

# SEMAPHORE CIRCULAR



Image by PPOPhot Lee Blease RN

## WILDCATS IN PEAK CONDITION

A Wildcat of 847 Naval Air Squadron conducts mountain flying training during Operation Clockwork in Norway in late January. Aircraft from the Commando Helicopter Force (CHF) deployed to the Royal Norwegian Air Force base at Bardufoss, in Northern Norway, for Operation Clockwork, their annual Arctic Circle workout. Merlin and Wildcat air and ground crew will master their environment – testing themselves and their machines against the extreme cold. Personnel will carry out survival training, ensuring they are able

to live and move in the harsh environment, learning to navigate, ski and build shelters and forage for food, before conducting sorties over Norway's fjords and mountains. Intensive flying operations will ensure the CHF is able to effectively operate in the Arctic, testing pilots, observers and engineers alike. Clockwork leads into Exercise Cold Response, the largest military exercises in the country in 2026, which will demonstrate the unity of NATO and the ability of the Alliance to deter threats in the high north.

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

**The next Semaphore Circular will be published on Friday 6 March, and the deadline for material is 1000 on Wednesday 4 March. Branch Notes will next be published on Friday 13 February and Semaphore Shorts on Friday 20 and 27 February.**



# SYMBOL OF FRIENDSHIP IS REDEDICATED

Between 1977 and 1995, the United States Naval Facility (USNAVFAC) Brawdy was co-located at RAF Brawdy, near Haverfordwest in West Wales, and the establishment played a crucial role in NATO's Cold War operations, specialising in anti-submarine warfare.

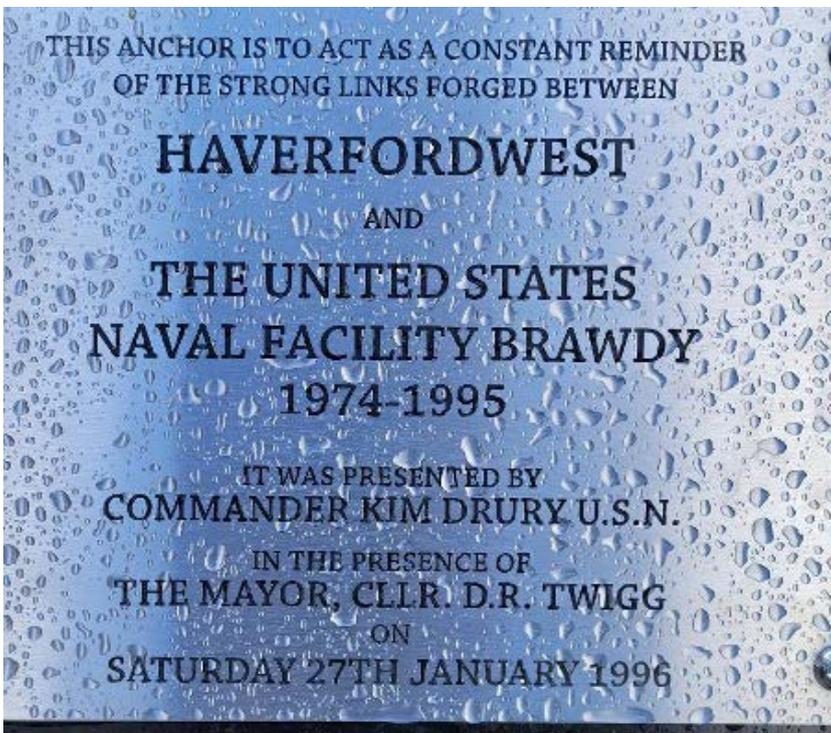
The Facility, which was jointly manned with US Navy, Royal Navy and Royal Air Force personnel, supported naval operations of the United States and other Allied nations by detecting the presence of Soviet submarines, thus protecting vital North Atlantic and Norwegian Sea routes. Beyond its strategic importance, the presence of the base left a lasting social and cultural legacy.

American Service personnel and their families became part of the local community, contributing to everyday life across Pembrokeshire and forming friendships that continue to be remembered decades later.

An anchor which was positioned at the Naval Facility main gate was moved and originally presented to Haverfordwest Town Council in 1996 to stand as a symbol of service, stability and international friendship.

Its recent rededication at the Old Quay, alongside the unveiling of a newly-replaced information sign, helps ensure that this important chapter of local history remains visible and accessible for future generations.

The ceremony served as both a moment of remembrance and a celebration of the strong community ties forged during the years NAVFAC Brawdy was in operation with the people of Wales.



## CALL FOR MALAYA AND BORNEO VETERANS

Did you serve in Malaya and Borneo in the 1960s? If so, would you like to march at the Cenotaph in Whitehall on Remembrance Sunday this year – 8 November?

You probably already hold the General Service Medal (GSM) with bars for Malay Peninsula and/or Borneo. You may also hold the PJM (Pingat Jasa Malaysia). 2026 marks the 60th anniversary since the end of the Confrontation and the National Malaya and Borneo Veterans Association want to honour the occasion by mustering a substantial contingent for the Remembrance march-past.

Sadly, as with all campaign-based associations, their membership is slowly declining in both numbers and mobility, which is why the group is reaching out to RNA

shipmates to offer suitably-qualified places alongside their members.

At this early stage all they are looking for is expressions of interest and, if possible, an indication of potential numbers so they can make an early case to the Cenotaph Team at the Royal British Legion for an appropriate allocation of tickets.

In 2025, they had 22 registered marchers and were privileged to receive coverage during the televised parade.

They want to make the 60th anniversary highly memorable if they can, and your support would be greatly appreciated.

Please reply to their Cenotaph Organiser, John Black, at [johnblack46@gmail.com](mailto:johnblack46@gmail.com) or call 07712 897525.

# CONTACTS



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Semaphore Circular and Short	<a href="mailto:comms@rnassoc.org">comms@rnassoc.org</a>
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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 early spring. Despite January and February 'allegedly' being seen as a quiet period preparing for the round of AGMs and the first round of AMC, FAC and National Council, I can testify it is not, as you see later on this Chairman's Dit...

Unfortunately, our National Vice Chairman, S/M Pete 'Chivs' Chivers, has had to stand down as National Vice Chairman, Chair of the Finance Administration Committee (FAC) and National Council Member for No 5 Area. I am sure you will join me in thanking Chivs for all his commitment and effort. He made a significant contribution during his tenure, and we wish him a speedy recovery and best wishes for the future.

Luckily for the RNA he is still holding court as the Chairman at Stowmarket; however, I have heard tell (NAAFI buzz) that some shipmates at Stowmarket Branch will dispute that, due to his awful jokes and dits! I am delighted to announce that Chivs' replacement, S/M Stephen Elliot (NCM Scotland) has taken up the role of NVCh and Chair of the FAC. A huge RNA welcome Stephen – I am looking forward to working with you.

Also joining the National Council as NCM 5 is S/M Diana Sadler, who will bring her experience in business practices to the table. Welcome Diana.

On a personal note, my Uncle Tom passed away in early January, aged 99. Tom was a World War 2 veteran, serving in HMS Roberts at D-Day and HMS Sirius in the Mediterranean during the siege of Malta. His funeral and final deployment took place in St Helens on 27 January. I wish to take this opportunity to offer my sincere thanks to St Helens Branch Chairman Tony Bull and Secretary Phil Stansbie for attending the funeral with the St Helens Standard carried by S/M Phil. S/M Tony saluted the hearse as Tom went by, a fantastic tribute and recognition.

I very much appreciate the contribution that Branches and individual shipmates make to attend a veteran's final deployment, and how valued your commitment is, particularly honour guards and attendance by the Standard Bearer. So I wanted to ensure shipmates are recognised for this exceptional service to their shipmates – BZ x 10! It reflects how passionate our Association's commitment is to remembrance and looking after our shipmates – Once Navy, Always Navy. Now to business...

**Naval Service Memorial (NSM) update:** Sara Field and I visited the National Memorial Arboretum prior to Christmas. We had both forgotten how stunning the Memorial is, and were told it is still one of the most popular exhibits.

We met a member of the on-site ground staff team at the NMA and were shown the NSM. There are two issues that require resolution.

One of the Memorial's glass panes has developed water ingress at its upper edge. To prevent further deterioration and to protect the structure as a whole,



remedial work is required to repair the affected pane and to install protective seals across all panes. These seals were not available when the Memorial was constructed in 2014 but are now standard practice on all newly installed memorials.

Alongside this work, appropriate arrangements for the ongoing maintenance and upkeep of the Memorial are essential to ensure it remains in a fitting condition for all who visit, both now and in the future.

We will be launching a fundraising campaign in the coming weeks – keep an eye on all our social media channels for further details.

**Annual Accounts:** If I may, a gentle reminder – Ladies and Gentlemen, please may I ask for your cooperation in ensuring that your accounts are checked prior to forwarding to Area/Central Office.

You would be amazed how many final checks are not completed, including simple things like totalling up columns and ensuring the 'brought forward' figure is the same as the closing figure on the previous year.

Thank you for your cooperation, and sorry for being a tad preachy (not sure if that is a word!) but that extra check will assist Kate Aldous at Central Office.

**Conference News:** Another gentle reminder that the 2026 Conference will be held in Salford; everything is going to plan and it looks like being a great Conference. It would be fantastic for organisation of the event if you could confirm your attendance and booking as early as possible – thank you.

For info, accommodation and programme details are available in this and the December Semaphore Circulars.

**National Standard Bearers Competition:** This year's competition will be held in HMS Collingwood on Saturday 9 May so please come along and support our 'Unsung Heroes' and cheer them on. Kick Off 1100. Please see the article on **page 15** or contact Central Office for specific details.

Finally ("thank goodness for that" I can hear you saying!) if you have any questions/queries, do not hesitate to email me on [andy@rnassoc.org](mailto:andy@rnassoc.org).

*Andy*

# FROM THE GENERAL SECRETARY

## Ahoy Shipmates!

Although this is my first missive to you in 2026 we are already well into our battle rhythm for the year – and there are plenty of issues that are of interest to you, our members.

For starters, there are some pretty significant developments with regards the Strategic Reserve and the possibility of more former Service personnel being re-called for service in a time of tension or crisis.

For more on this see our report on **page 11** of this Circular.

You might also have noticed the unpleasant spat over NATO and British contributions to recent conflicts – to be quite frank, last month we heard a lot of twaddle about our brave Armed Forces not being on a certain front line.

British forces, including Royal Navy and Royal Marines, served shoulder to shoulder with American and NATO units throughout the 20-year Afghanistan campaign, facing the same dangers and suffering heavy losses – 457 UK personnel were killed and thousands more wounded – proving unequivocally that we were very much on the front line.

The RNA, as always, supports every one of those serving people and veterans.

Please get in touch with your local RNA welfare officer, or our Central Office welfare advisor Jon Everett, if you have been affected by recent statements in the press, or, indeed, if you need any support, whoever you are, and for whatever reason.

Looking ahead, I hope you are gearing up for coming to National Conference in June.

Based around Salford Quays in Greater Manchester, including impressive venues such as the Lowry and the Imperial War Museum North (**see page 9**), the local organisers are doing a cracking job and it promises to be a great weekend!

I would ask you, if you are planning to attend, to make your arrangement sooner rather than later, so that we have a good idea of numbers and can plan accordingly.

Coming up soon we have the Welsh Uckers Championship (6 June – **see page 49**), the Army v Navy rugby match at Twickenham (sorry, the Allianz Stadium!) on 2 May and the Standard Bearers competition at HMS Collingwood (**see page 15**), so plenty to do!

And watch out for our own branded rugby and polo shirts which we have just announced – see them on **page 16** where you can find the link to pre-order your own shirts.

Talking of rugby, I'm writing this in Italy, as I am



taking the opportunity to fly over to Rome to watch my other favourite team in navy blue shirts take on the Italians tomorrow – and I'm hoping for a repeat of last season's Six Nations opener when Scotland won 31-19 at Murrayfield. We shall see...

Even more exciting, your RNA Yearbook will be dropping through your door over the next few weeks, if it hasn't already.

I personally think it is the best yet, but let us know what you think.

The Communications team always welcome feedback (critical or otherwise, so long as it is justified!) as that is a vital part of improving the service we provide to our membership. But don't be too harsh on them – they have a big task on their hands, and it is only getting bigger!

Fair winds and following seas,

*Bill*

# LAST CHANCE TO NOMINATE FOR 2026 SCOTTISH VETERANS AWARDS

If you would like to nominate a shipmate or group for consideration in the Scottish Veterans Awards you will have to get a move on!

This year's awards ceremony will take place at the five-star Prestonfield House, Edinburgh, on 29 April and is sponsored by DXC Technology – and nominations close on **22 February**.

The Main Organisations Sponsor for Veterans Awards CIC across the UK is Thales Group.

The Scottish Veterans Awards are open to all Armed Forces veterans, serving reservists and those organisations and companies that support their community in Scotland.

If you are or you know a veteran who has done some great things since transition to civilian life, a reservist doing great things, a business, organisation or charity that goes above and beyond to support our former military personnel through employment programmes or veterans support then feel free to apply or nominate on the following link:

<https://veteransawards.co.uk/scottish-veterans-awards/>

This year includes two new categories – the Cadet Adult instructor and the Military Charity Fundraiser of the Year Awards.



In support of the ABF Scotland and the Royal Navy Royal Marines Charity!

The categories are:

- Role Model of the Year
- The Community Award
- Military Charity Fundraiser of the year
- Entrepreneur of the Year
- Health and Well-being Award
- Inspiration of the Year
- Employer of the Year
- Lifetime Achievement
- Leader of the Year Award
- Volunteer of the Year
- Veterans Business of the Year Award
- Veterans Group of the Year
- Reservist of the Year

■ Cadet Adult Instructor of the Year  
The overall Veterans Awards Champion will be chosen from the winners of each of the above categories and receive a one-off commissioned piece from Dan Earp Jones at Veterans Trees, handmade Award.

A certificate-giving and filming day will be held on 10 March in Edinburgh Castle, with the main black-tie award ceremony taking place at Prestonfield House, Edinburgh, on the 29 April. It will be hosted by BFBS Scotland DJ and presenter Mark McKenzie.

Other dates for your diaries:

■ **Welsh Veterans Awards** application process opens – 1 March

■ **Welsh Veterans Awards** – 8 July at the four-star Vale Resort

■ **English Veterans Awards**

application process opens – 1 June

■ **English Veterans Awards** – 1 October at the four-star De Vere Cotswolds Waterpark.

The RNA was represented at last year's English Veterans Awards by the Association's Veteran Mentors at HMS Raleigh in Cornwall.

The Mentors were short-listed in the Team of the Year category – recognition for their outstanding contribution to the military community.

## NEW ROLE FOR MANDY AT RNRMC

Royal Navy & Royal Marines Charity (RNRMC) has appointed Mandy Lindley as its new Deputy Chief Executive Officer, recognising her deep understanding of the Royal Naval community, shaped by both her own Service experience and more than a decade of senior leadership within the charity. A former member of the Women's Royal Naval Service, Mandy brings first-hand knowledge of Naval life and the realities faced by serving personnel, veterans and their families. This lived experience has been central to her work at RNRMC since joining the charity in 2015 as Director of Relationships and Funding, where she has been responsible for all grant-making and commissioning activity and is a member of the Executive team.

During her tenure, Mandy has helped drive a significant evolution in the charity's approach to grant-making, placing greater emphasis on early intervention and prevention, a stronger understanding of need across the Royal Navy community, and the delivery of robust, evidence-based outcomes. She is also a former Trustee of the Women's Royal Naval Service Benevolent Trust.

Dr Brian Gilvary, Chair of RNRMC, said: "Mandy's appointment reflects her exceptional contribution to RNRMC and her deep-rooted understanding of the Royal Navy. "Her own Service experience, combined with her strategic leadership and insight into need across the Naval family, has been fundamental in strengthening how the charity supports its beneficiaries and I am delighted to welcome her as Deputy CEO."

After leaving the Royal Navy to start a family, Mandy moved



into the voluntary and community sector, where she gained more than 15 years' experience in early years support. She was the founder and manager of Home-Start Portsmouth, supporting families to improve parenting and family life through early, community-based intervention.

Reflecting on her appointment, Mandy said: "I am incredibly proud to take on the role of Deputy CEO at RNRMC. I understand the importance of timely, effective support for those in the Royal Navy community.

"I've seen first-hand how early intervention and strong partnerships can change lives, and I'm committed to ensuring our funding and work continues to make a meaningful, lasting difference.



# FIRST SEA LORD PAYS VISIT TO CHINA FLEET COUNTRY CLUB

The First Sea Lord, Gen Sir Gwyn Jenkins RM, has visited the China Fleet Trust and learn more about the charity's expanding support for Royal Navy and Royal Marines personnel, veterans, reservists and families.

Sir Gwyn and his team stayed at the Club last month ahead of the visit, during which he met the Trust's Chair, Rear Admiral John Weale, and Chief Executive Gordon Hannah.

The First Sea Lord received an overview of the Trust's heritage, charitable impact, and plans to enhance welfare and wellbeing provision across the Naval Service.

Built on the legacy of the original China Fleet Club in Hong Kong – funded by sailors and Marines more than a

century ago – the Trust today plays a unique role in supporting the Royal Navy family. Last year alone, more than 55,000 beneficiary visits were supported through welfare initiatives, discounted breaks, respite opportunities and wider family support programmes.

Sir Gwyn heard how the Trust's work reinforces family resilience, wellbeing and recovery, particularly for those facing the pressures of Service life and deployment.

The visit also highlighted the positive feedback and testimonials received from Royal Navy and Royal Marines units, which increasingly describe the China Fleet as "part of the family," recognising its contribution to morale and recovery.

During the meeting, the Trust shared updates on its new fundraising initiative,

launched to expand the level of support available to serving personnel and families.

Sir Gwyn also heard how future funds will enable broader assistance to Naval units and help strengthen the welfare network available across the Fleet.

The First Sea Lord was further briefed on the Club's recent renewable energy investments and sustainability improvements, reflecting the Trust's commitment to responsible stewardship of assets entrusted by generations of sailors and Marines.

The Trust also highlighted its close collaboration with other Royal Navy charities and its active role within the wider Armed Forces charity sector. Rear Admiral Weale said: "It was a privilege to welcome the First Sea Lord to Saltash.

"His visit underlines the importance of the China Fleet Trust's role within the Royal Navy family, and we were delighted to share how our work continues to evolve to meet the needs of today's serving personnel and their loved ones."

Gordon Hannah added: "We were proud to show Sir Gwyn how the Trust and the Club support wellbeing, recovery and family resilience – services that make a meaningful difference every day.

"We remain committed to honouring our heritage while strengthening the support we provide to the Naval community."

This visit marks only the second time a serving First Sea Lord has visited the Club, the first being Admiral Sir Philip Jones in 2018.

## CLUB IS NOT JUST FOR GOLFERS...

If you are thinking of what you and the family might plan to do in the course of 2026, why not check out what is on offer at the China Fleet Country Club.

You may think of the CFCC as exclusively for golfers, but you would be wrong. On the contrary, it is very much a family-friendly resort offering an extensive range of activities for the holidaymaker or short-break customer to enjoy.

The family accommodation, (self-catering, should you choose) is excellent, while the swimming pool, woodland fairy trail or woodland adventure golf will be high on the children's agenda.

There is a health club and spa, and a top-rated gym. You may also wish to use the club as a base to discover the wonders of Devon and Cornwall. Shipmates/RN veterans and their close family are welcomed at Beneficiary Rates (second tier). When enquiring or booking have your RNA/Veterans ID Card at hand.

See [www.china-fleet.co.uk](http://www.china-fleet.co.uk) or call 01752 848668.

# SALFORD

## A CENTURY OF CITY PRIDE EVENING AT THE MUSEUM

One of the major elements of RNA National Conference weekend is the Saturday evening Gala Dinner which follows our AGM.

This year's dinner looks like being particularly memorable as it will be held at the Imperial War Museum North, on the banks of the Manchester Ship Canal opposite Salford Quays.

The striking museum, designed by Daniel Libeskind opened in 2002, features a jagged profile representing the fracturing effect of warfare, disrupting lives and environments.

It was the first of the Imperial War Museum's branches to be opened in the North of England, and incorporates both fixed and temporary exhibitions.

The Royal Navy's features throughout the museum's permanent galleries, demonstrating the importance of maritime power to Britain's existence and influence.

Exhibits explore the Navy's crucial role in both World Wars, particularly the Battle of the Atlantic in 1939-45, when sailors from both the RN and Merchant Marine faced relentless U-boat attacks in their bid to keep vital supply lines open.

As well as ensuring Britain's food supplies were maintained, success in the Battle of the Atlantic was also essential in building up the forces that would be unleashed on the Normandy coast in June 1944 – without a (relatively) safe passage across the Atlantic, the gathering of troops and



materiel would have been difficult if not impossible.

Personal testimonies, uniforms, and equipment bring to life the harsh conditions endured by Naval personnel, from freezing convoy routes to long weeks crammed in submarines. IWM North also highlights the Navy's evolving role in more recent conflicts. Displays examine post-war operations such as the Falklands Conflict, peacekeeping missions, and humanitarian deployments, illustrating how Naval power extends beyond combat to diplomacy and disaster relief. These stories emphasise adaptability – how the Royal Navy has responded to new technologies, new threats, and changing political realities.

One of the museum's most prominent exhibits is a Harrier jump jet – not a Royal Naval aircraft, but the similar American Marine Corps AV-8A version.

For details of the Conference programme see the **December Semaphore Circular**, and accommodation offers are displayed on the **next page**.

## FREE TRANSPORT FOR CONFERENCE



Organisers and local authorities in Greater Manchester are pleased to confirm that shipmates attending the National Conference in Salford this summer will be eligible for free transport on buses and trams over the conference weekend – provided they can show proof of membership.

All operators will be notified that they can accept the following forms of RNA membership card ID as valid authority to travel:

- **Full member**
- **Associate member**
- **Life member**
- **Honorary Member**
- **Certificate of Appreciation**

The offer is valid from Friday 12 June to Sunday 14 June inclusive. For clarity, anyone who cannot present a valid ID will be treated as a standard passenger and required to pay on bus or hold a valid Metrolink ticket/paid contactless fare. Passengers who are unable to present valid ID when requested will be liable for a penalty fare for travelling without a valid ticket.

Photo by **Thomas Foster** on **Unsplash**



**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**



# NEW MEASURES WILL STRENGTHEN UK STRATEGIC RESERVE IN A CRISIS

The government's new Armed Forces Bill contains measures to increase the pool of former Service personnel who could step up in times of crisis, including a ten-year increase in upper age limit and a broadening of the criteria under which the new measures will be applied.

The new measures are designed to strengthen the UK's Strategic Reserve (former Service personnel with an Ex-Regular and Recall Reserve liability), to help the nation draw on their valuable skills and experiences in times of crisis.

The Strategic Reserve is a different group from the Volunteer Reserve – those 'part-time' Service personnel who are normally referred to as Reservists – and is thought to number around 95,000 people.

The Ministry of Defence is taking this action to boost readiness and deliver on its first duty – to keep its citizens safe.

The Bill includes measures that will affect both Regular and Volunteer Reserve personnel's liability for recall after they leave service.

The key changes will:

- Increase the maximum age for call from the current 55 to 65;
- Align the time for which recall applies across all three Services;
- Lower the threshold for recall so that Reservists can be recalled for "warlike preparations" – the current

requirement specifies "national danger, great emergency or attack on the UK".

Commander Standing Joint Command Lt Gen Paul Griffiths said: "As the threat to our nation grows, we must ensure our Armed Forces can draw on the numbers and skills required to meet it.

"I fully support these measures, which will give us the widest possible pool of experienced personnel to call upon in times of crisis.

Our Strategic Reserve represents a wealth of expertise built over years of military and civilian experience, from cyber and intelligence to medicine and communications.

"These reforms will allow us to mobilise that talent rapidly when it matters most, strengthening our readiness and aligning with a similar approach many NATO forces are taking to bolster their own resilience."

The move will complement the current Volunteer Reserves, and ensure that in times of crisis the UK can both grow the pool of former Service personnel to call upon and have greater flexibility to draw on their skills and experiences during a transition to war.

Members of the Strategic Reserve vary in age and offer diverse and valuable skills from their military and civilian experiences, including crucial expertise in cyber, medicine, intelligence and communications.

The modified approach aligns the UK with the increasing importance NATO allies, including France, Germany and Poland, are placing on their Reserve forces to strengthen their defence and resilience and draw on expertise from outside the regular military.

It also reflects lessons from Ukraine's innovative use of Reserves and whole-of-society response to Russian aggression.

The Armed Forces Bill is renewed every five years, and current iteration went to the Second Reading stage in the House of Commons at the end of January.

If the Bill passes through Parliament and receives Royal Assent – the final stage of the legislative process – the new measures are expected to be introduced early next year.

■ If shipmates have any thoughts or views on the proposed changes, we would be delighted to hear from you on [cml@rnassoc.org](mailto:cml@rnassoc.org)

## RESERVIST MARKS 46 YEARS OF NAVAL SERVICE

A Royal Naval Reservist at HMS Pegasus is marking more than four decades of service, continuing a career that has spanned engineering, aviation, environmental protection and public relations.

CPO Robert 'Bob' Cresswell, who has completed 46 years of Royal Navy service, remains an active and valued member of the unit, supporting Air



Engineering Department Headquarters alongside his duties at HMS Pegasus.

After transitioning from Regular service to the Royal Naval Reserve in January 2013, Bob initially joined the Engineering Training School.

He then moved to 700W, serving as Executive CPO on the Wildcat squadron, which recommissioned as 825 NAS in 2014. Bob remained with the squadron until 2016, when he transferred into his current post.

Reflecting on his service, Bob describes the RNR as "the best of both worlds", offering continued membership of the RN while allowing greater control over one's career path.

For Bob, HMS Pegasus – the RNR unit that supports the Fleet Air Arm – represents continuity, camaraderie and belonging, values that have kept him proudly serving well into his fifth decade of service.

**THE RNA  
ONLINE  
QUIZ  
NIGHT**

Friday 20th February 2026  
Starts at 1900

# HMS DASHER SAILORS QUALIFY FOR ARCTIC STAR MEDAL – 82 YEARS ON

Only nine months after she was commissioned as a Royal Navy aircraft carrier, HMS Dasher's service ended in a devastating explosion in the Firth of Clyde on 27 March 1943, killing almost 400 sailors. In her short life Dasher made a full contribution to the war effort, including participation in the Battle of the Atlantic, the invasion of North Africa (Operation Torch) and escorting Arctic convoy JW53.

That last duty has, however, brought a small piece of good news with the very recent decision by the Honours and Ceremonial Branch of the Ministry of Defence that Dasher's crew, on board for that duty, qualify for the award of the Arctic Star medal.

The Arctic Star was instituted relatively recently, in 2013, recognising operational service within the Arctic Circle of any duration.

Dasher was tasked with escorting Convoy JW53 in February 1943. During the course of that task her hull split in a violent storm and she was forced to seek shelter off northern Iceland. Although photographic evidence of that episode existed, establishing Dasher's precise movements and position beyond doubt took considerable time, and was only possible by a diligent partnership with Honours and Ceremonial Branch. Now that qualification has been acknowledged and the heroic service of these sailors and aviators can be officially recognised for their families.

Relatives of Dasher's ship's company who seek the Arctic Star on behalf of their kin can now apply to the **MOD Medals Office, Room G36, Innsworth House, Imjin Barracks, Gloucester, GL3 1HW; DBS-Medals@mod.gov.uk**. The application form may be found on the gov.uk website - Apply for or replace a medal or veterans badge : Apply for a medal - GOV.UK, or just search for 'medal application' and it should take you there.

The form is reasonably straightforward and requires the applicant to provide whatever details they have regarding the Service person plus Next of Kin details in cases such as this. It would also be helpful if applicants could include any other

HMS Dasher at sea on convoy duties. Image from the Imperial War Museum collection: ©IWM (A 15348)



relevant information regarding their relative's service. This positive, and very welcome, recognition is now part of the history of this tragic ship. Having faced the hazards of wartime service in freezing Arctic waters, only some six weeks later 379 of her crew died in the bitterly cold waters between Ardrossan and the Isle of Arran – there were only 149 survivors. This was the second-biggest loss of life in inshore waters in World War 2, yet, other than by relatives of the ship's company and communities in the Firth of Clyde, this loss goes largely unacknowledged, and some loved ones died never having been told the facts.

There remain many unanswered questions about the disaster itself and why only 23 bodies were, apparently, recovered from a sinking close to shore on a fine spring Saturday afternoon. The search for evidence, or indeed further unmarked burials, that will bring an end to this mystery continues.

The researchers who secured the Arctic Star recognition want to hear from anyone who might have any information whatsoever, be it from a family member of a survivor or an eye witness to help in this quest, or letters, or family stories. Please contact Dame Mary Richardson at [damemary@btinternet.com](mailto:damemary@btinternet.com). She and the small research team would warmly welcome any information, however seemingly trivial. Mary is the daughter of a lost Dasher sailor, George Arthur Habgood, who was the ship's butcher.

## GORDON IS RNRMC'S NEW DIRECTOR NORTH

Royal Navy & Royal Marines Charity (RNRMC) has announced that Gordon Michie has been appointed as its new Director North, joining the charity's Senior Leadership Team to lead and expand RNRMC's presence across Scotland and Northern England. In his role as Director North, Gordon will be the senior representative of RNRMC in the region, championing the needs of the Royal Navy, Royal Marines and RFA communities, their families, and local veterans.

He will build on the charity's recent regional strategy, strengthen key relationships with Naval and civilian partners, increase awareness of RNRMC's work, and help grow both services and fundraising across the north of the UK.

Gordon brings extensive experience

from across the military and charitable sectors. A veteran of the RAF, Gordon has spent much of his career in senior fundraising and leadership roles, most recently leading fundraising and learning functions at a major UK veterans' charity.

His deep understanding of serving personnel, veterans and the charitable landscape will be invaluable in helping RNRMC deliver its long-term strategic goals across the North.

Gordon said: "I am honoured to join Royal Navy & Royal Marines Charity at such an exciting time of growth and impact.

"The commitment RNRMC shows to



serving personnel, veterans and their families is exceptional, and I am looking forward to working with colleagues, partners and communities across the North to ensure that vital support reaches those who need it.

"Together, we can build stronger networks, expand opportunities, and elevate the charity's presence to further benefit our Naval family."

# ARE YOU UP FOR ANOTHER RACE?

It's a little longer than last year, and heading in the opposite direction, but RNRMC's Race Across the UK is back this year to offer the ultimate endurance challenge for teams looking for adventure while raising money to support Naval families.

The inaugural RATUK last autumn saw teams of two head from Edinburgh to Dartmouth, travelling the length of the UK with no cars, no planes and no map apps.

Armed only with a paper map, their wits and what they could carry on their backs, teams demonstrated determination and a sense of adventure to reach each checkpoint and cross the finish line.

From 6–9 October this year teams of two will embark once again into the unknown – this time on the Harbour to Highlands challenge.

The starting line is at Dartmouth in Devon, home of Britannia Royal Naval College, and they will finish four days later in Inverness on the east coast of Scotland, having visited between three to five checkpoints along the way. Teams are encouraged to raise £3,000, and every pound raised will make a real difference to Royal Navy, Royal Marines and Royal Fleet Auxiliary personnel and their families, helping those facing injury, illness, mental health challenges or financial difficulties.

Donations support vital services, from recovery programmes and wellbeing initiatives to family support and practical assistance, ensuring Naval personnel and their loved ones are valued and supported for life.

Sam Nicolson, CEO at RNRMC, said: "Race Across the UK is more than just an endurance challenge – it's a chance for teams to push themselves, work together and experience something truly unique.

"At the same time, every step they take and every pound they raise helps us support serving personnel, veterans and their families when they need it most.

"We're thrilled to see RATUK return for 2026, and we can't wait to welcome teams ready for the adventure and the opportunity to make a real difference."

Last year's event brought together teams from across the UK, raising vital funds and creating an unforgettable experience for all involved.

Participants praised not just the challenge itself, but the sense of camaraderie and community it fostered along the way.



One of those teams was the Association's very own Team RNA – Ready N Able.

General Secretary Bill Oliphant and Welfare and Wellbeing Co-ordinator Jon Everett made the arduous journey from the Scottish capital to BRNC.

And although they weren't first across the line, the team topped the leaderboard in terms of fundraising, gathering well over £12,000 in the process – helped by individual shipmates and branches from far and wide.

"The RNA works closely with RNRMC, so it was a no-brainer for the Association to enter a team for Race Across the UK 2025," said Bill.

"And I am a firm believer in leading from the front, so I really didn't have much choice as to who would be taking up the challenge!

"I will be perfectly honest – it wasn't a walk in the park, and there were times when Jon and I wondered what on earth possessed us to say yes.

"But looking back, it was tremendous fun, and we made loads of new friends along the way.

"This was a tangible way of showing our support for a superb charity, and the sense of achievement when we finished the challenge was worth it, especially when we saw the level of support we had been given by shipmates and branches.

"Will we be back on the start line for the 2026 race? Let's just say we are keeping an open mind..."

Places for Race Across the UK 2026 are limited, and interested teams are encouraged to sign up early to secure their spot.

By taking part, participants can push themselves physically and mentally, while raising essential funds to support the Naval community – making a real difference to the lives of those who serve and their families.

RNRMC will also help you reach your target.

They have lots of experience with fundraising, and can give potential entrants plenty of good advice, tips and fundraising materials to help them smash their target – perhaps starting with the advice offered in their fundraising guide in the downloadable assets.

"We'd hate for you to feel as though you haven't got any support," said organisers.

"There's lots we can do to help, and please remember that we wouldn't ever ask you to pay any shortfall of your sponsorship or stop you from taking part in your event."

Registration is now open, so for more information or to sign up, go to <https://fundraising.rnrmc.org.uk/event/race-across-the-uk/home>



# REFLECTIONS ON A LIFE WELL SAILED

Reaching the age of 70 is a milestone that invites reflection, and for Terry Whitty (pictured right) it is difficult to believe just how quickly the years have passed.

Looking back, it feels as though it all began with that very first photograph, the first step on a journey that would go on to shape a full and meaningful life.

Like so many others, Terry's life has been shaped by both highs and lows. Each experience, whether challenging or uplifting, has contributed to the person he is today.

Throughout it all, he has been fortunate to build a fulfilling personal life alongside a deeply rewarding voluntary one.

Terry shares his life in East Cornwall with "an amazing wife, a wonderful daughter, and a close circle of friends and former shipmates".

Their constant support, encouragement, and friendship have played a significant role throughout his journey and remain a source of strength and gratitude.

For nearly 14 years, Terry has had the honour and privilege of working alongside exceptional staff at HMS Raleigh, where he is treated with the utmost respect.

During this time, he has served as a Royal Naval Association Volunteer Mentor in Phase One Training, a role that allows him to support recruits and their families at the very start of their Naval careers.

In total, he has supported almost 9,000 recruits and their families, a remarkable contribution that reflects



both commitment and compassion. Supporting families while their loved ones were undertaking Phase One training is always something Terry takes great pride in. He understands how daunting those

early weeks can be, and his guidance, reassurance, and presence, alongside Divisional Training Staff, has helped many families navigate what can be an uncertain time.

His belief remains that this support makes a real and lasting difference during a critical period in the lives of recruits and their loved ones.

Working with the next generation of sailors and the other Volunteer Mentors has been one of the most rewarding experiences of Terry's life. With over 41 years connected to the Royal Navy, he has witnessed first-hand the resilience, dedication and values that continue to define Naval service.

The idea of "once Navy, always Navy" resonates deeply with Terry.

As he reflects on reaching 70 years of age, he does so with pride, gratitude and a deep appreciation for the people, experiences and service that have shaped his journey.

It is a life well sailed, marked by commitment, community, and an enduring connection to the Royal Navy.

## 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)

## TITANIC (x4), TRAINS AND PLENTY MORE

Richard Jones, a Shipmate of the RNA and currently serving in HMS Queen Elizabeth, recently gave an excellent Fireside Chat about the sinking of the Titanic.



His background deeply informs his historical writing, especially when exploring maritime disasters, where lessons from the bridge and engine room echo through time.

In 2019, Richard published 'RMS Titanic – The Bridlington Connections', a 108-page paperback that uncovers unique links between the Titanic and his hometown in East Yorkshire.

With original research and photographs, the book explored stories of survivors washed ashore, memorial plaques, and local researchers dedicated to the famous liner. He has now written four

books on the ill-fated liner, the most recent (his 29th book in all) was 'Titanic – the Movie Ships'.

He is currently working on the final stages of the sinking of the SS Lulworth Hill, whose survivors were rescued by the crew of HMS Rapid off the African coast after 50 days adrift at sea.

But it's not all ships – last summer also saw the publication of 'Yorkshire Railway Disasters', a 96-page illustrated paperback (Amberley Publishing, £14.39) exploring fatal rail accidents from 1840 to the 21st century, looking at systems failures, procedural breakdowns and human error, drawing compelling parallels to naval risk management – buy it [here](#). The prolific author (pictured left) also has a further five books due for publication this year alone.



The RNA Ceremonial Team, who gathered last month to update the Ceremonial Guide which is expected to be published later this year. From left: Mike Smyth, Steve Susans, Tony Avery, Steve Champion, Barry Henderson and Dean Deakins

# RAISING OUR STANDARDS

The RNA Standard Bearers Competition will take place at HMS Collingwood in May – and 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 hone their skills and confidence.

The stress levels rise the following day when the competitors demonstrate their skills.

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.



## Royal Naval Association Heritage Rugby Shirt & Polo



VX3

The Royal Naval Association has teamed up with the Royal Navy Rugby Union, in partnership with VX3, to bring you some very smart new kit. This unisex polo and rugby top is supporting the RNA. The polo shirt costs £26.67 and the rugby shirt £41.67, and can be pre-ordered using this link: [Military & Services Replica Mens – RNA Polo and Heritage Rugby Shirts](#). Please note that this is a pre-order item, with delivery expected mid-April 2026. Pre-orders will be accepted up until 20 February 2026.

VX3 stands for Veni Vidi Vici “which translates to I came, I saw, I conquered: VX3 look to empower our athletes and teams to achieve success. It’s not just on the field of play that we aim to achieve high standards, from design to production to delivery we strive to maintain an unrivalled level of customer service, as well as supporting our teams and players away from the pitch. We make sure that whatever your goal, you are always #Equipped to Conquer” See their website for more details: <https://vx-3.com>

**Important ordering information:**

- VX3 does not split club shop orders. If your basket contains additional items, your entire order will be dispatched once this pre-order item is in stock.
- If you need other items sooner, please place a separate order.

**Thank you to RNRU and VX3 for all their support!**

# LAST CHANCE TO SNAP UP PRIZE

We in the Central Office Communications team are most grateful to our friend and colleague S/M Nigel Huxtable for the time and effort he puts into capturing marvellous images for the Association. And although it seems like he is close to omnipresent, Nigel can't be

everywhere to cover the wide range of activities undertaken by members of the RNA. We are sure there are plenty of you out there who have a knack for eye-catching pictures who could capture the essential elements that make up the work, play and comradeship of the RNA.

It would be of great help to us at Central Office, as we are always looking for great pictures that illustrate the best of what shipmates achieve within the organisation. And if you are one of those people, we urge you to submit picture(s) you have taken to the judges of the Royal Navy's prestigious Peregrine Trophy competition, a highly-regarded showcase for the best of the RN's talented professional 'photos'.

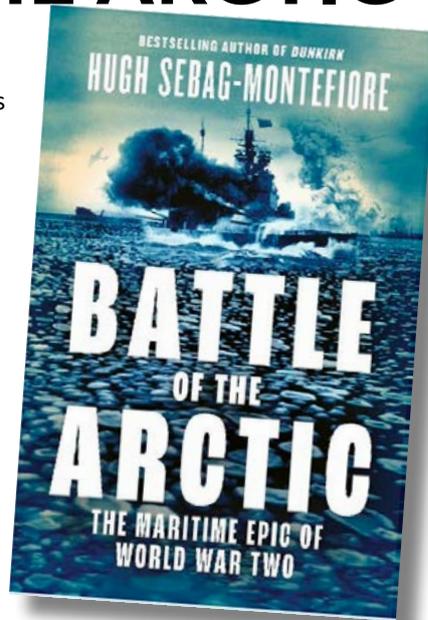
## FOCUS ON THE ARCTIC

Best-selling author Hugh Sebag-Montefiore has turned his attention to the nightmarish world of the World War 2 Arctic Convoys in his latest book.

Battle of the Arctic is based on new research which gives fresh insights into the "spine-tingling drama, outstanding courage and heartbreaking tragedy" of the campaign described by Churchill as "the worst journey in the world".

Sebag-Montefiore is no stranger to military history, having written highly-regarded books on the German Enigma system, on Dunkirk and on the Battle of the Somme. His latest effort uses a wide range of archive sources and thrilling eyewitness accounts to shine a light on a cruel and unforgiving theatre of war, where shipwrecked men died within minutes in freezing water, and those who made it ashore were prey to bitter cold, inhospitable deserted islands or primitive facilities.

'Battle of the Arctic', published by William Collins, is currently available in hardback at £30, with an ISBN number of 9780008335779



One category of the Peregrines is dedicated to finding "the best single photograph taken of Royal Navy Veterans that best encapsulates the ethos of the RNA."

This category (number 17) is open to Naval Service veterans, Royal Navy and Royal Marines amateur photographers and Royal Navy professional photographers, and all photographs **must have been taken between 16 December 2024 and 31 December 2025**, and **not entered in the RN Photographic Competition 2024**.

Entries should be submitted **no later than 21 February 2026**.

Judging, by a panel of invited independent experts, will take place between 4 and 11 March.

For full details of the conditions of entry and a copy of the entry form please go to the end of this Circular (see **page 45**).

## NEW GUIDANCE ISSUED ON SERIOUS INCIDENT REPORTING FOR CHARITIES

The Charity Commission have updated their guidance on serious incident reporting, which sets out how to spot such incidents, trustees' responsibility to ensure prompt, full and frank disclosure when such incidents arise, and that appropriate governance processes are in place for dealing with them.

The Commission requires charities to report serious incidents, which is described as "an adverse event, whether actual or alleged, which results in or risks significant:

- harm to the charity's beneficiaries, staff, volunteers or others who come into contact with the charity through its work;
- loss of the charity's money or assets;
- damage to the charity's property;
- harm to the charity's work or reputation.

Such incidents could include:

**Safeguarding incidents** involving veterans, serving personnel, families, or volunteers;

**Partner-related risks** (including cross-border/overseas delivery);

**Data and confidentiality** considerations;

**Reputational risks** linked to public trust;

**Financial crime, cyber-risk and grant management** in a high-trust environment;

**Governance failures** that may impact service delivery or statutory compliance.

Other situations which should be taken into consideration include **unverified or suspicious donations** (which could indicate money laundering), individuals who are **disqualified in law**, and discovering links to **terrorism and extremism**.

The responsibility for reporting serious incidents rests with the charity's trustees. In practice, this may be delegated to someone else within the charity, such as an employee or the charity's professional advisers.

However, all trustees bear ultimate responsibility for ensuring their charity makes a report promptly when required – doing so in a timely manner means as soon as is reasonably possible after it happens, or immediately after the charity becomes aware of it

It is essential that trustee boards understand – and can demonstrate – robust policies, clear reporting routes, and confident decision-making when incidents arise.

A link to the Charity Commission's updated guidance is available **here**.

# SOLDIERING ON AWARDS RECOGNISES QUIET HEROES

X-Forces Enterprise (XFE) has opened the nomination process for the 2026 Armed Forces Community Awards – formerly known as the Soldiering On Awards. The awards are a national platform that celebrates the exceptional achievements of the Armed Forces community, not just on one night, but throughout the year.



Across 12 categories, the awards honour individuals, teams and organisations, including serving personnel, veterans, families, and those who support them. From regional storytelling to high-profile gatherings, the awards create ongoing opportunities to recognise and elevate these inspiring contributions.

Nominations for the 2026 Armed Forces Community Awards, opened on 19 January and close on 29 March. Judging takes place in April and May, with the finalists in each category being announced on 22 June. There will be a reception for finalists at the House of Lords on 15 July, and winners will be formally announced at a high-profile awards night on 17 September.

The 12 categories and partners are:

- **Animal Partnership** (Pets at Home)
- **Employee Champion** (Landmarc)
- **Education, Training and Development** (Reed in Partnership)
- **Working Together** (FiMT)
- **Connecting Society** (COBSEO)
- **Business Start-up** (Barclays)
- **Healthcare and Rehabilitation** (Redwood)
- **Business Scale-up** (LSEG Foundation)
- **Defence Inclusivity** (Babcock International)

- **Community Impact** (BAE Systems)

- **Inspiration** (NatWest)
- **Lifetime Achievement** (Oracle).

Full details of categories and how to nominate can be found at <https://www.soldieringon.org>

org

For more than a decade, these awards have shone a light on the extraordinary service, resilience and leadership found across the Forces community and among those who support it.

Across the UK, members of the Armed Forces community are making a difference every day, often quietly, often without recognition, with commitment and purpose. The awards exist to bring those stories into the spotlight and to say, clearly and publicly, that your contribution matters, and your impact is valued.

A nomination can validate years of service, lift someone who never seeks praise, and amplify stories of compassion, collaboration and leadership that deserve to be heard.

It not only celebrates achievement but also gives visibility to the dedication that underpin a stronger, more connected society.

Nominations are open to anyone from the Armed Forces community and those who support it. This includes serving personnel, veterans, reservists, partners, cadets, volunteers, employers, leaders, community champions, organisations and beneficiaries. If someone's actions may feel ordinary to them but transformative to others, they deserve consideration.

If someone came to mind, trust that instinct. Share their story and submit a nomination – you don't need perfect wording, just honesty and belief.



## STEPHEN STEPS UP

The RNA is delighted to announce that S/M Stephen Elliot (pictured above) has agreed to take over the role of National Vice Chair of the Association.

Stephen is currently Chair of the City of Edinburgh Branch and also National Council Member for Scottish Area.

We also thank the previous National Vice Chair, S/M Pete Chivers, for his dedicated and excellent service to the Association at the highest levels. BZ Stephen for stepping up - we are all very grateful for your support.

## READY, WILLING AND ABLE...

**You don't write a will for yourself – you write it for your loved ones. If you need to update or create a new will click here for our free service through Octopus Legacy. Simply answer a few questions and choose how you'd like to write your will, online by phone, or home. This is a membership perk of belonging to the RNA. You do not have to leave us anything, but if you wanted to it would be great to help shipmates down the line. You can even stipulate what we spend it on, such as Welfare, or leave something to your local branch. It's your free will – use it or lose it.**

## VETERANS PRIDE 2026 AT HMS EAGLET

Veterans Pride 2026 is moving back to LGBT+ History Month.

This event encourages the coming together of LGBTQIA+ veterans, serving personnel and their allies, to reflect, recognise and celebrate their unique experiences.

Join veterans and members of the Armed Forces LGBTQIA+ community for a Rainbow Honours-recognised, cabaret-style event in the heart of Liverpool at HMS Eaglet, 80 Sefton St, East Brunswick Dock, Liverpool L3 4DZ on Friday 24 July, starting at 6pm.

Tickets at £20 include an arrival drink and a hot buffet with dessert.

The dress code is, in traditional terms, black tie, but they don't want, or expect, anyone to go to any expense. They are asking guests to be 'authentically glamorous', so dress in what makes you

comfortable, with a bit of Glam!

There will also be an opportunity to network with local community-based charity stalls.

For tickets and further details the link is [here](#).

Headlining the event is Scottish singer-songwriter Horse McDonald whose career spans three decades and includes tours with the likes of Tina Turner, BB King, Bryan Ferry and Burt Bacharach.

West End star Gillian Hardie returns to host the event, while singer and saxophonist Jess Stretton aims to get everyone onto the dance floor.

There will also be a fine art exhibition by RAF veteran Dr David Iddon, who will display his most recent collection 'In the Navy' a series of pieces exploring 'vintage love'.

# ELLESMERE GOLF CLUB TO HOST RNA TOURNAMENT

S/M Kevin McAllister has booked Ellesmere Golf Club at Worsley, Manchester, for the 2026 RNA golf competition.

The booking is for Friday 12 June, at the start of the RNA's National Conference weekend in Salford.

The golf course is around 20-25 minutes away from the Copthorne Hotel at Salford Quays, where many shipmates attending Conference will be staying. First tee will be at 1030.

Kevin is seeking funding to help with the costs of the tournament, which will include a round of golf, bacon baps, and tea/coffee on arrival and on completion.

If anyone has any oppo or knows of anyone who might wish to sponsor the event please contact Kevin at [kevinmac31@tiscali.co.uk](mailto:kevinmac31@tiscali.co.uk)

For details of the Worsley Golf Club see [www.ellesmeregolfclub.co.uk/](http://www.ellesmeregolfclub.co.uk/)



Photo by Peter Drew on Unsplash

## QUICK QUOTE FOR TRAVEL INSURANCE

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

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

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

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

## REQUEST FOR EMAIL DETAILS

Branch Secretaries, 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)



## PENSION AWARENESS PRESENTATION NAVAL VETERANS

# Your Armed Forces Pension Explained

Monday 16 February, 18:30 - 19:30

As part of the Royal Naval Association's weekly *Fireside Chat* series, this insight session is aimed at veterans with a pension in payment or a deferred pension, covering changes and choices, plus a live Q&A.



## 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.

## GET YOUR GIZZETS AT ONLINE SHOP

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:

**Fri 13 March** (Zoom 0900)  
**Thurs 7 May** (Zoom 1800)  
**Fri 7 August** (Zoom 0900)  
**Thurs 15 Oct** (Zoom 1800)

### FACs (finance):

**Fri 20 March** (Zoom 0930)  
Draft accounts  
**Thurs 14 May** (Zoom 1800)  
**Fri 14 August** (Zoom 0930)  
**Fri 13 Nov** (Zoom 0930)

### National Councils:

**Fri 17 April** (Zoom 0930 tbc) RNRMC Fin and Brooms (accept 2025 accounts)  
**Fri 12 June** (F2F at National Conference, 1300)  
**Fri 11 Sept** (F2F 0900, pre-CONA, Victory Bdg, venue and format tbc)  
**Fri 20 Nov** (Zoom 0900) Annual Report

## THE DAYS ARE SLIPPING BY...

There are still a handful of 2026 RNA Diaries available to purchase at a price of £7 including postage. The slim dark-blue diary with integrated cover can be bought from the RNA website shop through [this link](#).

## MEMORIAL TO HONOUR COASTAL FORCES

A £250,000 monument to the ‘Spitfires of the Sea’ is being crafted in boatyard in Hampshire – one of the very yards that turned out these graceful but dangerous warships. The Coastal Forces memorial will pay tribute to the men who went to war in thousands of these fast, flimsy boats, which took part in more than 900 actions, fired more torpedoes than the Submarine Service and attracted more than 3,000 bravery awards for their crews – though at a price; 300 of them (one in 12) were lost in action.

The monument is being fashioned at the Elephant Yard on the Hamble, and will be placed in Portsmouth Historic Dockyard next year.

For more on this story, and details of how you can contribute to the fundraising appeal, see the Royal Navy website at [this link](#).

Pictured above is MGB 64 on patrol with the 6th Flotilla in February 1942. Image from the Imperial War Museum collection: ©IWM (A 7628)



## 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 our RNA volunteers who manage the minibuses regionally, including the bookings.

To book a minibus, the contact details are:

**Plymouth** – Les Yeoman - [lesyeo3@gmail.com](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 purposes, there are certain criteria for driving the minibuses and these, along with additional details, are on our website 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**



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



**Go to your members area**  
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[www.talktotrinity.com](http://www.talktotrinity.com)

[hello@talktotrinity.com](mailto:hello@talktotrinity.com)

# CONFERENCE DOCUMENTS READY FOR BUSINESS

Plans are already well advanced for the 2026 National Conference weekend programme in Salford in June.

And though that programme looks very attractive in its own right, there is business to be done on the morning of Saturday 13 June at the RNA Annual General Meeting.

So shipmates are invited to put some thought into what should be discussed, and who should act as delegates for Branches and representatives on the National Council.

Three documents at the end of this Circular are relevant to the AGM (click



## A CENTURY OF CITY PRIDE

here to access them).

First is the delegate application form for shipmates who would like to play an active role the discussion and debate of the AGM in the Lowry Theatre.

The second is a nomination for National Council Members (NCMs) and Deputy National Council Members (DNCMs).

The opportunities for NCMs are in **Areas 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 9, 10 and 12**, while the openings for DNCMs are in **Areas 1, 2, 3, 9, 10, 11 and 12**.

Finally there is a form for proposed motions and amendments for consideration during the AGM.

The Saturday Gala Dinner will be held in the Imperial War Museum North, with a drumhead service on Sunday on Salford Quays..

Are you:

**Ex-forces?**

**Eager to travel more this year?** ✓

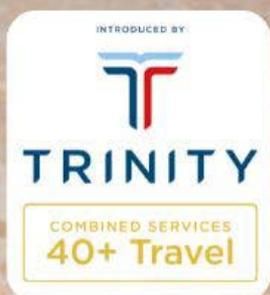
**Tired of rising insurance costs?** ✓

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)

# MONDAY NIGHT FIRESIDE CHATS

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

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

\* Lecture subjects may change at short notice.

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

# 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)

Genealogy – Mike Wilkinson: [mike.j.wilco@gmail.com](mailto:mike.j.wilco@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)

Date	Presenter	Subject
Mon 9 Feb	Ron Howell	3,000 Years of History from the Sea
Mon 16 Feb	White Ensign Association	Your Armed Forces Pension Explained – a pension awareness presentation aimed at veterans with a pension in payment or a deferred pension, covering changes and choices, plus a live Q&A session.
Mon 23 Feb	Capt Terry Tyack RN	Royal Navy Cadets and Youth

# 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)**



## BUILDING MOMENTUM IN 2026

### Into a new year

As the new year dawned, a quiet but unmistakable sense of momentum settled across Welfare and Wellbeing. Even before the first training session opened its virtual doors, many sensed that 2026 would bring renewed

direction and fresh energy to our Welfare & Wellbeing community. On Saturday 10 January, that feeling came into sharp focus. Across the country, screens lit up as new and returning Branch Welfare & Wellbeing Officers joined the year's

introductory session. Some were stepping into the role for the first time; others arrived with years of experience. What united them was a simple truth – meaningful welfare work begins with people who care enough to be present.

### Strengthening the Welfare Network

With AGM season in full swing branches are reminded to ensure all AWWO and BWWO contact details are current.

All BWWOs must hold a valid Enhanced DBS, and checks issued in 2023 will shortly be reviewed.

**Photo ID** – cards are available for BWWOs with both an up-to-date DBS and completed safeguarding training.

**GDPR** – a gentle reminder: no personal details of shipmates receiving support should ever be shared at branch meetings without written consent.

### AWWOs, NWWST and Looking Ahead

Area Welfare & Wellbeing Officers continue to provide vital support, and branches are encouraged to maintain strong links with them.

Vacancies currently remain in Area 3 and Area 11.

At national level, the NWWST is evolving.

Following strong interest from prospective new members, work is under way to refine the team's structure for 2026, creating clearer pathways, strengthening regional support, and building a more coherent national framework.

A face-to-face meeting is planned, with Portsmouth being considered as the venue.

### Reporting, Recording, and Recognising What Matters

The 2026 Monthly Delivery Report is now live.

These reports are essential in demonstrating impact to the RNRMC and celebrating the exceptional work carried out across the Association.

Forms can be downloaded, completed online, or accessed via QR code.

All online submissions now go directly in the overall reports, simplifying quarterly reporting.

Up-to-date Welfare & Wellbeing documents are available on the RNA website – use [this link](#).

Photo by Jeremy Bishop on Unsplash



## REDISCOVER YOURSELF ON A WEST-COUNTRY WEEKEND

Occasionally, an opportunity arises that offers far more than a change of scenery – it offers a turning point. Thriving Together is one such opportunity.

In May, a group of shipmates will head to Westward Ho! in Devon for a fully-funded wellbeing weekend designed to help people feel like themselves again. Not through pressure or formality, but through fresh air, shared experience, and the simple act of stepping away from daily demands.

From 15–17 May participants will enjoy professionally-led surfing lessons, structured wellbeing activities and relaxed time outdoors.

The dedicated bunkhouse accommodation fosters a sense of safety and camaraderie that many participants say they have not experienced in years.

This is not a reward, nor a retreat for the naturally confident.

It is for the people who quietly keep going, those who support others, those coping with change, those feeling isolated, or anyone in need of a reset.

### Who might benefit?

Consider shipmates who would gain from:

- Time away in a supportive, pressure free setting boost or a chance to rebuild resilience;
- Social connection after a period of isolation;
- Space to focus on their own wellbeing;
- A positive, uplifting experience among shipmates.

The programme has already transformed lives.

For some, it has been the first time in years they have laughed freely, tried something new, or felt genuinely connected. For others, it has re-ignited confidence and purpose.

### Why it matters

Welfare and wellbeing is not only about responding to difficulties, but it's also about creating opportunities for people to thrive. Thriving Together offers exactly that.

If you know someone who would benefit, especially someone unlikely to put themselves forward, now is the moment to nominate them.

Let's ensure the shipmates who need this most are given the chance.

**Closing date for nominations: 13 March 2026**

**Contact: [wws@rnassoc.org](mailto:wws@rnassoc.org)**

# WELFARE AND WELLBEING

## TRAINING – AND EMPOWERING

Start 2026 with renewed energy and a chance to strengthen the support we offer across the Branch Welfare & Wellbeing officers.

This year's programme is designed not just to train but to empower, connect, and build confidence in every member who steps forward to help others.

### Branch Welfare & Wellbeing –Safeguarding Awareness – Session 1

**Saturday 28 February, 10:00–12:00**

Begin your safeguarding pathway with the first of two essential modules.

Gain a solid understanding of how to recognise, respond to, and report concerns safely and appropriately.

Attendance Certificates are awarded upon completion of both safeguarding sessions.

### Branch Welfare & Wellbeing –Safeguarding

### Awareness – Suicide Prevention Awareness

**Saturday 21 March, 10:00–12:00**

A practical, module offering the skills to approach sensitive situations with confidence and compassion. A smartphone can be helpful, but it's absolutely not required to take part.

### Branch Welfare & Wellbeing –Safeguarding Awareness – Safeguarding Awareness – Session 2 April (date TBC), 10:00–12:00

Complete the safeguarding pathway for 2026 and reinforce your knowledge with clear, practical guidance.

### More Than 'Required Training'

These sessions are far more than a box ticking exercise. They are the foundation of safe, consistent, and compassionate support across all our branch Welfare and Wellbeing Officers, ensuring every member feels confident, prepared, and connected.

## FUNERAL GUIDE AVAILABLE ON WEBSITE

"The RNA has launched our Funeral Guide, and reminds shipmates that we offer ceremonial and administrative support for our members and all those who have served in Our Naval Forces." –

Jon Everett, Welfare and Wellbeing Support Co-ordinator [wws@rnassoc.org](mailto:wws@rnassoc.org), telephone 07591 829416

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.mrmc.org.uk">www.mrmc.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.mbt.org.uk">www.mbt.org.uk</a>
Royal Navy Royal Marines Widows' Association	07462 376850	<a href="https://rnmwidows.org">https://rnmwidows.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.ssafo.org.uk">www.ssafo.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>

## MIDWEEK MOMENTS OF CALM...

### Starting the Year with Mindfulness

January opened with an introduction to mindfulness and its benefits, offering members a gentle and accessible way to explore techniques for staying present, managing stress, and supporting emotional wellbeing.

The session set a calm and reflective tone for the months ahead, encouraging shipmates to begin the year with clearer focus and greater self awareness.

### A Midweek Moment of Calm

That sense of calm continued into early February. On Wednesday 4 February, Wellbeing Wednesday guided members through a restorative session of Tai Chi Qigong – a flowing, meditative practice that blended gentle movement with relaxed breathing.

The session offered a much-needed opportunity to pause, de-stress and rediscover balance in the middle of a busy week, reinforcing the value of small, regular acts of self care.

### Your Stories Needed

Wellbeing Wednesdays thrive on shared experience. If you or someone in your branch has a hobby, wellbeing practice or personal story that could inspire others, the team would love to hear from you.

These sessions are open to all members, and contributions of any size are warmly welcomed.

We hold the sessions on the first Wednesday of each month via Zoom.

Contact: [wws@rnassoc.org](mailto:wws@rnassoc.org)

## COULD MEDIATION WORK FOR YOU?

### Family Mediation – what is it, and how can it work for me?

Family Mediation Week (26-30 January) was an opportunity to raise awareness of family mediation and the benefits it can bring to separating families. And so, on the back of this particular event – how could mediation help you?

#### What is the aim of mediation?

Mediation is not therapy, and it is not relationship counselling. It is a confidential voluntary process where a mediator assists you to reach your own informed decisions about some or all matters which are currently disagreed between you. These issues could relate to a separation, divorce, arrangements for children, finances and property.

#### The role of a mediator – introducing Lucy Adams @ Knights

The mediator always starts with an individual assessment about the current issues, and whether mediation is a suitable process for you. They will consider the circumstances of your separation, the nature of what is currently disputed, and whether there is any risk of harm.

The mediator will not provide you with legal advice, but they do often share a legal or professional background. The mediator can provide information in relation to the process, the powers the court may have and the orders that can be made. The mediator will provide guidance as to the options available, but remain entirely impartial throughout the process.

At Knights, we offer a tailor-made premium mediation service. We can arrange same-day appointments and out-of-hours sessions to work round our clients' schedules and family arrangements. Our premium office spaces enable us to host mediation sessions which create the right environment to be able to mediate comfortably. We ensure that sufficient detail is included, to limit unnecessary legal costs and protracted correspondence.

Our family mediator, Lucy Adams (*right*), has over 16 years' experience practising in family law, with Law Society Advanced Accreditation in complex financial and children matters (<https://www.knightsplc.com/company/our-professionals/lucy-adams/>). Lucy is registered with the Family Mediation Association and the Family Mediation Council and can offer the Government Mediation Voucher scheme, which offers £500 towards the cost of mediation

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

Emma – an RNA member – has represented personnel in the Royal Navy, from ABs to Vice Admirals. She understands the difference between civvy and military life and the impact this can have on a relationship and/or a family.

Knights is a business and leading law firm offering premium professional services everywhere in the UK.

The team is made up of 1,100+ professionals across 26 (and growing) locations in the UK from Carlisle all the way down to Exeter.

The national family team at Knights are familiar with all aspects of family law, including contact arrangements for children, divorce and finances and pre/post-nuptial agreements. They have a handful of individuals who specialise in the treatment of Armed Forces pensions on divorce and appreciate the complexities of these schemes.

It's important to seek specialist legal advice when considering the financial arrangements on divorce, and they are there to help.



## Knights

sessions, in relation to children matters.

#### The mediation process

If mediation is suitable, the next step is to arrange a joint session with the mediator. Sometimes, you might not want to see each other and so the session may take place on a shuttle basis between various rooms or video calls, if mediation is taking place online. It might also be appropriate to explore other forms of mediation, ie hybrid mediation, where solicitors and other specialist professionals (such as financial advisors, accountants) are invited to join discussions.

The mediation process itself can be flexible and tailored to meet the needs of the parties. It is a forum designed with

you in mind. Knights ensure that any legal information provided is up-to-date, and we take time to ensure that all issues are dealt with in the mediation session. Following each session, we prepare a session record which includes detailed, clear, and concise information to assist participants in obtaining any legal advice between sessions. We know the sessions can be overwhelming, which is why we are here to support you. We actively encourage parties to obtain independent legal advice throughout the mediation process and we understand how important it is to ensure any agreement reached is made into a legally binding document, to provide certainty.

The Family Mediation Council (FMC) consistently find that over 70 per cent of cases result in whole or partial agreements. We're here to help you be part of that statistic.

If you require advice and help to navigate issues on divorce or separation or for all other family law questions, please do reach out. I am an Associate in the family team at Knights and my partner is a Royal Navy veteran. I come from a military family and have a little girl who is almost 2!

<https://www.knightsplc.com/company/our-professionals/emma-jones/>

[www.linkedin.com/in/emmxjones](http://www.linkedin.com/in/emmxjones)  
[emma.jones@knightsplc.com](mailto:emma.jones@knightsplc.com)



# BRANCH NEWS

## TORBAY Branch

On a wet and windy Sunday shortly before Christmas, Torbay Branch members convened at the King's Drive in Torquay to mark the 80th anniversary of the Branch and its predecessor, the Royal Navy Old Comrades Association. Due to adverse weather conditions, there were a number of 'modifications' to the normal RNA dress code! The Branch was joined by standards and representatives from other local ex-Service associations including the Paignton and Torquay Royal British Legions. Torbay Sea Cadets were also in

attendance, parading smartly despite the weather conditions. Also present were the MP for Torbay, Steve Darling, and sponsors of the event including Katie & Rob Mills Independent Funeral Directors, SWISCO, part of Torbay Council and Cllr Mark Spacagna. S/M Terry Membery, Chairman of the Branch, warmly welcomed all attendees and explained the purpose of the gathering. He said: "Today, we commemorate eight decades of service, camaraderie, and remembrance. 'The oak tree is being planted as a living symbol of strength, endurance, and renewal. It is dedicated to all who have served in the Royal Navy from Torbay, and to those who continue its proud traditions.'" A short service was conducted by the Revd Mike Wagstaff, RN Chaplain of BRNC Dartmouth, and the Mayor of Torbay, Cllr Barbara Lewis, read the fourth verse of the poem, 'For the Fallen'. Cdr Jane Allen RNR



(Rtd), Patron of the Branch, delivered a brief passage and a dedication of the tree, after which the Mayor laid the first soil around the new tree. The service concluded with the National Anthem. All those in attendance were invited to a local hotel for light refreshments to conclude the commemoration.



## WANSBECK Branch

Wansbeck Branch held their Christmas meal at the Cherry Tree, Stakeford on the weekend before Christmas, with 12 out of a possible 14 shipmates attending an enjoyable meal which was followed by a raffle. Shipmates commented on the excellent service provided by pub staff. With attendances down, the branch needs more members to attend as often as possible. The Branch AGM will be on Monday 2 March with maximum attendance required to vote in officers.



## ROSYTH & WEST FIFE Branch

Shipmates of the Rosyth & West Fife Branch have undertaken a series of group walks in the spring, summer and autumn months over the past couple of years.

Arranged and conducted by S/M Glen MacDonald, the walks have brought together different groups of the Branch's members and their friends and family to enjoy some gentle exercise amidst the fresh air and fine coastal and inland scenery of Fife.

Through these walks many of the Branch's members have had the opportunity to get to know each other better and to share stories and anecdotes about life and their Naval careers whilst all the while strolling through pleasant countryside.

In short, the walks have both facilitated and encouraged friendly comradeship and are therefore very much aligned with the ethos, aims and raison d'être of the Association. Teaming up with Revd Duncan Weaver, an ex-military padre with Veterans Chaplaincy Scotland – a charity which provides pastoral support for veterans in Scotland – a number of the walks have taken place along different sections of the Fife Pilgrim's Way, which stretches inland from beneath the bridges spanning the Firth of Forth at North Queensferry all the way to St Andrews.

Revd Duncan was also the official pastor for the Fife Pilgrim's Way and so, in addition to guiding a number of the walks, he also talked to the groups along the way, encouraging shipmates to reflect about their families, friends and Naval experiences and upon what really matter to them in life. This has all made for a very popular combination of gentle exercise, shared and personal reflections on life, as well as amiable social company.

Typically the walks have involved meeting mid-morning at a pre-arranged start point, walking together on either a circular or linear walk of four to five miles distance over two or three hours, and then enjoying a convivial lunch together in local hotels or cafes.

Visits to places of interest have often been incorporated, such as to the award-winning museum in the historic and charming village of Ceres, where the first Highland Games in Scotland are said to have taken place following the return of the village men from the Battle of Bannockburn in 1314.



Another walk included a guided tour around the historic 1,000-year-old Markinch parish church, said to be possibly the oldest building in Scotland!

The cost of lunch for the walkers that day was subsidised by Veterans Chaplaincy Scotland, with grant funding from British Forces Broadcasting (BFBS).

Other walks have taken shipmates along sections of the famous Fife Coastal Path, which also runs from North Queensferry to St Andrews.

One such walk from St David's Bay to Aberdour included an interesting stop at the former site of the World War 1 Royal Navy shore research and training establishment HMS Tarlair. Opened in 1915, this was where sonar, hydrophones and anti-submarine warfare were first developed by the RN in an effort to counter the threat from German U-boats.

One shipmate, a former Operations Branch TAS rating, was amazed to discover that this was the very spot where his old TAS sub branch had been established! Well, every day's a school day...

S/M Glen MacDonald said: "I have really enjoyed arranging and leading these walks for my fellow shipmates.

"It's been great to see them walking, smiling, rosy-cheeked, laughing and chatting together in the great outdoors, socially engaged and enjoying each other's company.

"I know full well that too many veterans can slip into loneliness and social isolation in later life, and so I believe these sorts of opportunities are good for us, good for our branch and good for the Royal Naval Association.

"It's all about comradeship."



## BRACKNELL Branch

Rounding up a busy few months, 42 Bracknell Branch shipmates enjoyed an excellent Trafalgar Dinner at a local golf club in mid-October (*right*), with a raffle, an auction of 'Nelson memorabilia' and a short talk from S/M Anthony Boddrell, in his role as National Council Member for Area 6 (as well as Area 6 President and Branch Standard Bearer).

Four Branch shipmates attended the RNA 75th Anniversary Concert at the Guildhall in Portsmouth – what a wonderful evening!

A group of 16 shipmates had an interesting visit to the Houses of Parliament at the end of October, at the invitation of Bracknell MP Peter Swallow (*below*).

The Branch have had a variety of interesting speakers at their monthly meetings, covering a wide variety of topics including all about the Royal Berkshire Fire & Rescue Service, and 'My Life and Politics' from a popular local councillor.

As usual, Branch shipmates attended local Armed Forces and Veterans Breakfast Clubs in the area as well as other area events, including another local Armed Forces Veterans Hub, run by Royal Berkshire Fire & Rescue Service at Newbury Fire Station, together with Newbury Branch members (*bottom left*).

Many shipmates assisted in the local Poppy Appeal, coming together for the weekend of Remembrance when five wreaths were laid, and the Branch Standard was paraded on four occasions (*right*).

At their December meeting they had a brief 'business' meeting before the fun really started with their annual



skittles competition and Christmas buffet (*bottom right*), with the Silver Cup going to a different shipmate this time...

The Branch carried out its usual three days of charity collection in the local Tesco, raising almost £1,500.



### CAERPHILLY Branch

The Caerphilly Branch Christmas dinner was a great evening, with 17 members attending the function at the Red Kite in Caerphilly. At its final meeting of 2025 the Branch was pleased to welcome several guests.

Shipmates were joined by Cllr Gaynor James (Armed Forces Champion), Sarah Jane Evans (Pontypool & District Royal British Legion), Chair of Pontypool Community Council Alan Peploe and Cllr Chris Peploe.

During the meeting a few presentations were made. The Branch welcomed two new shipmates to the fold, with the Chairman presenting Chris Small and Kelly Davies with their membership cards.

The Branch also presented a display of model ships (right) to the local Sea Cadets and Royal Marines Cadets of TS Kittiwake, which was gratefully received by Chris Small, one of the unit's instructors.

There was good collection of food for the Panteg House food bank which was received by Alan Peploe on their behalf.

All this was followed by a social evening with Buffet and Banter, where they were joined by shipmates from **Monmouth** Branch.

The Branch kicked off 2026 with an Uckers evening at Panteg House.

As ever, anyone with a Royal Navy or Royal Marines background is welcome – it would be great to welcome some new faces.



### CHRISTCHURCH Branch

Christchurch Branch recently celebrated its 60th anniversary – a celebration which was combined with a Trafalgar Lunch held at Christchurch Sailing Club. Guests of Honour were National President Vice Admiral

Duncan Potts and Area 4 President David White. Vice Admiral Potts commented on the excellent venue, with stunning views over Hengistbury Head, Christchurch Harbour and the River Stour towards Mudeford Quay. An anniversary cake, organised by S/M Lynn Squibb (our World Champion ten-pin bowler) was enjoyed at our November Branch meeting. A souvenir notebook and pen was presented to all shipmates at the Trafalgar lunch.





### **CORBY Branch**

Back in last December, S/M John Morris celebrated his 105th birthday. John is a Life Member of the RNA and has been a long and valued member of Corby branch.

John served during World War 2 on board W-class destroyer HMS Walker on Arctic Convoys – he is a recipient of the Arctic Star.

He was also awarded the Ushakov Medal, which he received from the Russian Embassy in London.

Walker first served in World War 1, and saw action in 1919 as part of the British campaign against the Russian Bolsheviks.

She was taken out of Reserve in the summer of 1939 and served through the entirety of World War 2, being decommissioned soon after the German surrender and being scrapped the following year.

John is always proud to wear his white beret.

Although travel is somewhat limited these days, visitors to John are always offered a tot. Their Shipmate is of a humble disposition, but they felt it appropriate, given last year they commemorated the 80th anniversary of VE Day, that they acknowledge the contribution made by their shipmate and all those other brave people he served alongside – the Branch is proud and honoured to have such a distinguished member on their roll.

John is pictured here with our Chairman and Treasurer.



### **PLYMOUTH Branch**

Attendance of Plymouth Branch, along with members of Brixham Branch and VIPs, are pictured attending the Lord High Admiral's Division in the presence of King Charles at BRNC Dartmouth in the week before Christmas. The photograph, courtesy of Les Yeoman) shows S/Ms Les and Sue Yeoman, Moira Fox, and Susan and Kevin Adamson.

### **PORT PHILLIP Branch**

Port Phillip Branch stalwart S/M Mike Bennett is preparing to step down as Chairman this year, having effectively organised and overseen the Branch for more than 20 year.

Mike has told shipmates he believes the Branch would benefit from a fresh approach – and he needs something of a break, as he has not missed a single Branch meeting or function in the past 25 years (with his late wife Sue clocking up 23 years of her own).

He said he intends to make at least one long overseas trip later this year, and as he does not want to leave the Branch in limbo he is prepared to continue (if members agree) as Chairman until he can hand over responsibility.

The Branch holds their AGM on Sunday (8 Feb), at which all Committee positions are up for re-election or endorsement – a timely opportunity for members to consider how the Branch should proceed, and to make their views known.

The normal Branch social meeting will also be held on the same date, following on from the AGM which begins at shortly after 1200.

**ST NEOTS and DISTRICT Branch**

St Neots & District Branch held their annual Presentation Evening at the St Neots Rugby Club in early December. Donations were made to three local good causes, raised by collections at various events throughout 2025: The three charities were St John Ambulance, St Neots Man Cave and Berkley Street Methodist Church – the Children and Families Project. Representatives of these good causes were delighted with the generous donations that the shipmates of St Neots Branch had provided, enabling them to continue providing their support to the local community.

The event and the ensuing publicity in the local press greatly enhanced the reputation and public awareness of the RNA in St Neots and the surrounding area.

John Shere presented a cheque to Steve Moore (St Neots Man Cave), Tony Webley presented to Alison Cracknell (Berkley Street Methodist Church) and Geoff Patterson presented to Richard Jameson and Pat Harrington (St John Ambulance).

The image (top right) shows (from left) Branch member John Shere, Steve



Moore (St Neots Man Cave), Alison Cracknell (Berkley Street Methodist Church), Tony Webley (Branch Secretary), Pat Harrington (St John Ambulance) and Geoff Patterson (Branch Chairman). And there were more presentations to come... 'Twas the night before Christmas and the RNA Elves (Maureen and Keith Ridley) were out and about, delivering tins of Heroes chocolates to Hinchingsbrooke A&E (below left) and Ambulance, Fire

and Police Services (below), along with Maureen's handmade cards. A relatively new member of the Branch featured in a prominent article in the Hunts Post. Submariner S/M Simon Cartwright recently retired from the Royal Navy last year and now works in the Royal Parks with facilities management firm OCS. Simon joined the Branch last summer and is already playing his part in branch life, being an enthusiastic supporter of ceremonial and social activities.



**STREET Branch**

At their meeting at the end of last month, members of Street Branch celebrated shipmate Brian Godden's '90 Years Young' birthday.

The shipmates joined Brian for a cake-cutting before enjoying a few tots together at the Wessex Hotel, Street.

Brian joined the Royal Navy at Chatham in 1952 as a Junior Seaman, where he did his basic training before joining HMS Implacable for sea training. He served in HM ships Aise, Loch Lomond, Hardy and

**Solebay.**

Brian left the service in 1960 as an AB and has for many years been an enthusiastic and active member of the Branch. Street Branch welcomes Service, ex-Service personnel, family members and interested civilians to join them in sharing experiences, enjoying companionship and socialising with 'like-minded people'. Contact Chairman Mike Jayes, tel 07805 516946, email streetrnachair@gmail.com for further details and meeting dates.



# OBITUARIES



## S/M RAY BREWSTER

Raymond Lennox (Ray) Brewster was the oldest member of the Leicester Senior Service Club when he died shortly before Christmas at the age of 103.

A Royal Navy World War 2 veteran who served six years, being awarded four official war medals, Ray crossed the bar peacefully at home on 3 December with his beloved daughter Candida by his side.

He had celebrated his 103rd birthday earlier that year at the Club, where he was joined by the Lord Lieutenant and Lord Mayor of Leicester, and he was the VIP Guest at both the Flag Raising and Armed Forces Day Services in the summer.

Ray's funeral took place at on 13 January at Loughborough Crematorium, and was followed by a celebration of Ray's life at the Leicester Senior Service Club.



## S/M BARBARA HILLIER

South Bristol Branch report with sadness that their Shipmate and Branch Welfare Officer Barbara Hillier (Lieutenant SCC) crossed the bar on 29 November 2025, aged 79.

Her funeral was held at Canford Crematorium, Westbury-on-Trym, Bristol, and was well attended by the Lord Lieutenant of Bristol, Mrs Peaches Golding, family members, friends and colleagues, a large representation from the three local Sea Cadet units and members from South Bristol Branch.

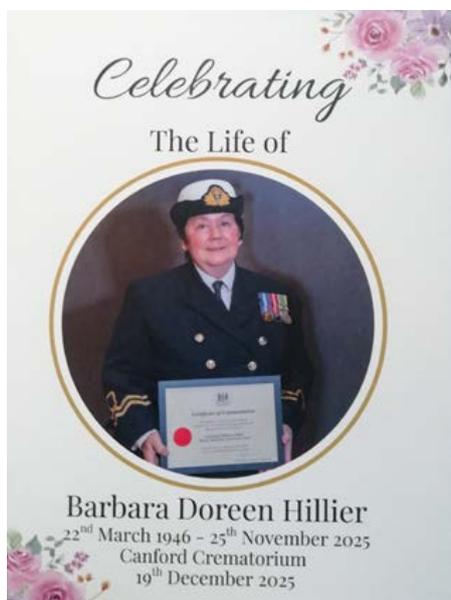
The Branch Standard was also in attendance throughout the funeral service.

S/M Barbara was born in Dundee on 22 March 1946, and during the 1950s her family moved south to the Patchway area of Bristol after her father had been offered employment at Hengrove Civilian Airport (the forerunner to Bristol International Airport).

During her formative years, Barbara attended local schools and colleges, eventually qualifying as a State Registered Nurse and was employed within the NHS.

S/M Barbara met her husband-to-be William (Bill) Hillier – at the time a serving RN Gunnery Rating – whilst he was on home leave.

They eventually married, settled in Patchway and were blessed with a family of two daughters (Elizabeth



and Nikki) and a son (also William). During the children's school years, Barbara was elected onto the Board of School Governors and also became fully involved with the local Brownie and Girl Guide Troupe activities. S/Ms Barbara and Bill joined the RNA Bristol Branch in 1986 and were later to become founder members of South Bristol Branch, commissioned in September 1993, taking up the committee positions of Welfare Officer and Hon Secretary respectively.

Bill sadly crossed the bar in June 2007. Barbara also served as a member

of the Royal Naval Auxiliary Service (RNXS) base at HMS Flying Fox in Bristol until it was disbanded in March 1994.

She also found part-time employment in the call centres, initially with a major motoring organisation and later with Avon and Somerset Police HQ in Portishead.

Beside her own family, Barbara had 'adopted' a further family, that being the local Sea Cadet Corps.

She taught the cadets navigation and often accompanied the cadets on the Sail Training Ships Malcolm Miller, Royalist and Winston Churchill.

S/M Barbara was eventually commissioned, held the rank of Lieutenant (SCC) and was Commanding Officer of TS Enterprise (Avonmouth SCC) for three years before being transferred to TS Adventure (Bristol SCC).

During her time with the Sea Cadet Corps, she was twice awarded the Lord Lieutenant of Bristol's Certificate of Commendation for Meritorious Service.

Besides her two daughters and son, Barbara leaves behind her extended family of grandchildren and great grandchildren.

S/M Barbara will be greatly missed by her family, friends, colleagues, Sea Cadets, fellow shipmates and all those who came into contact with her.

Definitely a hard act to follow.

## S/M BOB PEARSALL

Cdr Hugh 'Bob' Pearsall (Royal Navy/Royal Naval Reserve) joined the Royal Navy at HMS Ganges as a boy in 1953.

He became a PO Seaman before being commissioned and transferring into the FAA as an Observer.

He left the RN in 1977 and continued his service with the RNR from 1978 to 1983.

Ships and establishments he served in included HM Ships Tyne, Torquay, Eagle, Ark Royal, President and Heron, where he was an instructor.

He was a committed Life Member of the Royal Naval Association and a past Chairman of HMS President's Old Hands Association, maintaining a lifelong connection with the Naval community.

Bob died on 29 December 2025, aged 88.

### **S/M KENNETH 'RUSTY' BROWN**

S/M Kenneth Brown's daughter Pip has informed us of the death of her father at the age of 99.

One of the few remaining World War 2 RN D-Day veterans, Rusty was just four months shy of his 100th birthday when he passed away peacefully at Rothsay Grange Care Home, Andover, Hampshire, on 30 December 2025.

Pip writes: "In recent years he suffered failing health and mobility issues. Now reunited with his beloved wife, Barbara. He leaves two daughters, Ann and Pip, together with one grandchild and one great grandchild."

Rusty joined the Royal Navy aged 17, serving from 4 October 1943 until 16 April 1947. He was on active service at sea throughout war, serving in the Mediterranean, at D-Day, and ending the war in the Far East.

He served as an AB anti-aircraft gunner, and a PO Coxswain with the Light Coastal Forces (MTBs) before transferring to the FAA.

After flying training at Lee-on-the-Solent, he was put on the 'Stringbag' Fairey Swordfish biplane torpedo bomber.

Years later he recounted how, on one occasion when returning to the ship, he had a flight-deck 'incident' and went into the sea.

Prior to him getting back on board the ship's captain had remarked "You'd better get him out before he turns rusty," which is how he got the nickname that stayed with him throughout his life.

In late 1947, aged 21, Rusty transferred to the Royal Armoured Corps. After



training he was posted to his regiment, the 12th Lancers, later transferring to the 4th Queen's Own Hussars which, due to regiment amalgamations, became the Queen's Royal Irish Hussars. He later transferred to the 3rd Carabiniers (Prince of Wales Dragoon Guards), which in time merged with another cavalry regiment to form the Royal Scots Dragoon Guards (Carabiniers and Greys).

In 1962 he was selected as a founder member for the Special Reconnaissance Squadron (SRS), RAC which was later redesignated the Parachute Sqn, RAC. Leaving the Parachute Sqn, RAC in 1967 he was posted to the MOD Army Personnel Research Establishment Farnborough – military equipment trials and development.

In 1975 he retired to Andover and returned to a military environment when he joined the MOD Police at RAF Boscombe Down. His military background saw him involved in escort duties for nuclear convoys across the country.

Retiring from the MOD Police in 1986, Rusty became involved in supporting Armed Forces veterans in and around Andover as Chairman of SSAFA – the Armed Forces Charity (Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen and Families Association), which gave him a tremendous sense of personal satisfaction.

During his military service Rusty was awarded 11 medals – the 1939 – 45 Star, Atlantic Star with clasp France and Germany, Pacific Star, War Medal 1939 – 45, 1939 – 45 Defence Medal, 1944 Normandy Campaign Medal, General Service Medal with clasp Malaya, General Service Medal with clasp Arabia, Arabian Service Medal, Long Service Good Conduct Medal.

As a surviving D-Day veteran the Government of France awarded him the Legion d'Honneur (Chevalier) – The National Order of the Legion of Honour, France's highest decoration.

In short, Rusty has had an adventurous, challenging yet fulfilling life. He frequently pointed out that the Armed Forces taught him the value of discipline, teamwork and investing in a cause larger than himself.

He enjoyed a long, proud and cherished relationship with the military. A remarkable man, loved and respected by all who knew him, he will be greatly missed by family and friends.



### **S/M WILLIAM 'BILL' DUNDEE**

**William James Dundee crossed the bar on 11 January 2026.**

**Known as Bill, he served from 1957-1981, starting his Naval career at HMS Ganges training establishment.**

**He went on to serve in HMS Aisne, HMS Herald, HMS Shackleton, HMS Malcolm, HMS Fearless and HMS Wolverton.**

**Bill was very proud to have been Chief Engineer for all five minesweepers in Hong Kong.**

**When the family came back to UK, he was liaison between the dockyard and ships for maintenance, and he also taught foreign students at HMS Sultan.**

**The image of HMS Aisne (below) is from the Imperial War Museum collection: ©IWM (FL 305)**



### **S/M RON UNDERWOOD**

The President of Brightlingsea Branch, S/M Ron Underwood, crossed the bar on 9 January. Ron was 100 years and seven months old, having just celebrated his 100½th birthday in November at the RBL with shipmates – rum and Swordfish beer followed by fish and chips. Ron joined the RN in 1943 aged 17, and after initial training at HMS Royal Arthur (Butlin's Camp at Skegness) he volunteered for aircrew duties and sailed in RMS Queen Mary to New York along with other potential aircrew. After a few hectic days in the Big Apple he was moved to Nova Scotia to start his Telegraphist Air Gunner training.

Once completed and advanced to LTAG he returned to the UK, joining 836 NAS flying Swordfish aircraft from MAC ships – merchant ships with a flight deck welded over their original upper deck.

Ron and his crew escorted Atlantic convoys looking to deter U-boats before moving to 825 NAS escorting Russian convoys – cold work in an open cockpit!

Ron's main task was to send an enemy report via Morse – and, of course, shoot down any enemy aircraft in his sights.

After the German surrender Ron and his squadron were on their way to the Far East, reaching Malta before the Japanese surrendered.

After the war Ron joined the Essex

Constabulary and served for over 30 years before retiring to his home town of Brightlingsea.

He was one of a group of ex-matelots who formed an RNA Branch in the town in 1993.

He served his Branch well as Secretary for many years, and in 2016 was elected as President of the Branch and given Life Membership of the RNA.

On his 100th birthday in May, in addition to a card from the King, Ron received a personal letter from the outgoing First Sea Lord, another from the Chief Constable of Essex and a silver cup from the Fleet Air Arm - Navy Wings. The stem of the cup was an inlet valve from a Pegasus engine used in the Swordfish.

### **S/M WARWICK MANDERS**

It is with much sadness that Wansbeck Branch report that one of their members, S/M Warwick Manders, crossed the bar on 21 January at the age of 81.

Warwick had been in Chester Court Care Home at Bedlington since 2019, and had been a regular attendee at Wansbeck Branch meetings for a number of years prior to suffering ill health.

S/M Warwick had served in the Royal Navy from 1961 to 1987, attaining the rank of Warrant Officer.

Warwick served in a number of ships during his time, and will be sadly missed by all who knew him.

His funeral will be held on Wednesday 18 February at 11.30am at Blyth Crematorium, followed by a family wake at Ellington at his daughter's house. If anyone is available to attend?

If so, please meet at the crematorium prior to Warwick's funeral for a Guard of Honour – standards are also welcome.

Wansbeck Branch will provide an anchor wreath.

All donations should be made to the RNA and/or Royal British Legion.



### **S/M NIGEL HAYBITTLE**

S/M Nigel John Haybittle crossed the bar on 27 December 2025 in Gosport. Nigel was an ex-CPO Seaman Specialist (Buffer) who served in the Royal Navy from 1964 until 2025.

Born in Bangor, Nigel left North Wales at the age of 16 to join up, beginning his career at HMS Raleigh.

After completing his training, he was drafted to HMS Fearless as a Junior Seaman Gunner.

During the Falklands War, Nigel was one of the youngest serving members of the ship's company.

His action station was with the starboard 40/60 Bofors gun crew, made up of some of the youngest sailors on board. It was this crew that shot down an

Argentine A-4 Skyhawk jet, which was so close that when the pilot ejected, the canopy landed on top of the crew.

Nigel went on to serve in several Type 42 destroyers, carriers and frigates, and served on the oldest commissioned warship, HMS Victory.

After leaving the Gunnery Branch, Nigel became a Seaman Specialist, a role he truly loved.

He ran for the Portsmouth Command Field Gun Crew 1990 and was a United Services/ship's company rugby player. Following his Naval career, Nigel worked



as a pilot boat coxswain from Gosport and was later on anti-piracy operations. He was also a passionate sailor and owned his own yacht, sailing whenever he could.

His funeral was held at St Luke's Church, Hasler, Gosport this morning.

The image (above) shows HMS Fearless under air attack in San Carlos Water in the Falklands in May 1982. From the Imperial War Museum collection (© Crown copyright reproduced under delegated authority from The Keeper of Public Records. Image: IWM (FKD 407))

# FLAGSHIP EMPLOYMENT INITIATIVE RETURNS FOR 2026

Women into Employment returns in 2026 to empower women across the Armed Forces community.

The Forces Employment Charity has announced its flagship Women into Employment series will return this year to empower women from the Armed Forces community to develop sustainable and fulfilling careers. Running from this month until mid-March, Women into Employment 2026 combines webinars with in-person events, offering practical career support, expert insight, and meaningful networking opportunities.

The new hybrid format will make the series more accessible than ever. Female veterans, Reservists, military spouses, partners and young women from military families often face distinct challenges when entering or re-entering the civilian workforce. These include translating military experience into language employers understand, managing childcare and frequent relocations, and navigating gender bias or under-representation. The Ministry of Defence's Families Continuous Attitudes Survey (FamCAS) 2025 report found that 68 per cent of spouses who had sought work in the previous 12 months experienced difficulty finding suitable employment.

Women into Employment exists to address these challenges directly,



offering tailored support, visibility, and pathways into meaningful employment.

This year's programme introduces a flexible mix of events to suit different needs and locations.

It began with Empowering You, a hybrid pre-series event running earlier this week, hosted both virtually and in person; hosted by Barclays at their campuses in London and Glasgow.

This is followed by three lunchtime webinars focused on purpose, applications, interviews, mentoring, and employer relationships.

The event series concludes with a London networking evening, hosted by Bank of America, featuring inspirational speaker Michelle Mills-Porter and opportunities to meet employers face to face.

Please see the full schedule below:

- **10 February – Webinar 1:** Finding your purpose with Michelle Mills-Porter (13.00–14.00)
- **24 February – Webinar 2:** Bossing applications and interviews (13.00–14.00)
- **3 March – Webinar 3:** The

benefits of mentoring and building employer relationships (13.00–14.00)

- **12 March – Networking Evening** hosted by Bank of America, London (17.00–20.00)

Caroline Woodward, Senior Events Manager at the Forces Employment Charity, said: "Whether you're thinking about your next career, WIE26 is a brilliant way to be inspired, gather tips to become super polished and be clear who you are and what you want.

"You'll also meet people who can help you take the next step, and I'd encourage every woman from the Armed Forces community to join and see what's possible."

The Women into Employment series forms part of Op ASCEND, an Office for Veterans' Affairs programme delivered by The Forces Employment Charity with funding from the Armed Forces Covenant Fund Trust.

The programme builds on the work of the Career Transition Partnership (CTP), supporting veterans and their families to maximise their potential and progress their careers.

To register, sign up to each portion of the series you wish to attend.

Don't miss out, book your tickets today!

<https://www.forcesemployment.org.uk/news/women-into-employment-is-back-in-2026/>

## FLAGGING UP A USEFUL CONTACT FOR YOU

If you are looking for a comprehensive career support service designed specifically for the Naval community, then you should consider the services of the White Ensign Association. Founded as a charity in 1958 by the Royal Navy and the City of London, the WEA has been providing free, impartial guidance for all serving and former members of the Royal Navy, Royal Marines, RFA and their families for more than 60 years.

Their stated mission is to deliver informed guidance to the Naval community on:

- Armed Forces pensions, Armed Forces compensation and other personal financial matters;
- Civilian employment, retraining and resettlement;
- Access to professional services for advice on personal,



welfare and domestic matters.

- With a headquarters in the decidedly Naval setting of HMS Belfast in the Pool of London, its executive staff travel across the UK offering briefings and one-to-one support through personal interviews.

One example of particular relevance to shipmates is the Fireside Chat scheduled for 16 February, when the WEA will be delivering a pension awareness presentation via Zoom – see page 21 for more details.

The WEA supported more than 7,200 members of the Naval community last year. If you would like to see how they can help you, with employment issues or other matters specific to

your service, see their website at <https://www.whiteensign.co.uk>

A Fleet Air Arm Fairey Swordfish prepares to launch from escort carrier HMS Fencer in a snowstorm during a Russian convoy in May 1944. Image from the Imperial War Museum collection: © IWM (A 23576)



## FEBRUARY SWINGING THE LAMP

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

On **10 February 1944** Fairey Swordfish A/842 from escort carrier HMS Fencer sank the diabolically-named U-666 in the Western Approaches – and it was not a one-off success for the Fencer/Stringbag combination.

Fencer, a 14,600-ton Attacker-class escort carrier, was laid down as a freighter in the United States but converted under the Bogue-class aircraft carrier programme, being launched at San Francisco on 4 April 1942 under the name USS Croatan.

However, she was transferred to the Royal Navy in February the following year, and joined Convoy HX 238 at New York on passage to Liverpool, where she was fitted out with British equipment to prepare her for anti-submarine duties

She spent the latter part of 1943 on convoy protection duties and patrols in the North Atlantic as part of the 8th Escort Group, carrying both Swordfish torpedo-bombers and Seafire fighters of 842 Naval Air Squadron, the latter bringing down a German Focke-Wulf 200 Condor maritime patrol aircraft in December.

After repairs at the turn of the year, Fencer began 1944 back on convoy escort duty, and the ship's embarked squadron, 842 NAS, struck a blow for the Allies when one of their Swordfish spotted a U-boat west of Ireland on 10 February.

The German submarine had been in action since August 1942, and although it had been part of 14 wolfpacks between March 1943 and February 1944 it had a decidedly modest record, having sunk just two ships – River-class frigate HMS Itchen (killing 230 men) and a 5,200-ton Greek freighter.

U-666, a 1,070-ton Type VIIC boat launched in Hamburg on 19 July 1942 and commissioned little over a month later, was a workhorse of the German fleet – an effective war machine, but a variant that appeared as the German Navy's 'Happy Time' was coming to an end.

The Allies had managed to turn the tide of the Battle of the Atlantic by mid-1943, and the Type VIIC bore the brunt of that Allied push – the devastating successes against Allied convoys of the early part of the war rapidly dried up and it was the German submarine arm that began to crumple under relentless attacks.

Unusually, U-666 had reportedly not lost a single life during her four war patrols, despite being seriously damaged on more than one occasion.

But that run of good fortune came to an end on 19 February when 842 NAS's 'A' Swordfish spotted the submarine and attacked with depth charges.

The attack was brief and precise – the submarine failed to resurface, and all 51 lives on board were lost.

Fencer survived the war, spending the final months and the immediate post-war period transporting aircraft then troops rather than carrying out operational patrols.

She was handed back to the Americans in October 1946 and spent her remaining years as a merchantman, sailing under various names, finally being scrapped in 1975.

**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.**

# LONGCAST

2026

<b>14 Feb</b>	Area 5 AGM and Quarterly Meeting (Wymondham Branch)
<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>8 August</b>	Area 5 Quarterly Meeting (online)
<b>12-14 June</b>	National Conference, Salford Quays
<b>11 Sept</b>	CONA Conference, Portsmouth
<b>12 Sept</b>	Scottish Area Quarterly Meeting (City of Edinburgh 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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The Royal Maritime Hotel is a stone's throw from Gunwharf Quays, the Spinnaker Tower and Portsmouth Historic Dockyard, HMS Victory, The Mary Rose Museum and HMS Warrior. Facilities include Horatio's restaurant, the Victory bar, a small swimming pool, sauna, spa pool and skittles!

Run by a charity to benefit veterans and serving military personnel




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



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## 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**

**NOMINATION FORM**  
**ELECTION OF MEMBERS AND DEPUTY MEMBERS OF THE NATIONAL COUNCIL 2026**  
**(Revised RNA Bye-Law 7)**

**For the attention of All Branch Secretaries:**  
**NCM in Areas 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 9, 10, 12 and DNCM in Areas 1, 2, 3, 9, 10, 11, 12**

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

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

**Names of Nominees**

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

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

**Address of Nominee**

**NCM**.....

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

**DNCM**.....

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

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

**NCM-**

**DNCM -**

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

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

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

Candidate's Branch .....

We are aware of the above nomination.

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

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

**Candidate**

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

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

The envelope containing this completed form should be marked **NOMINATIONS FOR NATIONAL COUNCIL** and must reach RNA HQ no later than **1600 on 20 February 2026.**

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

## PROPOSED MOTIONS AND AMENDMENTS FOR ANNUAL CONFERENCE 2026

Proposals must reach The General Secretary by **1600 20 February 2026**

Name of Proposing Branch: .....

### Motion / amendment

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

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

---

Name of Seconding Branch: .....

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

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### Notes

- a. A motion is submitted in the name of a Branch. Secretaries of proposing and seconding Branches are **certifying** that the motion or amendment reflects the view of the Branch meeting (not a committee); and that voting was conducted in accordance with Rule 20.
- b. A separate form is required for each Motion or Amendment
- c. A manuscript copy is acceptable for additional Motions or Amendments if the printed form is not available.
- d. The Motion or Amendment should be as short and precise as possible avoiding ambiguity. A Motion should normally start with the word 'THAT'
- e. The explanation is to assist the scrutiny of the Standing Orders Committee in understanding the intention behind the Motion so that they may be able to consider its presentation so it can be improved and implemented as soon as possible (Conference Bye Law C4)
- f. Motions may be submitted at any time but must reach the General Secretary by **20 February 2026**.
- g. Motions of Urgency should reach the General Secretary not less than 48 hours before Conference. (In accordance with Conference Bye Law C6.) and include an explanation about the urgency.
- h. Amendments to Motions should also normally reach the General Secretary not less than 7 days before Conference. The provision for the submission of amendments during Conference is in the Conference Bye-Laws.
- i. Bye-Laws. A Motion to Conference may propose that a Bye-Law be set aside or it may ask the Council to consider making or amending a Bye-Law.
- j. The Branch Proposing a Motion **must** have it Seconded by another Branch before forwarding it to the General Secretary. (Conference Bye Law C3a)



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



Webpage

# ROYAL NAVY PHOTOGRAPHIC COMPETITION 2025

Annex A to  
RNTM 09-031/25  
Dated 26 Nov 25

## IMAGE FORMAT FOR SUBMISSION AND ACCEPTABLE METHODS OF DIGITAL ENHANCEMENT

1. Stills images must be submitted in the electronic format JPEG at the highest quality.
2. Digital enhancement of images is **only** allowed to clean and balance to a correct reproduction of the original conditions. Tools that are considered acceptable:
  - a. Brightness control.
  - b. Burning and dodging.
  - c. Contrast control.
  - d. Colour balance.
  - e. Levels or Curves.
  - f. Saturation.
  - g. Unsharp mask.
  - h. Converting a colour image to black and white or sepia tone.
3. Manipulation of the composite elements of images and HDR are **not permitted**.
4. Where necessary, tools may also be used to remove sensor artefacts from the image.
5. Video entries should all be shot with the understanding they will be judged and viewed in a traditional widescreen film format. Landscape video will make better use of screen area during judging, but portrait format can be entered.
6. All video entries are to be exported as 1080p 25fps in either .mp4 or .mov format.
7. Grading and aftereffects can be used on videos, but composite elements of content shouldn't be changed.
8. The Royal Navy Photographic Specialist Advisor retains the right to reject photographs or videos deemed not suitable, manipulated or over enhanced.

**ROYAL NAVY PHOTOGRAPHIC COMPETITION 2025 – CONDITIONS OF ENTRY FOR ROYAL NAVAL ASSOCIATION CATEGORY**

1. This category is open to Naval Service Veterans, Royal Navy and Royal Marines Amateur Photographers and Royal Navy Professional Photographers.
2. Each photographer may submit a maximum of three photographs.
3. All photographs must have been taken between 16 Dec 24 – 31 Dec 25 not entered in the RNPC24.
4. Photographs should encapsulate the ethos of the RNA.
5. A completed application form found in this annex must accompany each entry.
6. Photographs that are personal copyright are **only** accepted for entry on the understanding that they may be reproduced free of charge. Photographs submitted may be used in public relations, marketing literature, official publications and online. Photographs submitted to the competition **will not be returned** and may be used in public relations, marketing literature, official publications and online.
7. Consent should be gained by the photographer of any image depicting members of the public if possible.
8. Image format for submission and acceptable methods of digital enhancement can be found at Annex A.
9. Images should be submitted by email as a JPEG at the highest quality, along with the entry form to the following email addresses:
  - a. [rnphotographiccomp@gmail.com](mailto:rnphotographiccomp@gmail.com) – Place RNA RNPC25 Entry in the subject field.
  - b. [cml@rnassoc.org](mailto:cml@rnassoc.org) - Place RNA RNPC25 Entry in the subject field.
10. Entries should be sent no later than 21 Feb 26.
11. Online judging will take place on 4-11 Mar 26.
12. An RNTM listing winners will be issued on completion of judging. Winners will be notified if not currently serving.

# ROYAL NAVY PHOTOGRAPHIC COMPETITION 2025 ENTRY FORM – PROFESSIONAL, AMATEUR AND VETERAN ROYAL NAVAL ASSOCIATION ENTRY FORM

NAME		RANK/RATE/TITLE		SERVICE NO*	
* if applicable					
SHIP/UNIT/ADDRESS				EMAIL	

Select Category and Class:

<b>Veteran</b>	Category 17a	<input type="checkbox"/>	<b>Amateur</b>	Category 17b	<input type="checkbox"/>	<b>Professional</b>	Category 17c	<input type="checkbox"/>
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Maximum of three images may be submitted in your selected category. Full file names (for professionals) and images to be entered here. Veterans and amateurs are to use the following file naming convention:

20240615-Category17b-MrJamesJohn-001                  

20240615-Category17b-MrJamesJohn-002

20240820-Category17b-MrJamesJohn-003

Professional photographers are to have full file info as per BR870. RN Amateurs and member of the public, either under or over 18 fill out a line about the photograph.

Concise Description of Photograph – (Who, What, Where, Why, When)  
Examples below.

Image 1. Standard Bearers at the Armed Forces Week Flag raising Plymouth Guildhall on 24 Jun 24.  
Image 2. A veteran from D-Day speak at a DD80 event at Arromanches, in France today on 6 Jun 24.  
Image 3. Veteran Vera Brett lights the beacon to commemorate DDay80 in Portsmouth on 6 Jun 24.

Please check as appropriate:

I certify that this photograph was taken by me between 16 Dec 24 – 31 Dec 25 and has not been manipulated outside of the stated rules. This image was not entered into the RNPC24 and consent for any member of the public in the image has been gained.

Signature: ..... Date: .....

# 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

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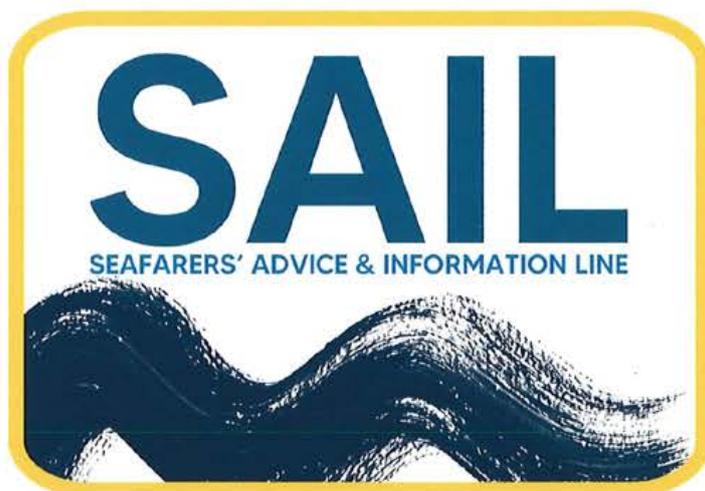


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