HM Ships Ariadne and Minerva.

For more details and video, see the story on the RNA website [here](#) and a short video is available on Facebook [here](#).



**ROYAL NAVAL  
ASSOCIATION**



**HOW TO BOOK:**  
**01603 886 742**  
**sales@justforgroups.com**  
**www.justforgroups.com**

# RNA CONFERENCE 2026 SALFORD QUAYS

## Friday 12th – Sunday 14th June 2026



Gala Dinner  
only  
**£55pp**



City of Salford Branch RNA are delighted to be hosting the 2026 RNA Conference at Salford Quays.

A three-course gala dinner with drink reception, and table drinks will be held on Saturday at the impressive Imperial War Museum. just for groups! have also secured some bedrooms at the Copthorne Hotel Manchester Salford Quays. Please contact the just for groups! team on 01603 886 742 to book the gala dinner at a cost of £55pp, and/or bed & breakfast accommodation.

Alternatively, book directly via the website:

[www.justforgroups.com](http://www.justforgroups.com)

Group code:  
RNASAL2601



### Copthorne Hotel Manchester Salford Quays

The Copthorne Hotel is located in Salford Quays within walking distance of Media City. The hotel hosts 166 en-suite bedrooms, all fully equipped with complimentary WiFi, mini fridge, tea/coffee making facilities and a TV.

**2 nights**

**£119 per person sharing**

**£209 per person sole occupancy**

**3 nights**

**£169 per person sharing**

**£294 per person sole occupancy**



# THANKS TO FORELAND

The Royal Naval Association is proud to extend its sincere gratitude to Foreland Shipping for their generous donation of £5,000 in support of the Association's ongoing work with serving and former members of the Royal Navy community.

This significant contribution will directly assist the Association in continuing its vital mission:

providing lifelong support, camaraderie, and advocacy for sailors, veterans, and their families.

The funding will help enhance welfare initiatives, community programmes, and outreach efforts across the UK.

RNA General Secretary Bill Oliphant said: "We are deeply grateful to Foreland Shipping for their generous support.

"Donations such as this make a real and lasting difference to the lives of our members.

"It enables us to deliver wellbeing support for those feeling isolated, community events that bring people together, and practical assistance for members navigating challenging moments in their lives."

Foreland Shipping Limited was established in 1999 to build, commission and operate specialised vessels

in the UK Strategic Sealift Service.

Foreland Shipping owns and operates four Roll On, Roll Off (Ro-Ro) vessels, all British flagged and manned by British officers and ratings.

The four ships – Anvil Point, Hartland Point, Hurst Point and Eddystone – each displace more than 23,000 tonnes.

## ... AND THANKS FOR DONATIONS

The fundraiser for the Naval Service Memorial at the National Arboretum is going well. This monument is for everyone in the Naval family and the RNA holds the honour of its upkeep.

As with any honour, there comes responsibility, and the RNA must pay for damage and insurance. Sadly, there has been some damage in the last year and we have a nationwide (and Navy-wide) campaign to help pay for ongoing repairs.

We would like to send great thanks to Aldershot Branch (£3,000), Plymouth Branch (£500), Warwick Branch (£250), Ashford Branch (£250) and Aberdeen Branch (£150) for their kind donations.

We would also encourage all branches to consider this project as their annual fundraising and donation effort. The RNA Central Office is also applying for grants from various funders, so all the heavy lifting does not sit with you, but your support is greatly appreciated and any amount you can give is an investment in the past, present and future generations of Naval personnel and their families.

We also encourage you to visit the monument – its beauty is inspiring and it is for you.

<https://www.justgiving.com/campaign/navalservicememorial>

## DO YOU HAVE A TOP OPPO? THEN TELL US ABOUT IT!

Do you know anyone who has gone above and beyond in their efforts to make other people's lives better within our community? The National President's Awards are designed to recognise people who do something awesome or who are an inspiration in any way.

Usually the Branch will spot those people and nominate them, but we are aware that not everyone likes to blow the their own trumpet so we have devised a way for anyone in our network to nominate their Top Oppo – or you can nominate yourself if you are working independently or on the Lanyard Roll.

The awards are celebrated at the National Conference and the deadline for this year is the 11th May.

Please do consider sending in your nominations, there are only a few awards given every year, but it is great to be able to hear the outstanding jobs people are doing across our organisation and be able to recognise this in some way. You can find the nomination form [here](#).

## VETERANS AWARDS – WALES IS NEXT

The Scottish Veteran Awards process has reached its final stage – and now it is the turn of the Welsh event to kick into gear.

Nominations for the Welsh Veterans Awards close on 22 May, with the winners being announced from shortlists at a ceremony at the Vale Resort on 8 July. Follow [this link](#) for more information.

The application process for the English Veterans Awards will open on 1 June, closing on 17 August, with a final awards ceremony at the De Vere Cotswold Water Park on 1 October – more details via [this link](#).

## WHITE ENSIGN FLAGS UP SCAMS

Serving in the Royal Navy or Royal Marines demands resilience, discipline and focus.

But while you are protecting the nation, scammers are working just as hard to threaten your financial security, according to the White Ensign Association.

Investment scams are becoming more sophisticated, particularly through AI, cryptocurrency and social media.

With deployments, irregular schedules and time away from home, Service personnel

can be more exposed, whether through distraction, limited opportunity to check details, or the appeal of making money work harder while away.

In a guide, Alfie Orton, Financial Wellbeing Manager at the White Ensign Association, highlights key red flags and offers practical, Forces-friendly advice to help you stay in control and protect your money, .

For more details see [this link](#) on the White Ensign Association website.

## MARKING ANNIVERSARY OF OP TELIC

In May, the Royal British Legion will remember the 15th anniversary of the end of the Iraq War, and honour the extraordinary service of British Armed Forces in the Coalition.

RBL are hosting a commemorative event at midday at the National Memorial Arboretum, Staffordshire, on Friday 22 May – the 15th anniversary of the end of Op Telic.

They will remember the lives lost and those affected and pay tribute to the

professionalism and dedication of those who served, from the initial invasion to the rebuilding of Iraqi infrastructure.

RBL invites all personnel who served with the British Forces and/or their families, including the bereaved, to come together for comradeship and reflection.

To register your interest, visit <https://rbl.org.uk/telic15o>. Registration closes on Sunday 12 April. If you have any questions contact the RBL at [RemembranceEvents@britishlegion.org.uk](mailto:RemembranceEvents@britishlegion.org.uk)

# GOVERNMENT-BACKED VETERAN CENTRE NETWORK IS LAUNCHED

Thousands of ex-Forces personnel will soon be able to visit the UK's first ever network of government-backed veteran support centres and gain easier access to local services across health, housing, employment and more.

The 14 existing veteran centres will receive more than £13m of funding to become part of Op Valour, a groundbreaking programme that tackles the current fragmented nature of accessing support.

The wider £50m programme will include an HQ in the Office for Veterans' Affairs in the Ministry of Defence, field officers and an online support platform. The system will work together to share data and form better connections between local charities, councils and service providers.

The government is investing record levels in support for our veterans, and is renewing the nation's commitment to those who serve with a ten-year Veterans Strategy, which aims to celebrate and support veterans, and help them to contribute to their local communities and the economy.

Minister for Veterans and People Louise Sandher-Jones MP said: "This government is stepping up the nation's commitment to its veterans. We are building the first ever system that brings together a headquarters in the heart of government, coheres charities and support services, and connects a network of veteran support centres.

"With new connections across the system and field officers on the ground, Valour will build the most detailed picture yet of what's working and what's needed at a local and national level."

The minister was speaking on a visit to one of the centres that will soon become part of the Valour network, to learn more about how the extra funding will help support the 265,000-strong veteran community in South West England.

Alongside a group of six local military charities, Alabaré's Valour-recognised centre in Salisbury will coordinate local access to housing, health, employment and wellbeing support for veterans and the wider Armed Forces community.

Andrew Lord, CEO of Alabaré, said: "The Valour programme is one of the most significant opportunities in recent years to transform how the UK's Armed Forces community accesses support, recovery pathways, and long term independence. Alabaré's partnership with Defence Medical Welfare Service, Defence Gardens, Icarus, The Poppy Factory, The Warrior Programme and Armed Forces Equine Charity reflects both our long-standing commitment to supporting veterans and the strength that comes when organisations work together."

Veteran centres have also been selected in Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland and across England. These include a wellbeing centre in County Fermanagh that supports veterans'

mental health, SSAFA's drop-in centre in Glasgow that signposts veterans to local services, and a community sports centre in Port Talbot, South Wales. A group of centres in Greater Manchester organise local community activities such as walking trips and choir singing to reduce isolation, while a Kent-based charity trains and employs veterans to manufacture road signage.

Later in the spring there will be a further opportunity for organisations to be able to apply to become part of the Valour network, via a second round of funding.

**The upcoming Valour-recognised centres by region are:**

- **Northern Ireland:** Brooke House
- **Scotland:** SSAFA
- **Wales:** Bulldogs Boxing and Community Activities
- **North East England:** Northumberland County Council and East Durham Veterans Trust
- **North West England:** Armed Forces Community HQ – Greater Manchester and Veterans in Communities
- **Yorkshire & the Humber:** Hull 4 Heroes
- **West Midlands:** Telford & Wrekin Council
- **East Midlands:** Derbyshire Addictions Advice Service
- **South East England:** Veterans Outreach Support and Royal British Veterans Enterprise
- **South West England:** Alabaré and Improving Lives Plymouth

## SOLENT VALOUR CENTRE BUILDS ON SUCCESS

Veterans Outreach Support (VOS), together with its consortium partners, is delighted to announce the award of £1 million to lead the Solent Valour Recognised Centre (VRC) programme, part of the initiative described above which builds upon VOS's existing centre in Portsmouth, and supporting the wider Solent region.

The Solent Valour Recognised Centre (VRC) consortium unites specialist charities, NHS partner (Hampshire and Isle of Wight Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust) and seven local authorities (Portsmouth City Council, Havant Borough Council, Gosport Borough Council, Isle of Wight Council, Eastleigh Borough Council, Southampton City Council, Fareham Borough Council), building on the success of VOS and the Solent Armed Forces Covenant Partnership Board, alongside other specialist partners to deliver a coordinated, multi-agency 'No Wrong Door' approach.

Through this collaboration, the Solent VRC will focus on providing joined-up support in welfare, wellbeing, housing, employment, and health (physical and mental health), enabling a smooth transition from military to civilian life and meeting the wider needs of the Armed Forces community.

Ian Millen, CEO of VOS, said: "Being selected to lead this programme is both an honour and a tremendous opportunity

for our veterans and wider Armed Forces family. We are proud of our partnerships with Portsmouth City Council, as well as other local authorities, specialist partner charities and the Solent Armed Forces Covenant Partnership Board, which reflect a strength of collaboration that has been central to this success.

"Our programme, 'Reinforcing Success' sees us become part of a wider network of support centres across the UK, and builds upon our 18 years of dedicated support to veterans across Portsmouth, Isle of Wight and the wider Solent area.

"The programme's holistic approach mirrors our existing commitment to supporting the whole person. Veterans deserve seamless access to the health and wellbeing support they need, free from barriers or challenges, and working even more closely with our consortium partners will ensure that they get this.

"This funding celebrates and supports the remarkable men and women who have served in our Armed Forces and their families, while recognising and harnessing their invaluable talents across society."

The Solent region support three times the national average of Armed Forces personnel and families with over 59K veterans living in this region.

# GANGES MUSEUM NOW OPEN

The doors of the HMS Ganges Museum open at 1100 tomorrow (Saturday 4 April) for the 2026 season, which runs until Sunday 25 October (closed on Bank Holidays). Opening hours are 1100 to 1600 (last entry 1530) every Saturday and Sunday.

The Museum is housed at Shotley Marina, Shotley Gate in Suffolk (postcode IP9 1QJ), the site of the former Royal Navy training establishment near Ipswich.

It boasts new cabinets and displays, and is expecting high levels of interest as 2026 marks 50 years since the closure of HMS Ganges.

You are also advised to note that there will be a special celebration over the weekend of 6-7 June.

Admission is free, but donations are always welcome to help keep the museum running and developing.

Parking is available nearby, and the

museum is wheelchair accessible, child and dog-friendly.

Organisers are also looking for new faces on the volunteering side.

If you would like to know more about becoming a volunteer, or a trustee, contact Museum Secretary June a call on 07515 469420 or visit the website at [www.hmsgangesmuseum.com/volunteer](http://www.hmsgangesmuseum.com/volunteer) for more details.

The Museum records, displays and cares for artefacts, photographs, memorabilia and donated items from former trainees at HMS Ganges from 1905-1976.

Apart from running the Museum they also assist former Ganges Boys, their families and researchers search their archives.

Volunteers receive free Museum Membership, a discount on items purchased from the Museum Shop and Free Parking at the Marina.



**Mast manning at HMS Ganges. Image from the Imperial War Museum © Crown copyright reproduced under delegated authority from The Keeper of Public Records. Image: IWM (HU 87137)**

## Saturday 16th May 2026

RBLS Club, Bathgate  
West Lothian

## Scottish Area

## Uckers

## Competition

From 10:00

Anyone can enter

Spectators welcome



**ROYAL NAVAL  
ASSOCIATION**



Book your slot by emailing  
[kelliot250666@gmail.com](mailto:kelliot250666@gmail.com)

# TWICKENHAM: SEATING AND SHIPMATES' BAR DETAILS

## Your guide to the Army v Navy match at Twickenham

The time is almost here – The annual Army v Navy rugby match on 2 May. Expect tries, tears and, with any luck, a triumphant Team Navy. To help you navigate the occasion smoothly and ensure your match-day experience is shipshape, please take a moment to read the key information here, including a map to keep you on the right course.

### Timings

- Ticket Office opens: 1000
- Gates open: 1100
- Bars open: 1100
- Men's Game: 1400
- Ticket/Wristband Office closes: 1345
- Women's Game: 1645
- Bars close: 1740

So we have given you plenty of time to steady your sea legs before kick off...

### Wristband Collection

Please collect your wristbands from the dedicated RNA window at the Ticket Office, located on the south-east corner of the stadium (see map). If your shipmates are arriving separately and need to collect their wristbands individually, please ensure they have:

- The name of the booker, and
- The relevant ticket numbers.

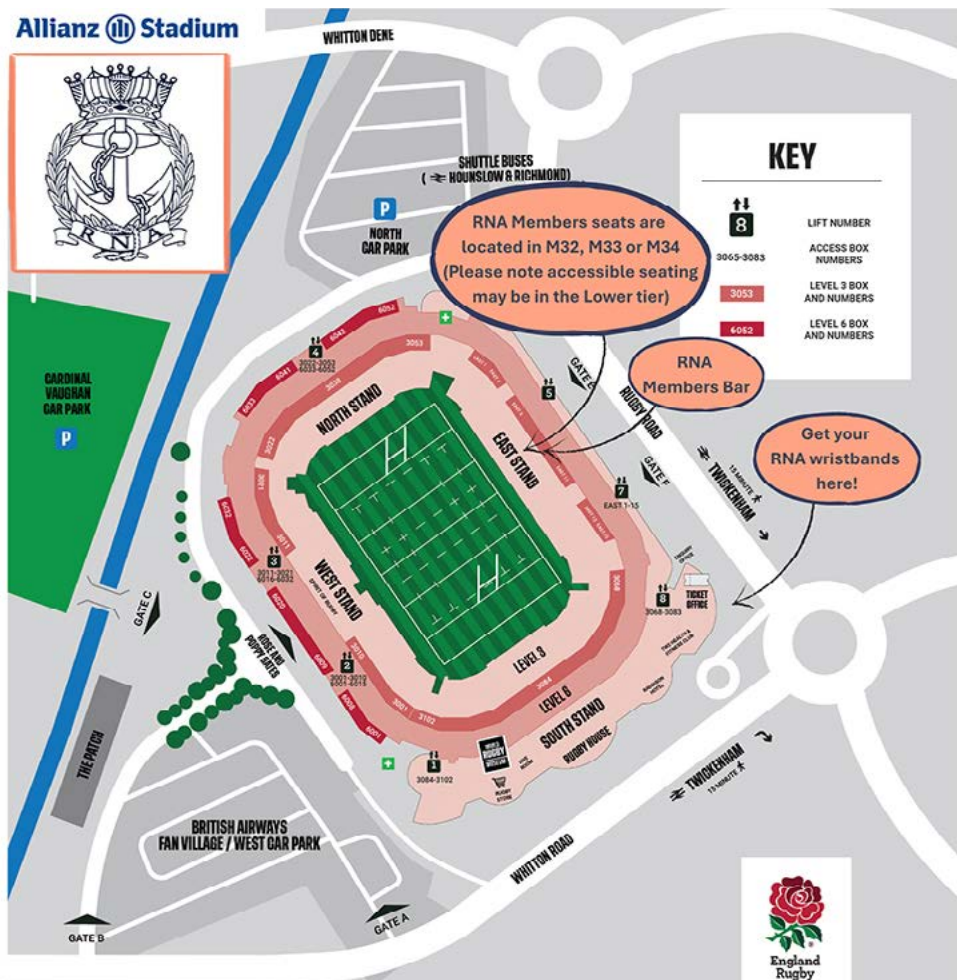
This will help avoid any last minute scrums at the window.

### Where You're Sitting

Your digital tickets (in your app) show your block and seat numbers. The stadium is clearly signposted, so simply follow the signage to your seats.

RNA Members are seated in the East Stand, Middle Tier, Blocks M32, M33 or M34. Please note: accessible seating may be in the Lower Tier.

### RNA Members' Bar



Our private RNA Members' Bar is located in the Middle Tier of the East Stand.

We have some fantastic auction lots and raffle prizes lined up so please do set some time aside, pop in and take a look at what's on offer. More details will follow shortly – keep an eye on our social media channels.

**Shipmates are reminded that Branches can apply to the BCSF (Branch and Club Support Fund) for financial support towards transport for the match, if the Branch is running a coach, for example. For details, see the form on the RNA website (link here) or email Kate (gso@rnassoc.org) or Sara (ams@rnassoc.org).**

# KILT WALKS SET THE PACE FOR CHARITIES

Registration for a number of charity Kiltwalks is now open – and the first event of the 2026 programme takes place at the end of this month. Kiltwalk is Scotland's largest mass participation walking event with more than 216,000 people taking part in the past decade. And the Kiltwalk community, together with The Hunter Foundation, has managed to raise

£58 million to date, with all funds raised having been distributed to 4,000 Scottish charities. The 2026 programme starts in **Glasgow** on Saturday 25 April (the Sunday event has already sold out), followed by **Aberdeen** on 7 June, **Dundee** on 16 August and **Edinburgh** on 13 September. There are different categories of entry depending on distance

(Glasgow's Mighty Stride, for example, covers 23 miles, with the Big Stroll clocking in at 14.5 miles and the Wee Wander three miles). Entry for the longer events has been capped at £20, and funds raised by you go directly to your chosen charity. See <https://www.thekiltwalk.co.uk> for more details of all Kiltwalks and how it could benefit your charity.



# RACE ACROSS THE UK



**START: DARTMOUTH FINISH: INVERNESS**

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

**EVENT CAPACITY: 30 TEAMS OF 2**

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

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

**ENTRY FEE:**  
£300

**FUNDRAISING  
TARGET:**  
£1,500

\* per person

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



The Royal Navy and Royal Marines Charity is a company limited by guarantee registered in England and Wales (no. 4047940) and is a registered charity (no. 113794) and Scotland (SC044949).

# WHY TAKE PART?

**PUSH YOUR LIMITS**

**SUPPORT YOUR NAVY FAMILY**

**CREATE STORIES YOU'LL TELL FOR YEARS**

Every mile you cover helps change lives.

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

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

Team Sea Dust, 2025



# SERVICES CRICKET FESTIVAL AT LORD'S

All three Services will be battling it out for a prestigious trophy at Lord's Cricket Ground in London next month. The Armed Forces Cricket Festival will take place on Thursday 23 April, when the Royal Navy, Army and RAF vie for the Inter-Services T20 Trophy. On the same bill will be a UK Armed Forces Women's fixture against the MCC.

This is a great opportunity to support your Service and enjoy high-level cricket with colleagues, friends and family, at the home of cricket.

Gates will open at 0900, with the first match starting at 1000.

**Please note: timings may be subject to change, depending on the weather and other conditions.**

The Pelham Suite in the Warner Stand will be open during the event for all veterans to relax and watch the cricket. The schedule is as follows:

**1000-1245 Match 1:** UKAFCA

Women's vs MCC – T20

**1245-1315 Lunch:** Kwik Cricket to be played on Nursery Ground

**1315-1600 Match 2:** RAF vs Losers of Army/Navy - IST20

**1600-1630 Tea:** Military band to play on main ground

**1630-1915 Match 3:** RAF v Winners of Army/Navy - IST20

A post-tournament presentation will be held approximately 15 minutes after



the conclusion of the last match, when the respective trophies and awards will be presented by the President of MCC.

**Ground Admission Prices:**

■ Adults: £20

■ Serving Personnel / Veterans / MOD Civil Servants: £10\*

■ Over 65s: £5

■ Under 16s: £5 – Ticket holders must be Under 16 on the match date. Please note Under 14s must be accompanied by an adult.

Serving Personnel / MOD Civil Servants / Veterans – Please bring proof of identity with you to the match (eg ID cards, Veterans ID card). You may be asked to prove your entitlement to this discount.

You can buy tickets now via the Lord's website: [www.lords.org](http://www.lords.org) All tickets must be purchased online.

Further details about the day, including links to ticket purchases, can be found at the Inter Services T20 website: <https://interservicest20.co.uk>

**Photo by Nipun Chandra Surnilla on Unsplash**

## CENTRAL OFFICE OPEN DAYS

Four dates have been set aside for shipmates to visit Portsmouth Naval Base to see what makes Central Office tick.

The Central Office Open days for 2026 are:

- Friday 29 May
- Friday 26 June
- Friday 17 July
- Friday 7 August

If you would like more details of what happens on Open Days, or to register your interest, please contact Sara Field on [ams@rnassoc.org](mailto:ams@rnassoc.org)

## COMMENDATION FOR RALEIGH MENTORS

The RNA is proud to announce that its Veteran Mentors at HMS Raleigh have been awarded a Captain's Commendation by the Commanding Officer, Capt Jeremy Ussher, in recognition of their exceptional contribution to the training and support of Royal Navy recruits.

The award highlights the outstanding work delivered by the RNA Veteran Mentors team, who provide guidance and support to recruits, assist staff, and make a tangible difference to the experience of those undergoing training.

Their commitment exemplifies the professionalism, dedication, and leadership that the Royal Naval Association seeks to promote.

Shipmate Terry Whitty, RNA's Lead Liaison Mentor at HMS Raleigh (third from left in the picture), said: "This is a tremendous achievement and a proud moment for everyone involved.

"Our Veteran Mentors embody the very best of the Association – their experience, dedication, and support for others are invaluable.

"This recognition by HMS Raleigh is richly deserved and reflects the outstanding impact they have every



day."

The RNA extends its heartfelt thanks to all Veteran Mentors for their continued commitment to the mentoring programme at HMS Raleigh.

Their efforts not only support the next generation of Royal Navy personnel but also uphold the reputation and values of the Association.

The 239-acre establishment, at Torpoint in Cornwall, hosts a number of training units and courses, including the ten-week Initial Naval Training programme takes new recruits and teaches them the essential skills needed in their Naval careers, as well as instilling core values and the Naval ethos that makes the Royal Navy such an effective fighting force.

# Welsh Open Uckers Tournament



Welsh Open Uckers Tournament

To be held at HMS Swan, Builth Wells Rugby Club

6th June 2026 First Roll of the Dice 10:00

Buffet Available 12:00 to 16:00

Entertainment by

**Lower Deck Shanty Men**

19:00 onwards

**2000 Grand Draw**

**All this for only £5 per entrant**

***Please Register ASAP with [davebuckingham10@gmail.com](mailto:davebuckingham10@gmail.com)***

# MEET ENCOMPASSES MARBLES AND MOTHERING SUNDAY

Tot time and a Mothering Sunday lunch were part of the Daily Routine when the RNAMCC (Royal Naval Association Motorhome, Caravan and Camping Club) met up in Lincolnshire over the weekend of 13-16 March. A total of 45 shipmates in 27 units gathered for the three nights in various motorhomes, campervans and the like to meet up, and get the opportunity to meet other new members and discuss what's ahead for the season.

The next Big Meet Mk V is in June!

Hanworth Country Park ([www.hanworthcountrypark.co.uk](http://www.hanworthcountrypark.co.uk)) was the venue in the Lincolnshire countryside and gave everyone the chance to set their plans and vans (and tents) for the forthcoming season, including the Big Meet Mk V with its Caribbean/Hawaiian theme. There was a raffle held which raised £78 which is being donated to a World War 2 Veterans Club, to pay for a fish and chip supper for its membership.

S/M Dawn Easterbrook organised a guessing game with

marbles in a demijohn which also raised £100 – there were 1,254 marbles inside (pictured right).

43 shipmates also attended the Mothering Sunday lunch, allowing all to have a gentle wind down before derigging and setting off back across the various parts of the UK from whence they came.

The RNAMCC is open to anyone with an interest in camping, caravanning, motorhoming etc who has at least one member of the party with an active RNA membership (Full, Life or Associate).

The group consists of members across all branches of the military and is aimed at meeting up with friends past and present, with like-minded interests, and pets are welcome.

For up-to-date information of what is going on please check out the Facebook page <https://www.facebook.com/groups/294795378948752> or contact Ron Shilton (Lead Admin) on [rnamcc@outlook.com](mailto:rnamcc@outlook.com) or Annette Laurie (PRO & Communications Lead) on [commsrnamcc@outlook.com](mailto:commsrnamcc@outlook.com)



## DAY OF CELEBRATION AT FORCES LGBT+ MEMORIAL

Save the date! Expressions of interest are now open for an LGBT+ Armed Forces Community Memorial Dedication Event on Saturday 20 June.

Following the successful dedication of the Memorial at the National Memorial Arboretum last October (pictured right, UK MOD © Crown copyright 2025), Fighting With Pride (FWP) is delighted to announce this Community Dedication Event.

This special gathering is for the wider LGBT+ Armed Forces family – veterans, serving personnel, and importantly, friends and families who were unable to attend the official ceremony.

It will be a day of celebration, pride and community, with live music, a picnic atmosphere, a short ceremony at the memorial, contributions from veterans and serving personnel, representation from Service and veterans' charities.

FWP want this event to feel inclusive, joyful and affirming, giving everyone the chance to connect, reflect and celebrate the courage, service and dignity of the LGBT+ Armed Forces community.

Full details, including the confirmed timings and formal registration information, will be shared on the Fighting With Pride website and social media in the coming weeks.

At this stage they just need to ask for an expression of



interest so they can have a good idea of numbers for planning purposes.

In the form you will be able to indicate the total number of guests including yourself, and the family and friends you would like to bring to the event with you.

Be advised, they may need to ask for a nominal charge per head for each of your additional guests. This is to be confirmed.

Register an expression of interest using [this link](#).

# EPICGigability

THE MILITARY VETERANS CORNISH PILOT GIG CLUB (CHARITY NO: 1192085)



## Now making waves in Minehead

EPICGigability is a Tri-Service club founded and run by military veterans' charity that welcomes serving members of the Armed Forces, veterans, and their families.

We've been running for over three years with resounding success in Cornwall, and now we're looking to expand to Somerset starting in Minehead. With many veterans and serving personnel in the area, we believe our mix of camaraderie, teamwork, and resilience can bring huge benefits to the service community.

### Blue Water Therapy

Fresh air, exercise, and time on the water

Mental wellbeing through focus and rhythm

A sense of calm, balance, and connection

### Our Philosophy: Every Person Is Capable

- No matter your age, background, or ability, you are welcome.
- Whether you've rowed before or never picked up an oar, we believe in inclusion, encouragement, and opportunity for everyone be that rowing, maintaining, support functions, coaching, talking and socialising with likeminded people.

### Why Join?

- Built on teamwork and mutual support
- Open to serving members, veterans, and their families
- Boosts physical fitness and mental wellbeing
- A new community with the spirit of service

*Find out more!*

Follow us on Facebook: [EPICGigability](#) or call 07929 572742 or email [info@epicgigability.co.uk](mailto:info@epicgigability.co.uk)



# SPECTACULAR OPPORTUNITY

The magnificent Massed Bands of HM Royal Marines Beating Retreat will return to London this summer, bringing a spectacular evening of military music, tradition and pageantry to the iconic Horse Guards Parade on 16 and 17 July 2026.

This spectacular evening of military music and ceremonial pageantry will see more than 200 of the world's finest military musicians perform in one of the capital's most historic settings, against the stunning backdrop of St James's Park.

Audiences will be treated to a stirring programme featuring the Massed Bands of HM Royal Marines, the precision drill of the 40-strong Corps of Drums, and a Royal Navy Guard of Honour. The evening will culminate in the moving Naval Sunset ceremony, a tradition rich in heritage that provides a powerful and memorable finale.

All proceeds from the event will support the

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

Performances will take place on:

- Thursday 16 July 2026 – 18:30
- Friday 17 July 2026 – 18:30

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

Tickets range from £17 to £45, with seated and special access options available. Wheelchair tickets include a companion within the same ticket. Groups of 20 or more can receive a 10% discount using the code BEATGROUP (maximum discount £100).

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

## QUICK QUOTE FOR TRAVEL INSURANCE

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

[https://51bwhwzvnuu.typeform.com/to/UU6CIVe3#association\\_members\\_area=xxxxx](https://51bwhwzvnuu.typeform.com/to/UU6CIVe3#association_members_area=xxxxx)

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

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

## REQUEST FOR EMAIL DETAILS

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

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

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

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

## ARE YOU WILLING TO HELP THE ASSOCIATION?

Change starts with a will... and it couldn't be easier. Writing a will isn't really for you, it's for the people you love, to make their lives easier. It's your chance to leave a legacy that lasts long after you've gone. A will doesn't just save your loved ones time, money, and stress. It's also an opportunity

to be part of something bigger. By including a gift in your will, you can help support the Royal Naval Association and make a meaningful difference to shipmates for generations to come. That's why we've partnered with expert estate planners Octopus Legacy to offer you the chance to write or update

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



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

**ONCE NAVY ALWAYS NAVY**

[royal-naval-association.com](http://royal-naval-association.com)

In partnership with **octopuslegacy**

## SHOP ONLINE AND HELP US RAISE FUNDS

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

easyfundraising turns your everyday online shopping into **FREE** donations when you use them to shop with more than 8,000 retailers such as eBay, John Lewis & Partners, Argos, ASOS and Booking.com.

Retailers then make a small donation by way of saying 'thank you', and easyfundraising gives those free funds to the cause. If you would like to get involved, please register using this link – just click **here** to sign up, and once you've raised your first donation, easyfundraising will give the RNA a £1 bonus donation! There are no catches or hidden charges and the Association will be really grateful for your donations.

## GIZZETS ONLINE

Our lanyards and pin badges are available from our online shop. Click the SHOP link on our website, or go to: <https://www.rnagizzet.co.uk/>

## UPCOMING MEETINGS

### Assoc Management Committees:

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

**Thurs 7 May** (Zoom 1800)

**Fri 7 August** (Zoom 0900)

**Thurs 15 Oct** (Zoom 1800)

### FACs (finance):

Fortnight ahead(ish) of NC, preferably post AMC

**Thurs 14 May** (Zoom 1800)

## ADMIRAL IS NOW IN CHARGE

Former Second Sea Lord Vice Admiral Sir Martin Connell has been appointed President of The Naval Children's Charity. The Admiral, who had a 39-year Service career, has been the charity's Vice Chair of Trustees for several years, and has already played a pivotal role in shaping its strategic direction and championing support for Naval families.

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



Do you have a few minutes to spare to help us help you and your shipmates? It could be very much worth your while...

Because it will only take a few minutes to complete the RNA 2026 membership survey, which will enable us to understand all members' views on the RNA and its activities.

And for one lucky entrant, drawn at random, there will be a £100 Amazon gift voucher.

Completing the survey will help us to deliver more of what members want and need.

And if you could all add your email addresses, this would enable us to communicate more effectively with members.

To take part in the survey please click this link: <https://forms.office.com/e/wbauj6qJmm>

## 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.

We are also extremely grateful to RNA volunteers who manage the minibuses regionally, including bookings. To book a minibus, the contact details are:

**Plymouth** – Les Yeoman - [lesyeo3@gmail.com](mailto:lesyeo3@gmail.com) – 07795 231397

**Manchester** – David Barlow – [dbarlow@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:dbarlow@hotmail.co.uk) - 07747 006100

**Portsmouth** – Sara Field – [ams@rnassoc.org](mailto:ams@rnassoc.org) – 023 92 723747

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



## YOUR INSURANCE PARTNER

### Enjoy the following member benefits:

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

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



## ROYAL NAVAL ASSOCIATION



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



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

## GREENWICH SUPPORTS ONLINE TUTORING

Greenwich Hospital, in partnership with the Naval Children's Charity, is pleased to announce the launch of a new pilot tutoring initiative, designed to support children who have at least one parent, carer or legal guardian currently serving in the Royal Navy, Royal Marines or Royal Fleet Auxiliary. Delivered in collaboration with an independent tutoring provider, the programme will offer high quality, non-means-tested, 1:1 online tutoring support to eligible children.

## APARTMENTS AVAILABLE FOR RENT

A number of new two-bedroom apartments are now available to rent at the Nautilus Welfare Fund's flagship estate, the Mariners' Park retirement complex on the River Mersey at Wallasey.

The park includes communal social areas, a laundry, a hairdresser's salon, a gym, a games room, a community alarm system, and 24/7 emergency support and is a place where former seafarers can share memories with others who have experienced life at sea. For more details or to book a visit follow [this link](#).

## GREETINGS FROM CROATIA

The RNA has received an Easter message of conviviality from our Croatian counterparts. "Wishing you a joyful and peaceful Easter from all of us at the Association of Croatian Navy Veterans. May this season bring health, happiness, and renewed hope." Warm regards, Association of Croatian Navy Veterans

# RNRMC HOSTS EVENING OF APPRECIATION

Royal Navy & Royal Marines Charity (RNRMC) hosted its Portsmouth Recognition Evening at the Warrant Officers & Senior Rates Mess at HMS Excellent on 17 March, welcoming 150 guests, including two World War 2 veterans, from across the region for an evening of appreciation and celebration.

Bringing together volunteers, fundraisers, ambassadors, trustees and corporate partners, the reception recognised the individuals and organisations whose dedication enables the charity to continue its vital mission – supporting sailors, marines and their families.

The evening was opened by Samantha Nicolson, Chief Executive of RNRMC, who paid tribute to those who go above and beyond in support of the naval community. "It is a real privilege to come together and recognise the extraordinary commitment shown by our supporters," she said. "Each plays a vital part in ensuring RNRMC can continue to stand alongside sailors, marines and their families whenever they need us. Their dedication, generosity and belief in our mission make a lasting difference, and we are deeply grateful."

A special tribute was paid to Ken Arkell and Robin Boodle, whose service and legacy

continue to inspire generations.

Ken joined the Royal Navy as a Telegraphist in the closing days of the war, serving at sea and overseas, including in Ceylon and Singapore, before demobilisation. He remains an active member of the Naval community.

Robin served for 24 years in the Royal Navy, enlisting just before his 15th birthday in 1939. His career spanned the Battle of the Atlantic and operations across the Pacific, Burma and the Far East. Initially serving as a gunner on board HMS Suffolk, he later retrained in Navigation and Radar at HMS Dryad. In recent years, with support from RNRMC, he has attended VE Day 80 commemorations, including a service at Westminster Abbey, and celebrated his 101st birthday.

Recognition certificates were presented to individuals and organisations who have demonstrated exceptional commitment over the past 12 months, celebrating achievement across fundraising, volunteering, partnership and community leadership

The charity also recognised its volunteer network, whose dedication and proactive spirit continue to strengthen connections with communities across the region.

RNRMC extends sincere thanks to MBDA for sponsoring this year's event.

## STAND EASY AND CONNECT

Royal Navy & Royal Marines Charity (RNRMC) is inviting the Naval community to pop the kettle on and take a meaningful pause this May as Stand Easy returns for 2026.

Taking place during Mental Health Awareness Week (11–17 May), Stand Easy is RNRMC's annual fundraising campaign encouraging serving personnel, veterans and families to come together over a brew, creating space to connect, talk and support mental health and wellbeing across the Naval community.

Inspired by the Naval command meaning "pause, but remain ready", RNRMC recognises that while Service life brings pride and purpose, it also brings sustained operational pressure. With ongoing global uncertainty and high-readiness roles, many in our community



are carrying extra worries alongside deployments, relocations and time apart from loved ones.

More than 40 per cent of veterans report difficulties adjusting to civilian life, and one in four adults in the UK experience a mental health condition each year. In 2025 alone, RNRMC supported 3,874 beneficiaries where mental health and wellbeing was the primary area of need, investing over £800,000 into counselling, therapeutic programmes,

peer support networks and family services.

For former Royal Marine James 'Jim' Brown, that support proved life-changing. After experiencing isolation in retirement, he found renewed purpose through Veterans Outreach Support (VOS), supported by RNRMC.

"I am so grateful that I found this support," he said. "I feel part of a community again – it has truly changed my life."

Hosting a Stand Easy event can be as simple as a tea break in a mess, wardroom, workplace or at home. However big or small, every brew helps.

To sign up, download your free host pack and find out more, visit: <https://www.rnrmc.org.uk/supported-events/stand-easy>

Now, more than ever, a simple pause can make a powerful difference.

# DO YOU KNOW ANY HEROPRENEURS?

Nominations are now open for the Heropreneurs Awards 2026, honouring entrepreneurs and innovators from the Armed Forces community.

The awards, delivered by the Forces Employment Charity, celebrate the achievements of the UK Armed Forces community including veterans, serving personnel, reservists, and their families.

Since launching in 2018, the Heropreneurs Awards, sponsored by Warwick Business School, have recognised the drive, resilience and innovation found within the Armed Forces community. The awards shine a light on businesses at every stage, from early start-ups to established enterprises, all united by a strong sense of purpose and impact.

Among the categories is the Warwick Business School MBA

Scholarship Award, open to veterans, serving members of the Armed Forces, reservists, and their immediate family members offering the winner a scholarship to cover all tuition fees for an MBA programme of their choice at WBS, worth up to £69,980, and significant scholarships are available for runners-up. Applications for this award close on 26 April.

Other categories include Heropreneur of the Year, Start-Up of the Year and Micro Enterprise of the Year. Nominations for the Heropreneurs Awards close on 14 June 2026.

This year's awards ceremony will be held at The Shard, London, on Monday 2 November.

For more information on the various categories, and to submit a nomination, please use [this link](#).

Are you:

**Ex-forces?**

**Eager to travel more this year?** 

**Tired of rising insurance costs?** 

You could make a saving by

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

**Get A 30 Second Quote**

\*TERMS AND CONDITIONS APPLY. ALL INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHEME AVAILABLE AT: [WWW.COMBINEDSERVICESTRAVELCOVER.ORG.UK](http://WWW.COMBINEDSERVICESTRAVELCOVER.ORG.UK)



# BE A WINNER WITH THE RNA LOTTERY

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

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

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

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

## PUTTING US ON THE MAP

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

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

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

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

Any feedback to the Comms team please.

## GET YOUR SLOPS HERE

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

# SPORTS AND COMRADESHIP GROUPS

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

# GREENWICH BACKS COMBAT STRESS

Combat Stress has been awarded an £825,000 grant by Greenwich Hospital, to help fund life-changing specialist services for Royal Navy, Royal Marines, and RFA veterans across the UK.

On average 73 per cent of veterans who undertake Combat Stress' treatment recover – significantly above the recovery rate for PTSD of other mental health services.

The grant, which will be spread over three years, will help to ensure that those Naval veterans struggling with complex mental health issues will continue to receive the best possible treatment and support.

Deirdre Mills, Director of Greenwich Hospital, said: "We recognise that the psychological impact of service can be profound and enduring.



## GREENWICH HOSPITAL

SUPPORTING THE ROYAL NAVY SINCE 1694

"This funding award reflects our commitment to ensuring Royal Navy, Royal Marines and Royal Fleet Auxiliary veterans receive the specialist mental health support they deserve.

"By investing in the evidence-based care provided by Combat Stress, we are helping veterans overcome the challenges they face and achieve positive lasting change for themselves and their families."

Chloe Mackay, CEO of Combat Stress, said: "We are extremely grateful to Greenwich Hospital for their ongoing support of Combat Stress.

"Our renewed partnership will be crucial in providing life-changing treatment to Royal Navy, Royal Marine and Royal Fleet Auxiliary veterans.

"This grant means that more veterans will be able to understand their mental

health, access treatment and support, and recover from PTSD.

"It will ensure that veterans who are struggling with their mental health will be able to get the help they so desperately need, improving their lives and the lives of their families".

Greenwich Hospital has been providing and funding support to serving and former serving Royal Navy, Royal Marines, and RFA personnel and their families for more than 325 years.

To find out more, visit the Greenwich Hospital website [here](#).

# Royal Naval Association Lottery



**Win up to £25,000**

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



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

**Enter by using the QR Code  
or visit [RNAlottery.co.uk](http://RNAlottery.co.uk)**



## LEAVERS EVENTS – SUPPORTING THOSE WHO HAVE SERVED

The 2026 Royal Navy Service Leavers Events (SLEs) are well under way, marking a significant evolution in how the Royal Navy recognises and celebrates personnel transitioning out of Service, writes RNA Welfare and Wellbeing Co-ordinator Jon Everett. This year saw a major milestone with the first-ever Service Leavers Event held at HMS Cambria in Wales, broadening regional access and offering a meaningful moment of recognition for those preparing for civilian life. I was fortunate to attend the HMS Cambria event alongside numerous Naval charities and support organisations. The day was filled with pride, reflection, and sincere gratitude. Importantly, these events acknowledge not only the achievements of the Service leavers themselves but also the unwavering support of their families, who stand alongside them throughout their Naval careers.

### What Are Royal Navy SLEs?

Royal Navy Service Leavers Events were designed to formally thank those leaving the Service while recognising the vital role families play during years of deployments, relocations, and service commitments.

According to the Royal Navy Forum, these events offer Service leavers and their families an opportunity to reflect on their achievements, connect with the Naval community, and consider the next chapter together.



Each event typically includes:

- A welcome reception with refreshments
- Presentation of Valedictory Certificates or letters
- Optional personal citations
- A light buffet
- Opportunities to network with support organisations and Naval charities such as RNRMC, RNBT, SSAFA, RBL, and, of course, the RNA

They are open to those undergoing resettlement or preparing to leave the Service.

### HMS Cambria – A First for Wales

The March event at HMS Cambria marked the first Service Leavers Event ever held in Wales, with more than 90 attendees representing a combined 280–285 years of service.

Rear Admiral Jude Terry addressed the group, offering heartfelt thanks for the dedication shown by personnel and families alike.

Seventeen Naval charities supported the event a strong display of the network available to those transitioning out of uniform.

### Acknowledging Exceptional Support – Thank You S/M Terry Stewart

A special and sincere thank you must go to S/M Terry Stewart, whose hard work and commitment is central to the success of these events.

Terry organises and delivers the events to an exceptional standard, ensuring every Service leaver and family member feels supported and celebrated.

As both an active RNA member and Chairman of Llandudno Branch, Terry

exemplifies the absolute best of the RNA's spirit of service, camaraderie, and community support.

### Upcoming Service Leavers Events – Scotland & South-West

The next two Service Leavers Events will take place at:

- Ardencaple Hotel, Helensburgh (Scotland) 22 April
- China Fleet Country Club, Saltash, 22 April.

The Scottish Area and their local RNA Branches have already shown strong commitment by attending previous Scottish SLEs and will continue to support future ones.

Their ongoing presence is invaluable, ensuring that service leavers receive a warm welcome and an introduction to the wide support network available to them.

I extend my sincere thanks to them for their continued dedication and representation at these important events.

### The Role of the Royal Naval Association

As these events continue to grow across the UK, my long-term aim is to strengthen RNA involvement by linking more closely with branches near each venue.

This is not just about recruiting – it is about national awareness, ensuring every Service leaver knows that the RNA is here for them and their families. Wherever they choose to settle, whether elsewhere in the UK or overseas, the RNA remains ready to offer camaraderie, wellbeing support, and a lifelong community.



## JENNY MAKES A BIG DIFFERENCE



Introducing **Jenny McGee**, our Branch Welfare and Wellbeing Officer of the Month, *writes RNA W&W Co-ordinator Jon Everett*. When the Frome Branch Welfare Officer had to stand down in 2024 due to ill health, Jenny immediately stepped up to ensure that members continued to receive the support they needed.

Shortly afterward, the role evolved into Welfare & Wellbeing Officer, bringing the Royal Naval Association in line with national guidance. This update came with online training requirements, all of which Jenny completed. She also submits monthly welfare reports without fail.

Frome Branch has a widely-spread membership area, stretching over seven miles to the east and 12 miles to the west, yet despite the distance, Jenny remains in regular contact with members.

Through home visits, phone calls, and check-ins, she has supported those in poor health, those recently bereaved, and those simply in need

of companionship.

Jenny also organises monthly coffee mornings at a local farm shop, and actively encourages members to attend the Frome Veterans' Hub, often organising transport for those who would otherwise be unable to get there.

She embodies all the qualities of an excellent Welfare & Wellbeing Officer – compassionate, committed, reliable, and always putting the needs of branch members first, including those living in care homes.

The Frome Branch is extremely grateful to have Jenny in this role.

On behalf of the whole branch – thank you, Jenny! Your dedication makes an enormous difference.

This year, at the Area 4 Reunion, it was announced that Jenny had been awarded the Area 4 Vic Cornwall Trophy for her outstanding work as Welfare Officer.

Many congratulations on this well-deserved recognition.

To me, Jenny represents everything that makes a truly great branch welfare officer.

Despite her own personal challenges, she has repeatedly gone above and beyond, travelling far and wide, offering support wherever it's needed, and consistently reporting on her activities.

She is a shining example of the spirit of RNA companionship and the ethos we cherish across the Seven Cs.

Having had the pleasure of meeting Jenny myself, her enthusiasm and passion for welfare work is clear the moment she speaks. I am delighted to congratulate her on her award this year.

■ If your branch has a Welfare or Welfare & Wellbeing Officer who is going above and beyond, let's celebrate them.

Send me the details and a photo, and we'll help shine a light on their fantastic work, reminding the wider RNA family that there is always someone there for them.

## JOIN OUR WELLBEING WEDNESDAYS

Our Wellbeing Wednesdays have been going well, and I'd love to encourage a few more to come along if you're able to join us. Each session is designed to offer something meaningful, interesting and supportive, and as always, everyone in the RNA is welcome. The sessions are 7–8pm on the first Wednesday of each month via Zoom.

### **A Look Back: Stonemasonry and the Power of Recovery**

Earlier in March, we had an inspiring session led by Henry Grey, who spoke candidly about his time in the Merchant Navy, his struggles with alcohol and drugs, and how stonemasonry became the turning point that changed his life.

Learning the craft gave him focus, purpose, and a completely new direction.

Since leaving the Merchant Navy, Henry has worked on Salisbury Cathedral and is now developing his own wellbeing-based training programme, offering veterans the chance to explore stonemasonry as both a skill and a therapeutic activity. I'm hoping to build on this by offering a dedicated wellbeing weekend – more details to follow.

### **Monthly BWWO Online Training Saturdays – Building Awareness and Confidence**

Alongside the Wednesday programme, I run monthly Branch Welfare Officer Training Days online on Saturdays. These have been well supported, with volunteers delivering awareness sessions on safeguarding, suicide prevention, and coming up this month, domestic abuse awareness (on Saturday 18 April).

These sessions are designed to build awareness rather than provide formal qualifications, but they do include signposting to recognised training for those who wish to take things further.

### **Your Safety and Support Matter**

Your wellbeing is always the priority. Every session is delivered with safeguarding in mind. There will always be at least one person present on screen who can offer private support if something feels uncomfortable or difficult. You'll also receive information after each session about how to find help if you need it.

### **Get Involved**

If you or any member of the RNA have a hobby, interest, or experience that you think would make a good wellbeing topic, please do get in touch. We're always keen to include new voices and ideas.

You can reach me at [wws@rnassoc.org](mailto:wws@rnassoc.org)

# WELFARE AND WELLBEING

# HEALTH AND WELLBEING FAIRS

March was another busy and rewarding month for health and wellbeing engagement across the Royal Navy, with two well-attended health fairs taking place at HMS King Alfred in Portsmouth and HMS Raleigh in Cornwall.

Both events provided valuable opportunities to connect with serving personnel at different stages of their Naval careers and to highlight the wide range of support available to them and their families.

## HMS King Alfred – Supporting Our Royal Naval Reservists

The first health fair of the month took place at RNR unit HMS King Alfred.

Held on one of the unit's parade nights, the event allowed reservists to engage directly with welfare organisations and Naval charities in a relaxed and accessible setting.

I was fortunate to meet many of the dedicated Reservists who give their time alongside civilian careers to support the Royal Navy. Conversations focused on the role of the RNA, how we



can support Reservists during and after their service, and how the RNA can also be a point of contact for their families.

A wide range of charities were present, showcasing the support available and helping personnel better understand what they are entitled to and what help exists beyond the unit.

Events like this are especially important for Reservists, who may not always have the same day-to-day access to welfare support as their regular Service counterparts.

The evening reinforced the importance of visibility, engagement, and ensuring reservists know they remain part of the wider Naval family.

## HMS Raleigh – Engaging Phase Two Trainees

The second health fair took place at HMS Raleigh, focusing on Phase Two trainees who have completed their initial training and are progressing into specialist roles – a key point in a Naval career, where individuals begin to shape their future paths while adjusting to the demands of Service life.

The event brought together numerous charities and support organisations, giving trainees the chance to explore the help available to them early in their careers.

I thoroughly enjoyed speaking with trainees about:

- Their future career plans
- Their families and support networks
- Worries and concerns about service life and deployments
- How welfare and wellbeing support remains available throughout their careers

A key message shared was that support doesn't stop when they leave training establishments or go on deployment. The

RNA has a strong nationwide network of experienced Branch Welfare Officers who can support serving personnel and their families, whether they are on leave, deployed, or facing challenges at home.

We also highlighted the RNA's Thriving Together and Wellbeing programmes, alongside online resources and support options that can be accessed wherever personnel or their families are based.

## Strengthening the Welfare Network

Both events demonstrated the Royal Navy's continued commitment to wellbeing and the importance of early engagement with welfare support. Whether speaking to experienced Reservists or trainees, the message was consistent: There is a strong, connected network of support available and the RNA is proud to be part of that network.

Engagement at events like these helps build awareness, confidence, and reassurance that no one needs to face challenges alone, during service or beyond.

## FUNERAL GUIDE AVAILABLE

The RNA has created a Funeral Guide, and reminds shipmates that we offer ceremonial and administrative support for members and all those who have served in Our Naval Forces. Find the guide on our website: <https://www.royal-naval-association.co.uk/rna-funeral-guide>



## WELFARE CONTACTS

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

# BRANCH NEWS

## BRIGHTLINGSEA Branch

Shipmates from Brightlingsea Branch, along with colleagues from other branches in Eastern England, have honoured the memory of the three sailors who died in Motor Torpedo Boat (MTB) 667 alongside in Brightlingsea Harbour on 5 March 1943.

Members of the branch were joined by shipmates from **Colchester, Rayleigh, Stowmarket** and Basildon to pay tribute to the victims of a tragic accident.

On such a glorious spring day, surrounded by daffodils and crocuses, it was hard to connect with the war some 83 years earlier.

Back in March 1943 the newly-constructed MTB 667 had just been fitted out and had completed acceptance trials before she was due to depart for the Mediterranean.

Pre-deployment weekend leave had been granted, with just the duty watch remaining on board.

The first sailor returning from leave on the morning of 5 March found to his horror that his fellow crew members who had remained on board were unresponsive.

Medical assistance came from the base port, HMS Nemo, which hosted the Coastal Forces equipping unit.

The doctor found three men dead from some unknown cause and the others in poor shape. The bodies were removed to the mortuary and the sick men to the Sick Quarters.

Subsequent investigation revealed that the casualties were a result of inhalation of methyl bromide, a toxic gas which had leaked from the boat's fire extinguishing system.

A past president of Brightlingsea Branch, the late Joe French, a native of Brightlingsea, was serving as Leading Writer to the Captain of HMS Nemo, and was tasked with arranging the funerals of the three dead.

Naval funerals took place at All Saints Church on 9 March 1943 for Chief Motor Mechanic Charles Edward Harris and Motor Mechanic Frederick William Phair. Petty Officer Cox'n Heaney was taken by his family for burial in Linkinhorne, Cornwall.

Joe French never forgot the MTB 667 incident and started annual Services of Remembrance in the early 1990s.

The Branch continues to honour the men to this day. MTB 667 did deploy to the Mediterranean, and was for a period based in Malta and operated in the Adriatic.

She survived the war, and was sold in late 1945.

The two images of the headstones are by S/M Chris Burrow, of Brightlingsea Branch, and the pictures of the standards by S/M Eddie Hardiman, of Rayleigh Branch.

The image at the foot of the page, from the Imperial War Museum collection, is of MTB 650, a Fairmile D MTB of the same design as MTB 667. © IWM (FL 25693)





**RUSHDEN Branch**

Congratulations to S/M Peter Brooksby on being declared the Rushden Branch Shipmate of the Year for 2025.

Peter has been a valued member of the RNA and Rushden Branch for many years.

A dedicated and active supporter, he takes his role as Rum Bosun seriously, ensuring everyone receives their rightful tot.

Peter was nominated for Shipmate of the Year in both 2024 and 2025, reflecting the high regard in which he is held by fellow members.

He has also proudly represented the branch as a delegate at several National Conferences, including last year's event in Portsmouth.

With multiple nominations from members, Peter is a truly deserving winner.

Rushden & District Branch continues to be one of the most active branches in Area 6, and shipmates were honoured to receive the Area Award for Most Active Branch.

With more than 90 members, they remain committed to upholding the traditions of the Royal Navy and the RNA. This latest recognition marks the fourth time in the past five years that the branch has received this award, an achievement of which all members are extremely proud. Pictured are Shipmate Peter Brooksby (right) receiving his Shipmate of the Year Award from branch chairman, Michael Thompson, and branch members receiving the Area Award at the Area 6 AGM in February.



**CARDIFF Branch**

Great to see the Cardiff branch continue to grow and attract new members. Following the branch's move to the Cardiff and County Club, a private members club in the centre of the Welsh capital, Cardiff Branch welcomed several new members at their March branch meeting.

Branch President S/M Peter Machin presented S/Ms Angela Green (top left), Peter Shilling (bottom right), Janet Scott Samuel (top right) and Clare Wray (bottom left) with their RNA membership cards and pin badges during the meeting.

Welcome aboard, shipmates!



## CHARD Branch

Chard Branch, with its President and newly-appointed Area 4 President S/M Malcolm Day and seven other shipmates, attended the Area 4 reunion in Bideford on the first weekend of March.

It was a great weekend for all, especially for one branch member, who was awarded the Jacky Ward Trophy for her great service to the branch.

The award was collected for her in her absence by S/M Helen Day, making it more special as it was presented by S/M Peter Shoemsmith assisted by S/M Malcolm Day – Helen's husband.

The president was also involved in handing over a certificate of appreciation to retiring Area 4 Standard Bearer S/M Mike Norton, with yet another certificate being awarded to his wife Jan for all the service she had given to her branch

and the support she had given over the years to her husband, who had displayed the standard at various locations throughout the South West. Another Certificate of Appreciation was awarded to S/M Monica White for her long-standing support to her husband, former Area 4 President S/M David White.

This year was a first for Area 4 when members from Area 3 Aldershot attended and were made welcome by all, and were winners of the quiz held on Saturday morning.

Getting back to Chard's involvement in the proceedings, their very own shipmate Martin Kirkbride and Area 4 padre officiated at the Association church service, ably assisted by local Reverend Jules, where it was one less service for Jules as she is passing to another congregation.

All in all it was a great weekend meet-up with like-minded people and shipmates.

Images courtesy of S/M Dick Moon.





### WREXHAM Branch

Wrexham Branch held their Annual General Meeting for 2026, on the 11th of March, with more than 50% of shipmates in attendance, including 2 via the Zoom live stream.

The meeting was chaired by S/M Mick Kingston, who was standing down after 4 years' service, to concentrate on his recent retirement and his ever growing list of DIY tasks.

In opening the meeting Mick invited S/M The Reverend Heather 'The Bish' Shotton to lead the branch in prayer for the future and for the safe deployment and return of our affiliated ship HMS Dragon. This would also be Heather's last official act on behalf of the branch, as after many years, supporting shipmates and the wider veterans community of Wrexham, she is sailing off to pastures new, we wish her well in her new adventures with husband Rob.

The branch then proceeded with the election and re-election of officers.

S/M Jeff Hughes RVM, was elected as branch chairman.

S/M Andy 'Danny' Daniels was elected as Vice Chairman. Danny joined the branch 4 years ago, having previously been a member of Reigate branch.

S/M Ruth Smith was re-elected as Honorary Treasurer.

S/M David Shipton was re-elected as Branch Secretary.

Due to his election as chairman S/M Jeff Hughes, has stood down as the fulltime branch Standard Bearer, but will remain as a second to the newly appointed Standard bearer Kevin Roberts.

Also due to his new responsibilities, Jeff Hughes will be assisted in his duties as social secretary by, Karen Roberts and Tracey Hallmark.

We wish them all well in their endeavours and responsibilities.

Following the election of the branch officers, the result of the 'Eric Holmwood' Shipmate



### BRIXHAM Branch

As reported in our Welfare and Wellbeing section last month, on Saturday 14 February a group from Brixham Branch attended Family's Day at BRNC Dartmouth, joined by RNA Welfare and Wellbeing Co-ordinator Jon Everett from Central Office.

The team regarded it as a very successful day, signing up 27 new members to the Association. Family's Day is the first opportunity for Officer Cadets to meet their families and loved ones during training.

### WANSBECK Branch

On Saturday 21 March the Submariners Museum in the armoury at Blyth Battery was officially opened.

A good turn out was expected from the Submariners Branch. The Battery was open to the public all weekend for the first time this year, and is open every weekend until the end of summer. On the 16th/17th May there is also a battle re-enactment on as well as many stalls with displays of weapons and costumes etc.

A reminder to branch members, there will be no meetings on 6th April and 4th May as these are bank holidays, so our next meeting is on 20th April at the Hirst Progressive Club in the concert room at 7-30pm. If you have not been before or for a while do come along and meet other members.

On Saturday 11th April we have an invite to Ashington RBL/- for a social evening from

7pm onwards with a raffle and bingo etc. at the cricket club opposite memorial park. Also a reminder about Saturday 25th April there is a St. George's Day service at Trinity Church Station Road Ashington followed by a social at the Masonic Hall with the Fusiliers, starting at 10-30 am at the church.

Also the Newbiggin Veterans are having a BBQ on Saturday 28th March from 12pm at the Masonic Hall (Homelyn House) on the Haven at £5 a head.

Also our RNA branch is having an Anniversary meal on Monday 6th July at either the Half Moon at Stakeford or the Cherry Tree at Choppington from 6-30pm for a 7pm meal followed by a raffle. We are at the moment awaiting menu choices and a price?

Therefore there will be no meeting on that night either, more to come when known. Photos attached from the Submariners museum, which is

# OBITUARIES

## S/M HARRY WADDINGHAM

The Royal Naval Association is deeply saddened to announce the passing of its oldest member, Harry Waddingham, at the remarkable age of 109. He was the oldest known veteran of World War 2 and died last week.

Harry Waddingham was a proud Naval veteran whose life embodied service, resilience, and dedication to his country.

Harry joined the Royal Navy at the age of 16, even before World War 2.

He served with distinction throughout the war, including supporting the evacuation of Dunkirk (Operation Dynamo) in May and June 1940, when his ship – the destroyer HMS Wakeful – was sunk with heavy loss of life. Only four of almost 650 troops picked up from the beaches were saved, and Harry was one of only 25 of the ship's company of just over 100 to survive – he attributed that to the fact that he was a gunner on the upper deck when the ship was struck by two torpedoes – not the safest place to be during combat, he later explained, but a very good place to be when the ship sinks rapidly. He was also out on deck in the destroyer HMS Juno a year later in the Mediterranean when she was sunk off the coast of Crete on 21 May 1941; 116 of her ship's company went down as the destroyer went down in two minutes, but Harry was one of the 104 survivors.

His wartime service also included duty in the Battle of the Atlantic and Arctic Convoys, where he and his shipmates played a vital role in convoy operations,

helping to safeguard critical supply routes against enemy threat during one of the most perilous periods of the conflict.

Throughout his Naval career, Harry was known for his steadfast commitment, quiet courage, and unwavering sense of duty.

Like so many of his generation, he faced immense challenges at sea, yet rarely spoke of his own sacrifices, instead maintaining a humble pride in having served alongside his fellow shipmates.

Harry was a Life Member of the RNA, maintaining close ties with the Naval community, continuing to attend events well into his later years.

After leaving



the Royal Navy Harry became a school teacher and subsequently joined the educational branch of the RAF. He was an inspiration to generations of members, representing a living link to the history and heritage of the Royal Navy.

RNA National President Vice Admiral Duncan Potts said: "Harry Waddingham was truly one of a kind. "To reach 109 years is extraordinary in itself, but to have lived a life of service and integrity makes his passing all the more poignant.

"We are immensely proud to have called him one of our own, and he will be greatly missed."

Harry's passing marks the end of an era. His life stands as a testament to the courage and sacrifice of the wartime generation, whose legacy continues to inspire us all.

The Royal Naval Association extends its deepest condolences to Harry's family, friends, and all who had the privilege of knowing him.

The photographs show Harry as a young man in the Navy during World War 2 and Harry on his 108th birthday, with the President of RNA Eastbourne, Rear Admiral John Kingwell.

### S/M DOUGIE SHELLEY

Members of Southend Branch are mourning the loss of World War 2 veteran shipmate Dougie Shelley. Dougie crossed the bar on 21 March 21 at the age of 100. And the centenarian hit the headlines when he turned 100 last autumn when an appeal for birthday cards saw the former Chatham rating amass more than 16,000, boosted by support from card companies Card Factory and Moonpig.

Inspired by members of his family who served before him, Dougie joined the Royal Navy aged 17 in 1942 and served in very different theatres during the war.

He began as a gunner in the destroyer HMS Milne, with a harsh introduction to life in the wartime Royal Navy on Arctic Convoys – the “worst journey in the world,” according to Winston Churchill.

Sailors faced freezing temperatures, constant attacks from the air, surface raiders and U-boats, and a high

death toll in the merchantmen on convoy.

Dougie recalled rescuing survivors from torpedoed vessels in the Barents Sea, and the fact his role as a gunlayer required precision and resilience in the harshest of conditions.

He went on to serve in Atlantic Convoy escorts and the Pacific theatre, including a spell on Battle-class destroyer HMS Armada, which was commissioned



shortly before the end of the war in the Far East. He also had a spell at HM<S Golden Hind, a dispersal camp in Australia.

RNA General Secretary Bill Oliphant said: “We are very sad to hear of Dougie’s passing.

“He was of a generation to whom we owe a great deal. “Our Second World War veterans are the last voices of this period in history, and the Royal Naval Association was privileged to have heard Dougie’s stories and counted him as a beloved member of our Naval family.”

### S/M DAVID PLEDGER

David Christopher Kirwood Pledger was born in Kingston-upon-Thames on 23 April 1943 and joined the Royal Navy at 16. His daughters say that it was clear that as a young man, those years were amongst the happiest of his life.

David worked as a Stoker and told tales of his experiences in the boiler room.

He said that it was a particularly demanding role and the margin for error was so tight.

David was proud of being part of the ship’s company in HMS Eagle and told the story when, in 1966, the ship won a Guinness World Record for the longest continuous time at sea, patrolling the Mozambique Channel.

But his fondest memories of the Royal Navy were of his time in HMS Relentless – principally, it seemed, because this was the

ship he was serving in when he met his future wife Sandra. David had always been a strong swimmer and became a RN Diver, and even after he moved to Devon, his interest in swimming and the sea continued.

As late as 2017 he swam the 1,500 metre ‘Plymouth Swim’, one of the more challenging open-water races.

His goal was to ‘not come last’, which he achieved (Dave and Sandra are pictured after the race below right), though mysteriously he never went open-water swimming again!

David was a sensitive, gentle man who had a love of nature and an affinity with animals, especially dogs.

He crossed the bar on 14 September

2025 in Paignton, less than a year after his beloved Sandra. They had been married for 58 years, and David had been her devoted carer for ten years; her loss left him completely bereft. David’s love of the sea was unerring, and he asked that following his passing, his ashes were to be scattered with his wife Sandra’s at sea. He leaves his two daughters, Kimberley and Alexina, of whom he was extremely proud. Dave, as he was affectionately known by shipmates at Torbay Branch, is very sadly missed.





**S/M JOHN KING**

**World War 2 veteran S/M John King has died at the age of 101.**

**John joined the Royal Navy in 1943, serving as a gunner in destroyer HMS Janus in the Mediterranean, seeing action at the Anzio Landings in January 1944.**

**He was one of fewer than 80 survivors when his ship was sunk by torpedo off the Italian beachhead on 23 January, when more than 100 of his shipmates lost their lives.**

**John, a member of Romford and Hornchurch Branch, featured heavily in media coverage of the 80th anniversary of D Day in 2024, when he made an emotional pilgrimage to Normandy as part of the Taxi Charity for Military Veterans community.**

**S/M CAROLINE OAKES**

On 10 March Shipmates from Area 12 (Ireland) attended the Service of Thanksgiving for the life of Lt Cdr Caroline Oakes MBE RN, who has died at the age of 37. This was a full military funeral for this serving officer and took place at Wellington Presbyterian Church, Ballymena, Co Antrim

The funeral was well attended by senior officers from the Royal Navy, Army and RAF. The coffin, draped with a Union Jack, was carried into the church by six Naval officers led by three RNA standards, as a Merlin helicopter did a fly-past.

The service was conducted by Rev Albert Baxter (Wellington) and Rev James Burnett, Padre HMS Hibernia (RNR Lisburn).

**S/M DICK WOOD**

S/M Dick Wood, a member of St Neots Branch, crossed the bar on 4 March at the age of 101.

Dick joined the Royal Navy in August 1942 aged 18, initially as a signaller, but it was discovered that he suffered from colour blindness and he couldn't continue in that role. He transferred to the Marine Engineering Branch as a Stoker 2nd Class, completing his training in December 1942 with a grading of 'Superior' and a recommendation for early advancement.

In January 1943 he was drafted to the light cruiser HMS Aurora and was promoted to Stoker 1st Class in October 1943. In June 1943, they embarked King George VI at Tripoli for his historic visit to Malta and Dick recalls that the King "smoked like a chimney!"



The family eulogy was given by Caroline's sister, Mrs Jennifer Hood, and the military eulogy by Air Vice Marshall Mark Flewin.

An Act of Remembrance was carried out at the end of the service with a Royal Marines bugler sounding the Last Post and Reveille, and the three RNA standards dripped, before the coffin was undressed.

The cortege left the church to the sound of Sunset for private cremation.



In October 1943, while supporting British efforts to reinforce the island of Leros in the Aegean, they were struck by a 500lb German bomb which caused extensive damage and a major fire, with 47 men killed and 30 wounded. The loss of so many of his shipmates seriously affected Dick and it remained with him for the remainder of his life.

He served in destroyer HMS Jervis from February to September 1944, initially in Malta, where he was on the books of HMS St Angelo. Jervis was at D Day, supporting the Canadian landings at Juno Beach and, in September 2024, Dick visited Normandy

for the D Day 80 commemorations. He visited Courseulles-sur-Mer on Juno Beach and was thanked by the Mayor for his part in liberating the town. He left the Navy in August 1946 and eventually settled in Bedford, where he joined Bedford Branch (long since decommissioned) and carried their standard for many years.

In August 2024, he celebrated his 100th birthday in Sandy, Beds, surrounded by family and friends.

He was presented with a bottle of Pusser's rum by Lt Cdr Derek Francis, a serving officer at RAF Wyton and a member of St Neots Branch.



Lt Cdr Oakes was a cadet with 2241 and 825 (Bangor) Sqn before joining the Royal Navy at the age of 19 as Officer Aircrew, initially as an observer on Sea King ASAC helicopters, including operational tours in Afghanistan.

### **S/M DENNIS WHITEHOUSE**

Lichfield Branch are sad to report that their Branch President, S/M Dennis Whitehouse, has crossed the bar.

Dennis – husband, father, sailor – died on 15 February at the age of 95.

He joined the Royal Navy in the summer of 1948 and served for more than seven years, attaining the rank of L/AIR(O).

He saw service in a numbers of establishments and units, including HM Ships Royal Arthur, Illustrious, Daedalus, Heron, Unicorn, Simbang, Seahawk, Gannet and Centaur, as well as RAF Boscombe Down and 814 Naval Air Squadron.

Dennis was a dedicated member of Lichfield Branch, taking up the role of Chairman, and ultimately Life President of the branch. Dennis spent his final years in Chasewater Carehome, Burntwood, where he was regularly visited by his RNA comrades.

A good man sadly missed.



### **S/M RITA LEDWARD**

Lichfield Branch is sad to report that their much-valued Welfare Officer S/M Rita Ledward has crossed the bar. Rita featured in the last edition of the Semaphore Circular, and was pictured cutting the cake at celebrations marking the 70th anniversary of the Branch.

Rita, whose husband Don was Branch Treasurer for several years, passed away on 26 February, just a few weeks after that celebration. Lichfield Branch Secretary Phil Tootill said of his shipmate: "Rita was an incredible woman, dedicated to the RNA and the welfare of us all. Fair winds and a following sea, Rita."

### **S/M DON COOMBE**

S/M Don Coombe, the face of the RNA's 2025 Christmas Appeal, has died at the age of 98.

One of six children, whose father was a Royal Marine, Don was brought up in a poor but loving childhood which he described as very happy.

He was on his way home from school one day in 1943 (having not done his homework...) when he passed by a Royal Navy recruiting office and, on the spur of the moment, walked in and – fiddling his age a little – signed up at 16.

Don later helped get the recruiter a job at Lloyds of London.

Don started as a Chatham rating, and was drafted to the Landing Craft Material Supply unit, spending the rest of his Naval career on landing craft.

He helped test American landing craft for seaworthiness before the Normandy Landings.

His wartime experiences in civilian life were, in Don's opinion, more devastating than his Service experiences – "we were bombed to hell where we lived" in East London.

He narrowly avoided death in one particular bombing raid, working his way past bodies as he escaped the carnage.

"War never hurt me, not physically – emotionally, yes..." he said.

Don was a boxer during his Naval career, holding the RN Light Heavyweight title. Years later Don had a photograph in his study at home of four young sailors, one of whom was Don. All were landing craft coxswains, and two of the other three were killed on D Day – he said he lost many friends in the Landings. Don was, at the time, preparing landing craft on the English side of the Channel.

Later, on being drafted as part of a work party to Tiptree in Essex, Don and his colleagues were tasked to find their own accommodation.

Having been deemed "too posh" to share with one of the stokers, Don was walking down the High Street in town when a woman in Land Army uniform approached his and said "Excuse me, sailor, I believe you are looking for accommodation." He confirmed that he was, and was invited to see the property. He ended up marrying her.

Although he never reached a commissioned rank in the Royal Navy, 33 years later the then Governor of Texas, John Connolly, commissioned Don as an honorary Admiral in the Texas Navy. After the war he was walking in London reading a copy of The Times when he saw an advertisement for a clerk to work at 143 Fenchurch Street. Looking up, he realised he was at exactly that address, so he went in, was interviewed, and offered the job, starting the following Monday.

He explained he had no suitable civilian clothes as he had not long been demobbed, so he started work in



his uniform. It was the start of a long, successful career with Lloyds of London – 25 years working for the same insurance brokers, then starting his own firm which he ran as chairman for more than 50 years.

He was also a JP for many years, and an incident at Magistrates Juvenile Court in Camberwell gave him the title of his autobiography – a "villain" arrived in court and asked if "the geezer wiv the flahr" was on the bench (Don, who had a reputation as a strict magistrate, always wore a red rose in his buttonhole when on duty). When told 'the geezer' was, he exclaimed "Jesus Christ! I'm not going home then..." And he didn't.

Don was not one to sit around; he was also a Commissioner in the Boy Scouts Association, and was awarded the MBE in 1992 for services to charity. Don featured in the RNA Christmas Appeal last year along with his grandson Ben, who left his job as a scaffolder to care for Don.

Ben, who joined the Association as an associate member, said at the time that Don's membership of the RNA had given the 98-year-old veteran a new lease of life, and Don agreed he could not exist without Ben's help.

The pair were invited to Portsmouth Naval Base, and to the Remembrance ceremonies at the Cenotaph last year (pictured above), and Ben said he really appreciated the support of the RNA, adding it was "nice to be part of another family."

RNA Central Office member Milly Luxford, who interviewed Don and Ben for the appeal, said at the time, said: "Don was a true gentleman, and it was an honour to get to know him – and what a life he has lived!"

# FAST-TRACK TO SUCCESS AT FORCES CAREERS EVENT

The Forces Employment Charity is collaborating with the Aston Martin Aramco Formula One Team to stage an exclusive careers event for the Armed Forces community at Silverstone race track.

The Pathways into Manufacturing and Logistics event on 7 May, hosted at the Team's innovative campus, will enable attendees to meet with Forces-friendly employers, gain practical career guidance, and explore how their military skills translate directly into roles within two of the UK's fastest-growing sectors.

Manufacturing and logistics play a vital role in the economy, with employers actively seeking the leadership, teamwork, and problem-solving skills of the Armed Forces community.

Throughout the day, the event will connect talent with real opportunities, address skills gaps, and support those who have served to explore new careers.

With only 80 places available, the event also offers attendees a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to tour the AMR Technology Campus (AMRTC).

## Event Highlights

- Discover how military skills translate to manufacturing and logistics
- Engage with employers offering live vacancies
- Access practical career guidance
- One to one networking with hiring managers and industry leaders
- Guidance on training routes and career pathways
- Go behind the scenes at the AMRTC

Alistair Halliday, Chief Executive at the Forces Employment Charity, said: "We are proud to be partnering with the Aston Martin F1 Team to bring this dynamic event to Silverstone. "The Armed Forces community has a wealth of talent to offer employers across manufacturing and logistics, and Op Ascend shows exactly how these skills translate into meaningful civilian careers.

"By providing attendees with direct access to industry leaders



and expert guidance, we are empowering them to move towards a new career with confidence."

Debbie Wall, ESG Director, Aston Martin Aramco Formula One Team, said: "Welcoming the Forces Employment Charity and veteran community to Aston Martin Aramco Formula One Team is a privilege for us.

"As part of our Make A Mark strategy we are focused on creating meaningful pathways into motorsport for those with exceptional skills and experience within our community.

"We're proud to support this event and to help showcase how military talent can thrive in a team environment like ours."

Registration is now open, and demand is expected to be high. Early booking is strongly encouraged.

Secure your place now at [this link](#).

Pathways into Manufacturing and Logistics is part of the government-funded Op Ascend programme.

Op Ascend is an Office for Veterans' Affairs programme awarded to the Forces Employment Charity through the Armed Forces Covenant Fund Trust.

It provides clear, accessible career pathways for veterans, empowering them to succeed from the moment they join the Armed Forces through their service and beyond.

## Your successful career transition starts here

The WEA Career Compass is a powerful digital platform that will support you to take your next steps into the civilian workplace with confidence.

Our expert employment team has developed this unique interface in response to Service leavers' challenges when approaching career transition, to support a successful journey of **discover > prepare > connect**.



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Understand what matters to you and clarify your career focus.

Explore your motivations, strengths, values, interests, preferred working environment and personal priorities to shape clear career options and find where you'll thrive.



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Capture your skills and achievements in a professional CV.

Either upload an existing CV or Career Compass will create one from scratch, then strengthen and structure it so your military experience is optimally presented to stand out to civilian employers.



### Explore Live Vacancies

Find roles matched to your individual profile.

Browse hundreds of live opportunities, with Career Compass helping you focus on roles that suit your skills, location and career goals.



### Submit Tailored Applications

Create strong, role-specific CVs and cover letters and apply directly to selected opportunities.

Tailor your applications to employer requirements and submit them in one simple, guided process.



### Prepare for Interview

Practise for interviews with personalised, intelligent feedback

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# APRIL SWINGING THE LAMP

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

World War 2 submarine HMS Tuna is best known for her part in a daring commando raid, but her record is much more impressive than a single operation.

T-class boat HMS Tuna was launched by Scotts at Greenock on 10 May 1940, a 1,570-ton submarine ironically powered by German engines – MAN diesels that had been bought before the war (although their good performance was somewhat hampered by the lack of spares after hostilities broke out, requiring depot ships and sometimes the crew themselves to manufacture any critical components).

Commissioned on 1 August 1940, Tuna sailed on her first war patrol on 30 August, and within two days had attacked a suspected German submarine, though no U-boat was reported to be operating in the area.

On 22 September the same year she sank Norwegian merchantman SS Tirana, captured by the Germans weeks before. Sadly, amongst almost 300 souls on board the prize were more than 250 Allied sailors, captured by the armed merchant cruiser Atlantis, and many of them were numbered amongst the 87 who died in the sinking. She also sank German catapult ship Ostmark (a rudimentary form of aircraft carrier) two days later in the Bay of Biscay, as well as a French tug.

Her finest hour came with her role in Operation Frankton, the commando raid on the strategically-important port of Bordeaux in France.

She sailed from Holy Loch in western Scotland on 30 November 1942, reaching the mouth of the Gironde on 7 December after some training en route. That evening ten Royal Marines – forerunners of the SBS – climbed into flimsy two-man folding kayaks and started paddling upstream. A sixth kayak or 'cockle' was damaged in the disembarkation process and never joined the raid.

Paddling overnight, two kayaks reached the port on the night of 11-12 December – one had capsized en route and the crews of two others were captured. Using delayed-fuse limpet mines, the four Cockleshell Heroes damaged six ships, four seriously, by which time the

HMS Tuna alongside depot ship HMS Exmouth at Scapa Flow in 1943. Image from the IWM collection: © IWM (A 19546)

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

British force was heading back downstream to scuttle their kayaks and head for the town of Ruffec, almost 100 miles distant, where members of the French Resistance were ready to help them escape.

Two of the four were caught two days later, but the final pair (Maj Herbert 'Blondie' Hasler and Mne Bill Sparks) arrived in Ruffec safely, and after hiding for almost three weeks, they were taken on foot across the Pyrenees and on through Spain to Gibraltar. Hasler was flown back to Britain in early April, while Sparks was taken home by sea.

None of their comrades made it back. Two died of hypothermia after their kayak capsized, the remaining four were executed under Hitler's Commando Order. On the evening of 7 April 1943, during her 18th war patrol, Tuna's crew picked up the sound of diesel engines while in the Norwegian Sea to the south-east of Jan Mayen Island. Tuna quickly sighted the source of the noise – U-644, an 860-ton Type VIIC U-boat just one week into her maiden war patrol.

Allied intelligence had identified the presence of a German submarine in the area, and Tuna had been tasked with hunting it down.

Four minutes after Tuna spotted her prey, at 2109, the order was made to fire six torpedoes at 500 yards range, though one failed to leave the tube. Within 60 seconds two explosions were heard, and the engine noise ceased. Tuna surfaced and found herself in the middle of a patch of debris and fuel oil; one man could be seen swimming but he sank before he could be reached, and two further bodies were seen on the surface. In all, 45 Germans died in the attack.

Tuna almost repeated the feat in the same area a week later, but her target on this occasion – U302 – was attacked from 5,000 yards, and all four torpedoes missed.

Tuna made three further war patrols, on one occasion attacking another U-boat without success, and she survived the war, being scrapped at Briton Ferry in Wales in the summer of 1946.



# LONGCAST

2026

<b>23 April</b>	Men's T20 Inter Services Cricket Final, Lords Cricket Ground
<b>2 May</b>	Army v Navy rugby match, Twickenham
<b>8-9 May</b>	National Standard Bearers training and competition, HMS Collingwood, Fareham
<b>9 May</b>	Area 5 Quarterly Meeting (Stowmarket Branch)
<b>16 May</b>	Area 4 Meeting (St Austell Branch)
<b>16 May</b>	Scottish Area Uckers Competition, RBLS Club, Bathgate, West Lothian
<b>6 June</b>	Welsh Open Uckers Tournament, Builth Wells Rugby Club
<b>12-14 June</b>	National Conference and AGM, Salford Quays
<b>28 June</b>	Armed Forces Day
<b>4 July</b>	HMS Collingwood Open Day
<b>8 August</b>	Area 5 Quarterly Meeting (online)
<b>11 Sept</b>	CONA Conference, Portsmouth
<b>12 Sept</b>	Scottish Area Quarterly Meeting (City of Edinburgh Branch)
<b>19 Sept</b>	Area 4 Meeting (Weymouth Branch)
<b>3 Oct</b>	RNA Uckers World Championships, Royal Maritime Hotel, Portsmouth
<b>8 Nov</b>	Remembrance Sunday
<b>14 Nov</b>	Area 5 Quarterly Meeting
<b>13 Feb 2027</b>	Area 5 Quarterly Meeting

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

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



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Visit [royalmaritimehotel.co.uk](http://royalmaritimehotel.co.uk) for more information and to book

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### MORE OFFERS

<b>Ship Anson pub, 10 The Hard, Portsea</b>	10% off food and drink
<b>Portsmouth Historic Dockyard</b>	£20 for a day ticket 30% off annual Ultimate Explorer tickets
<b>Royal Maritime Hotel 182 Queen Street</b>	A 10% discount on food, selected drinks and hotel rooms
<b>Sea Urchin's Gin</b> <b>Navy Strength Gin</b> <b>Arctic Convoy Vodka</b>	10% to RNA from the sale of each bottle  Don't forget to tick the box for RNA.  P&P is free for orders over £40, otherwise it is £4.50.
<b>China Fleet Country Club</b>	Click on the link for offers for Serving and ex-Serving RN and RM
<b>Trinity Insurance</b>	For offers see <a href="https://tinyurl.com/ssy8vt5s">https://tinyurl.com/ssy8vt5s</a>



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## Delegate to Annual Conference 2026 – CITY OF SALFORD

Branch secretaries should note the following before submitting their application.

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

*Full Members and Life Members are eligible to act as their Branch Delegate. Associate Members are eligible to be elected to act as their Branch Delegate provided that they have completed three years continuous membership of the Association immediately prior to election.*

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

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

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

**NB: A Delegate will not be confirmed as such unless or until the Branch Balance Sheet for 2025 and Branch Annual Report for 2025 have been received in RNA Central Office.**

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

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

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

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

# ARMED FORCES CRICKET

23 Apr 2026

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**YOUTH CREW**

## **Beginners Sailing Weeks**

**8-10 year olds**

**Monday 3rd - Friday 7th August**

**11-17 year Olds**

**Monday 3rd - Friday 7th August**

**Monday 17th - Friday 21st August**

**Welton Waters Adventure  
Centre **Yorkshire****

SAIL TOGETHER



YOUTH CREW

SAIL TOGETHER

# Family Days 2026!

FREE Fun  
for ALL  
the family!



Portsmouth - 31<sup>st</sup> May & 2<sup>nd</sup> August  
Reading - 30<sup>th</sup> May & 29<sup>th</sup> August  
Plymouth - 9<sup>th</sup> May & 22<sup>nd</sup> August  
Scotland - 27<sup>th</sup> June



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**Your help is genuinely the singular most important conversation I've had to date whilst in transition for leaving.**

## Trusted, independent guidance for **your future**

Whether you're serving, transitioning or long since left the Service, the White Ensign Association is here for you and your family.

Each year we support thousands across the Royal Navy, Royal Marines and Royal Fleet Auxiliary communities with free guidance to help navigate change and plan for your future with confidence.



**Financial Wellbeing**



**Armed Forces Pensions**



**Civilian Employment**



**Armed Forces Compensation**



**Professional Services Advice**



View upcoming events, and raise a case for confidential guidance at:

**[whiteensign.co.uk](http://whiteensign.co.uk)**



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# ROYAL NAVAL ASSOCIATION

**Veterans Can...  
Pale Ale & Pilsner**



For 75 years the Royal Naval Association has supported the wider Naval Family.

Totally inclusive, we promote the seven components of comradeship (our 7Cs): Connection, Community, Companionship, Care, Compassion, Commemoration and Celebration.

Veterans Can... "connects the global Veteran community, in order to bring balance, pride & positivity." It's about doing good things & focusing on the positives our time spent in the military has on our own lives - and on societies around the world.

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of Defence



Strategic  
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The Ministry of Defence (MOD) conducts voluntary debriefs with individuals returning from countries of interest. These debriefs can provide vital information and contribute to national security.

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You may have picked up a valuable piece of information; please share it with the MOD.



Webpage



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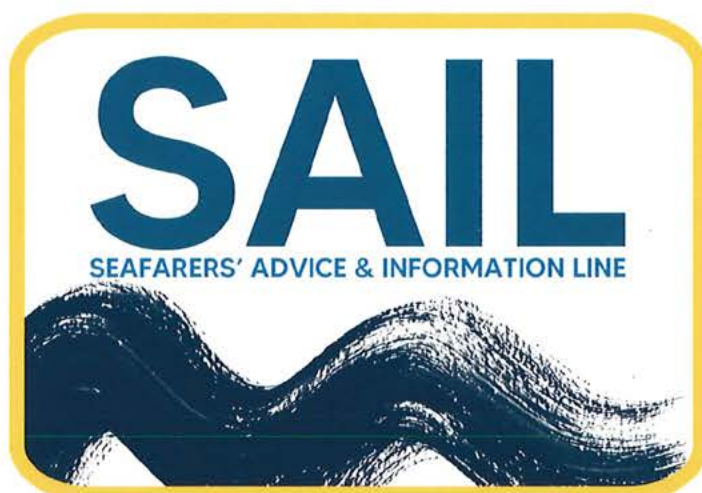


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citizens  
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 <https://sailine.org.uk/contact/>

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