

# SEMAPHORE CIRCULAR

## ► THRIVING IN MOUNTAINS OF WALES

The spirit of comradeship swirled around the Brecon Beacons as the latest event in the RNA's Thriving Together programme proved a big success.

There might have been mist swirling around as well but it didn't dampen the spirits of the intrepid group of veteran and serving Royal Navy personnel as they climbed a mountain and hiked past waterfalls, all the while reconnecting, reminiscing and supporting each other.

The group made their way up to the summit of Pen y Fan - the highest mountain in South Wales at 886m - at sunrise, and visited waterfalls near Neath; there were no suitable pools for swimming, though there was the option of a 'refreshing' (ie cold) shower.

It wasn't just walking - there was the odd cooked breakfast, curry and "hoofing BBQ" as well, with the opportunity to spin dits until the small hours.

RNA Thriving Together Lead 'Scouse' Reeves promised more events and trips like this to come in the programme, and gave a big 'thank you' to the Royal Navy and Royal Marines Charity (RNRMC) for the funding that went into the weekend. "We had a wonderful weekend away. The Thriving Together Programme gives people chance to meet each other and connect. Life can be hard when you leave the military; typically you can lose the feeling

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

**The next Semaphore Circular will be published on Friday 7 June.**



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of comradeship and deep purpose which comes with serving in the Armed Forces. It can be difficult to adapt, so re-connecting with old shipmates, and making new friends who understand your background is essential to continued good mental health and wellbeing.” One of the intrepid hikers was Mark ‘Whiskey’ Walker is a Navy veteran from Seaham, County Durham. He served from 1992 to 2020 and has been a member of the RNA for the last four years.

Mark said: “I had a wonderful time with a cracking bunch of shipmates. I haven’t laughed so heartily for a long time. The weekend proved ‘Once Navy, Always Navy’.”

The weather during the hiking may not have been helpful for enabling views but no one cared. Everyone enjoyed being outdoors with like-minded people.

Another member of the group was John Fallon, who is now a Nuclear and Power Security Manager with AtkinsRealis.

“I just wanted to extend my sincere thanks to you both for supporting and promoting the RNA’s Thriving Together Programme, said John. “I had the pleasure of taking part this last weekend and I just wanted to let you know that I have come away from it feeling refreshed and genuinely excited about future such events, and perhaps playing my own part in the RNA. “I haven’t missed the job since I left the RN but I

have most definitely missed the people, and this weekend made me feel like I was back in a mess which is something I wish I could bottle!

“Previously I had thought the RNA was a bit out of touch and perhaps targeted at a different demographic to my own, but this weekend has totally changed my outlook on it and I also think you have an asset in Chris Reeves - he played a blinder – it was planned and executed with gusto.

“I am Bristol based for the next few weeks but then moving to Devon with Newton Abbot as my local branch - I plan to be an active member.”

The RNA’s next Thriving Together event is trekking up Mount Snowdon on the 18th May. If you are a Navy veteran, currently serving, or a spouse and would like to join one of the RNA’s Thriving Together events email Chris Reeves: [scc@rnassoc.org](mailto:scc@rnassoc.org) for full details.

Next up on the programme is a return to Wales and a Snowdon walk on 18 May.



## ➤ CONTACTS



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# ➤ BZ TO THE NEW RECRUITS - AND BZ TO THE RNA'S MENTOR TEAM!



Congratulations to the winner of the Royal Naval Association Award on passing out of initial training at HMS Raleigh - AB Monday, pictured right with RNA Mentor Chris Harwood Hanson.

The RNA is proud to support new recruits and their families through their first few weeks of entering the Navy Family, reinforcing a simple message - welcome aboard and enjoy the journey!

The RNA is in Plymouth for the passing out of the next generation of young sailors, and the crew you see here at the foot of the page are the RNA's mentors - volunteers who look after the young recruits at Raleigh.

They are one of the RNA's most valuable assets, bringing on board new members and supporting families in the first few weeks of their extraordinary new life as they quickly develop from civilian to part of the Naval Family.

The RNA gives these volunteers, led by S/M Terry Whitty, our grateful thanks and wishes them good luck for each and every Passing Out Parade.

But don't just take our word for it - here are some of the comments about our mentors that appear in social media from the families of young men and women undertaking training at Torpoint:

**Emma said:** "Amazing people - the care and support they give not only to the recruits but their families too is just beyond anything you could imagine before your loved one joins up. They are invaluable and deserve every ounce of recognition they ever get, and so much more!!"

**A parent of a recruit in Fisher 23/31 said:** "Before I get kicked off of this site I would like to express my eternal gratitude to Terry Whitty! He has been an outstanding Mentor! The eyes and ears for us parents, partners etc. He and Lee looked after the whole of the Fisher Family on POP day - nothing was too much trouble. Thank you Terry from the bottom of my heart for all of your help, the photos, the updates and all the answers to all the

difficult questions that have been sent your way. HMS Raleigh and us families are so lucky to have amazing people like Terry to help us through this very gruelling 10+ weeks of training."

**Other parents chipped in with:** "I feel the need to stress that the past weeks would have been so so so much harder without the support and information that you have provided Terry Whitty. Knowing that you were seeing and encouraging our recruits was a great comfort, BUT I can't say how vital the contact from you was to us at home. Weekly updates, photos, prompts for important actions, really the list is endless...you go above and beyond in the way you have helped us - 'Thank you' doesn't even come close."

**Another parent said:** "Thank you Terry Whitty, although our stay here was a lot longer than expected! It's going to be very strange not logging on to check for updates as it's been part of my routine since 5th July!

In the 8 months that I've been part of this group I've witnessed how tirelessly all the mentors keep us families updated with all the photos and videos, it really goes above and beyond what I expected, I didn't think we would get to see anything.

Thank you so much for your dedication and commitment, it was a pleasure to meet you on Friday as we move on to the next chapter!"

**On the Passing Out Parade, one parent commented:** "What a fantastic day, very emotional. Congratulations to each and every one of them and good luck for their futures xxx and thank you Terry xx"

**And that's not to forget the staff at Raleigh, who are also part of the supportive Naval Family:** "A big shout out to all the Divisional staff and mentors of Gould 23/27 in fashioning our boy James into a Royal Navy Sailor. We are immensely proud of him and indebted to you all. He will be supported by a network of forever friends, some following him on his journey to HMS Sultan... and for those recruits who head off in a different direction, I know they'll always keep in touch. And finally to Billy and Dave - thank you for the pics and keeping us parents sane and in the loop. An amazing POP and once again THANK YOU ALL!"

**One final observation from a proud family:** "What an incredible day yesterday for Fisher 23/28 passing out parade. A huge thank you to Terry Whitty for all the help and support over the 10 weeks. This Facebook page with updates of our recruits is amazing and really does get us parents through. Matt Lawton and the Fisher divisional staff were fantastic, thanks for all your hard work getting Ethan through INT. Very proud parents."



# ➤ FROM THE GENERAL SECRETARY

## Ahoy Shipmates,

We're gearing up in Central Office for our AGM/Annual Conference in Cardiff over the weekend of 15-16 June and Branch Secretaries should already be in possession of the appropriate papers including the Agenda, last year's Minutes, the Trustees' Annual Report for 2023 and the Association Accounts for 2023.

These documents are available for all to see via the same link you clicked on to reach this Circular - the Circular Downloads section in the website's Members area.

You will note that there is a fairly full agenda this year with several motions to be taken. For Branches who maybe do not normally send delegates to Conference, this is the opportunity to have your branch's voice heard so please consider being part of the democratic decision-making process on how we take our Association forward.

Also, our Rules allow for an HQ Roll delegate to attend to represent the HQ Roll – Bye-Law C1(c) The HQ Roll may appoint a Delegate to Conference.

If any HQ Roll member would like to fulfil this function please contact Sara, our Membership Secretary, to nominate yourself.

Those perusing the agenda might ask what the IMC is?

The International Maritime Confederation is a grouping of veterans' associations across Europe – a sort of NATO version of European RNAs. Currently the UK – our National President – holds the Chair and, as well as the UK, the following nations are represented: France, Germany, Italy, Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia and Austria.

The latter is a bit of an oddity as Austria doesn't have a coastline, but up until the end of World War 1, the Austro-Hungarian Empire had the fifth largest navy in the world, and the Austrians are still very proud of that.

There is an annual Executive Committee meeting where these nations share their challenges and initiatives which is always useful, but the primary output is an annual international youth sailing camp which brings together the youth of those nations.

After a break caused by the Covid pandemic, this year, over the week 20-27 July, the RNA is rejuvenating the youth sailing camp at the Royal Hospital School in Holbrook, who are well set up for sailing.

The RNA is partnering with the Naval Children's Charity who are kindly sponsoring the event, but also seeking out youngsters from Naval families who they know may not get this opportunity in the normal run of things.

The feedback we have had in previous years certainly suggests that these youngsters benefit hugely from the activity, not only with building their confidence in life, but by establishing a friendship network across Europe.

If we have any youth workers within our membership, or a member with relevant experience and an



enhanced DBS who would like to volunteer to assist with that week, please get in touch through [admin@rnassoc.com](mailto:admin@rnassoc.com)

The subject of our cover picture this month is last month's Thriving Together walking activity weekend in Wales, which was a great success – BZ Scouse! Please see the list of Thriving Together activities later in this edition of the Semaphore Circular planned for the summer and sign up with Scouse at [scc@rnassoc.org](mailto:scc@rnassoc.org)

We had a lovely visit from the Chuckle Brothers of Wrexham branch into Central Office this week.

If you don't take part in Saturday evening online 'Tot Time' you might well ask 'who are the Chuckle Brothers?' They are Shipmates Kev Hackett and Jeff Hughes of Wrexham branch, who were attending a ceremony in Admiralty House to reaffiliate HMS Dragon to the city of Wrexham. Wrexham branch have been hosting this activity since the first COVID lockdown nearly four years ago.

I was delighted to be able to present them with a new iPad (**pictured below**) to allow them to continue this important activity - thank you Wrexham!

I should also add, the reason that Dragon is being reaffiliated from Cardiff to Wrexham is because there is a new HMS Cardiff in build on the Clyde which will take over the mantle of the city of Cardiff's affiliated warship.

In other news, the Standard Bearers Competition is all set for 18 May - see detailed instructions and an outline of the day later in this Circular **here**.

Looks like it's going to be a good day!

*Bill*





## ➤ WHATSAPP GROUP FOR UCKERS ENTHUSIASTS

The Royal Naval Association has partnered with Uckers International Ltd and now has its own group on WhatsApp via this link: <https://chat.whatsapp.com/LNKDExtnmAxDbOB0NE5TR7> Uckers International's mission is to bring the game to a wider audience, to create organised competition amongst its players, and to benefit Armed Forces

charities through the sharing of profits. On the digital platforms, gamers can play against their computer or play against their friends or selected opponents, both in 2-player and 4-player variants. There are also selectable rule variations and a variety of game timers. More information here: **Uckers.com - More than Ludo**

## ➤ SHANTYMEN ON STAGE

The Sheringham Shantymen are staging a special performance at the Woodville Theatre, Gravesend, on Saturday 27 July, with profits from the show being donated to Gravesend and Sheerness lifeboat stations. Former POMA(O) John Redmond, a member of the RNA, said that as part of the RNLI's 200th celebrations, the singing group hope to raise at least £1,000. The Shantymen are also doing a gig on the Sunday morning (28

July) at the Historic Dockyard Chatham in aid of the Historic Lifeboat Collection. The Sheringham Shantymen, a sea shanty group based in North Norfolk, have raised hundreds of thousands of pounds for the RNLI over their 34-year history, and hope to significantly add to this during 2024. For more details on the group see [www.shantymen.com](http://www.shantymen.com) and their Facebook page at [www.facebook.com/thesheringhamshantymenofficial](http://www.facebook.com/thesheringhamshantymenofficial)

## ➤ REMEMBERING KOSOVO - 25 YEARS ON FROM NATO DEPLOYMENT

This year, the Royal British Legion (RBL) will remember the 25th anniversary of the end of the Kosovo War, which saw the deployment of the NATO-led international peacekeeping force – KFOR.

2024 also marks the 75th anniversary of the establishment of NATO.

The RBL will honour the service and sacrifices of those who served with KFOR with a Service of Remembrance at the National Memorial Arboretum at Alrewas in Staffordshire, on Sunday 23 June.

Organisers look forward to welcoming all Armed Forces personnel who served with NATO's KFOR mission and/or their families to go along for the service.

To register to attend, please visit the RBL website and complete the registration form at <https://www.britishlegion.org.uk/get-involved/remembrance/remembrance-events/remembering-kosovo-25-years-on#form> Please note - registration closes on Monday 20 May 2024.

If you have any questions, please contact organisers at [RemembranceEvents@britishlegion.org.uk](mailto:RemembranceEvents@britishlegion.org.uk)

## ➤ SLOPS AVAILABLE FROM CENTRAL OFFICE

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).

## ➤ RNA SUPPORTS COMMONWEALTH NETWORK EVENT

RNA Sports and Comradeship Coordinator Scouse Reeves (pictured left, centre) and Communications Lead Sarah Bewley (pictured right) attended the Commonwealth Network Symposium at Worthy Down camp near Winchester. The event was to raise awareness of the support available to all members of the RN community, including Commonwealth personnel and their families, and there were valuable messages put out by Naval charities including Aggie's, the Naval Children's Charity and the NFF. The RNA has a St Vincent & the Grenadines Branch which offers support and comradeship to all serving or former members of our Naval Forces and their families both in the UK and the Caribbean.



## ➤ MARITIME BALL WILL RAISE FUNDS FOR THE RNRMC

Lt Joe Allan proudly presents the Cheshire Maritime Ball, hosted and sponsored by the Altrincham and Sale Chamber of Commerce! Get ready for a night of fine dining, elegance and dancing in aid of charity at Tatton Park on Saturday 3 August from 17:30.

Eventbrite are handling ticket sales; once you reserve a spot, payment of £125 per ticket is to be completed within a week of purchase. Payment details will be provided in your confirmation of reservation email. Included in the price are a three-course meal, wine with dinner, an official photo in the Gardens, free photography throughout the evening, a charity auction, guest speakers, a live band and DJ, entertainment including fire-breathers, stilt walkers and mirror men, a Photobooth – and other surprises...

To buy your tickets go to <https://tinyurl.com/4ref2p4b>

The event will be an RN-themed Mess Dinner so dance the night away in your Mess Dress (military), or if you are a civilian, dust off your tux or that glamorous ballgown you saved for a special occasion! With a live band, top-notch food and entertainment throughout the evening you will have plenty of time to enjoy the entire venue.

Individual tickets may be purchased, or whole tables of ten places. Dress code is Black Tie or Mess Dress with miniatures. RN personnel 2A or 2AW Mess Dress with negative headgear, other Services equivalent.

The charities which will benefit from the dinner are the RNRMC, a charity that supports serving Royal Navy and Royal Marines personnel as well as their families and veterans, and Christie, the leading experts in cancer care, research and education, based in Manchester.

## ➤ OP PROSPER 'WILL BOOST VETERANS' EMPLOYMENT'

The Prime Minister met veterans and businesses on 12 April at a Veterans Connect event at a military museum, where he launched Op Prosper - a wraparound employment service to support veterans into work after they leave the Armed Forces.

Op Prosper will be backed by £2.1 million in new funding. The scheme will support veterans in securing high-paid jobs, where they can hone the skills that they developed in the military in key sectors that are helping to boost the economy.

This includes areas like cyber and digital, manufacturing, energy and financial and professional services. Rishi Sunak said: "The courageous men and women who have served in our Armed Forces represent the very best of our country and we must serve them as well as they have served us."

"They deserve our full support to thrive in civilian life and to continue contributing their incredible skills to the prosperity of our country. "That is why I am proud to announce Op Prosper, which will support veterans in securing high-skilled roles in key sectors that are helping to grow the economy."

The Prime Minister was joined by the Minister for Veterans' Affairs

Johnny Mercer to meet veterans and some of the leading employers of veterans in the UK, including Deloitte, Amazon and Centrica.

Veterans' employment in the UK is at an all-time high, at 89 per cent, but there is more that could be done.

Op Prosper will build on the support already available and will improve awareness of the skills and talents of veterans among industry and employers, to encourage businesses to hire veterans.

The initiative will also provide wraparound support to veterans and their families, delivered by experienced professionals. This will make sure that they are supported to go straight into new roles or take the next step in their existing career.

Johnny Mercer said: "By connecting veterans with employers, engaging industry bodies on the importance of hiring veterans, and strengthening their qualifications and skills, this government will ensure more ex-Servicemen and women are securing high quality and fulfilling employment."

"Hiring a veteran is one of the best business decisions a company can make, and Op Prosper will help ensure this is realised by all employers across the country."

## ➤ SERVICE OF REMEMBRANCE

This year the annual Service of Remembrance will be held at the Cenotaph on Whitehall on Sunday 10 November.

The RNA has submitted their usual bid for tickets, and we will hear of our confirmed allocation by mid-May.

Further information will follow and, in the meantime, if you would like to register your interest in parading this year, please email Sara on [ams@rnassoc.org](mailto:ams@rnassoc.org)

## ➤ RNA OFFICE OPEN DAYS

Ever wondered how the Royal Naval Association is supported by the Central Office team? You could take a look for yourselves – shipmates are advised that the dates of Central Office Open Days this year are:

24 May

28 June

9 August

6 September

If you would like more details, or to register your interest, contact Sara on [ams@rnassoc.org](mailto:ams@rnassoc.org)

# D-DAY 80

On 5 and 6 June this year a series of major commemorations in the UK and France will honour the brave personnel who risked their lives for freedom and peace 80 years ago at D-Day and the Normandy Landings in Northern France. Events are planned both in the UK, including a national event in Portsmouth, and in Normandy.

The Portsmouth event, on 5 June, will be held on Southsea Common, with D-Day veterans at the heart of the programme, which will also feature an RAF flypast. It will be broadcast live in the UK.

The National Memorial Arboretum will be the venue for an RBL Remembrance Service on 6 June.

Bayeux is the venue for remembrance events in France on 5 June, including the War Cemetery and Bayeux Cathedral, while the main British commemorative event on 6 June will be at the British Normandy Memorial at Ver-sur-Mer. See <https://dday80.campaign.gov.uk/>

## ► NEW SHIP WILL PROTECT UK WATERS

The Duke of Edinburgh has given his blessing to a new Naval ship which will help safeguard UK waters from underwater threats.

Resplendent in her unique blue and white livery, RFA Stirling Castle was dedicated during a ceremony at the Port of Leith in Scotland.

The ship marks a move away from traditional minehunting, embracing cutting-edge technology as she acts as a 'mother ship' for an array of remotely-operated and autonomous systems which will scour home waters looking for mines.

With Stirling Castle due to begin operations later this year, a break from training offered the ideal opportunity to welcome the new ship into the RFA family in the presence of the Service's Commodore-in-Chief, the Duke of Edinburgh.

It was the second high-profile Royal visit to the Royal Navy in Scotland in 24 hours; the Princess Royal paid her



first visit to new Type 31 frigate HMS Venturer, under construction in Rosyth. Prince Edward joined Robert Aldridge, the Lord Lieutenant of Edinburgh, the Lord Lieutenant of Edinburgh, Cdre David Eagles, the Head of the RFA, and civic leaders from Stirling amongst others. Procured and delivered in less than a year, for the past few months RFA

Stirling Castle has been on the Clyde working with experts from the Royal Navy's Mine Threat Exploitation Group (MTXG) at Clyde Naval Base. The Group's Zulu Squadron are at the forefront of advancing new minehunting technologies, helping the Royal Navy to keep pace with the evolving threat from naval mines.



## ► MOST VALUABLE SUPPORT...

The RNA sponsored Most Valuable Player awards for the Royal Navy American Football team in their match against the University of Portsmouth (two awards being presented are pictured on right).

The game turned out to be a thrilling encounter and ended in a somewhat nery win for the Senior Service by 26-15.

You may be wondering what the relevance of this is to the RNA - well, American Football is just one of the Special Interest Groups (SIGs) that enables members who might have once played or coached a particular activity the chance to get involved again at a different level.

Many sports seem to lend themselves to this and it's another way of interesting members in our association and also linking veterans with serving personnel.

After the game RNA member and General Manager WO1 Dave Smith said: "We are grateful that the RNA could do this ,especially recognising serving personnel that are also members of the RNA in our community."

If anyone is interested in coaching or just coming along to support, this can only be a good thing.

Details can be sent to [engagement@rnassoc.org](mailto:engagement@rnassoc.org) with information being passed on.



Cdre Steve Prest made the presentations as outgoing President along with our very own Engagement Manager David MacAskill.

And the Uckers board? Well, it's a Naval tradition, played everywhere the Navy is - and it's a useful reminder of the RNA's World Uckers Championships which will take place at the Royal Maritime Hotel in Portsmouth on 12 October.

# ► THE RNA: WHO WE ARE, OUR VISION – AND WHAT WE DO

Imagine having a couple of minutes to pitch the RNA to someone who has shown some interest in joining. What would you say? To help us all articulate what the RNA is about and what our aspirations are Central Office have developed, and the AMC have approved, the Who are we, Vision, Mission & Values.

## Who are we?

The Royal Naval Association is a inclusive, diverse, multi-generational, rank-blind and free to join membership organisation. It is primarily for serving and former serving personnel of our Naval forces and their families. Membership is also open to those who may not have served but have an interest in the Naval Service.

## Vision:

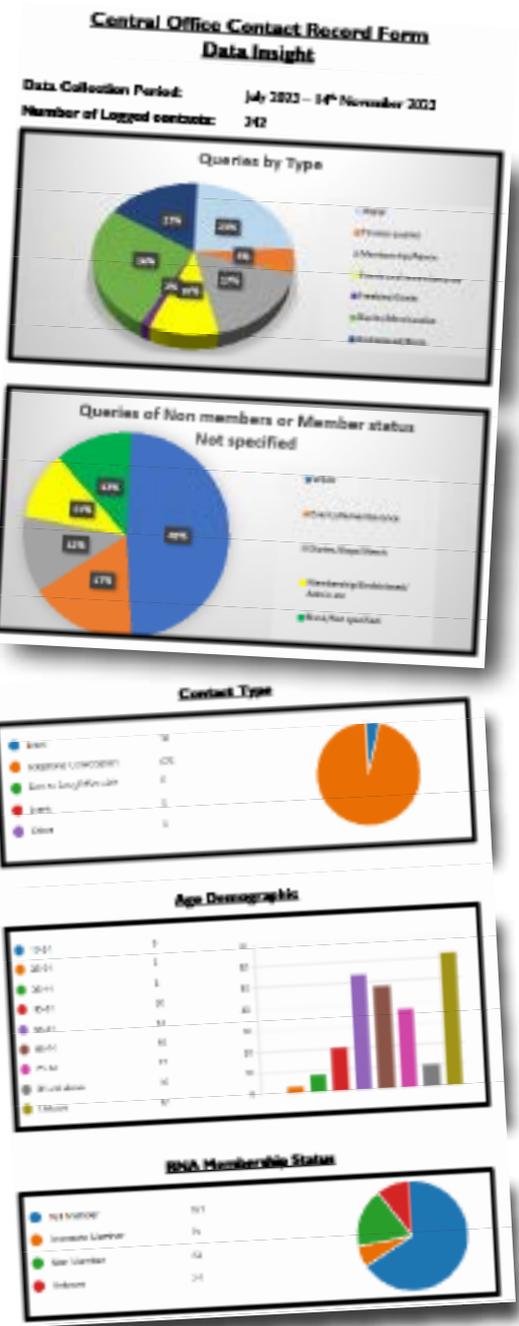
To be the most relevant Naval Association offering support to our members and smaller Naval Associations, whilst ensuring they maintain the independence and unique identity. Working with other charities, organisations and Governmental agencies to create an environment that improves the wellbeing of all former Naval Forces personnel and their families. As well as offering comradeship to our members.

## Mission:

To successfully foster comradeship within our membership.

## Values:

Our core values are centred on the seven components (Seven Cs) of Comradeship which are, Companionship, Community, Connection, Compassion, Care, Commemoration and Celebration, we seek to maintain the naval ethos and enjoy sharing experiences with like-minded people while supporting each other in times of need.



# ► STANDARD BEARERS COMPETITION 2024

Here are the details of the staging of the RNA's Standard Bearers competition this year.

The event will be held on Saturday 18 May at HMS Excellent on Whale Island, Portsmouth.

## Competitors

Entries for the competition closed in March. There are eight candidates for the Chester Cup and six for the Novice Cup. No further competitors will be accepted, so please do not turn up expecting to compete if you have not already entered!

## Training

A training session will take place during the First Dog Watch on Friday 17 May, commencing at 1600. Please note - this is open to any

standard bearer wishing to hone their skills whether they are competing in the cup competitions the following day or not.

Muster at the Drill Shed by 1600. Please send car details (make, model, colour and registration number) to [nca@rnassoc.org](mailto:nca@rnassoc.org) no later than 14 May.

## Inspection

The competition will commence with an inspection at 1000 on Saturday 18 May.

All competitors need to be ready in all respects by 0945 and muster at the north-east end of the Drill Shed ready to march into the competition arena.

Three judges will inspect

competitors, and this element should be completed by 1110.

## Drill

The drill routines will commence at 1125 with the novices, followed by the Chester Cup competitors.

## Spectators

Anyone wishing to attend as a spectator should forward names and car details (make, model, colour and registration number) to [nca@rnassoc.org](mailto:nca@rnassoc.org) no later than 14 May.

## Prize giving

This will take place in the WO & SR Mess from 1400.

And all that remains now is to wish all competitors in both competitions the very best of luck!

## ➤ TAKE A CHANCE ON THE RNA LOTTERY

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

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

Captain Bill Oliphant, Chief Executive of the RNA, said: "Our lottery is an exciting way of fundraising for and with at least 50 per cent from each £1 donated supporting the work we do, we will be able to help those in our community who need it most. "The RNA is free to join but relies on donations to help continue the good work. Since COVID, we've done so much more in the welfare/wellbeing space with our veterans, and having an RNA Lottery allows us to do even more. Please do sign up and play our lottery, and if you're not a member – join us!" Visit [www.RNALottery.co.uk](http://www.RNALottery.co.uk) to sign up.



**Area 7 NCM Lance Higgon Young (right) receiving his Life Membership Certificate from Area 7 Chairman Gordon Williams**

## ➤ SPECIAL INTEREST GROUPS

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

Camping and Caravanning – Ron Shilton: [rna.camping.caravan.motorhome.club@gmail.com](mailto:rna.camping.caravan.motorhome.club@gmail.com)

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

If you are interested in forming a Special Interest Group please contact [admin@royalnavalassoc.com](mailto:admin@royalnavalassoc.com)

## ➤ CONFERENCE – ARE YOU COMING TO CARDIFF?

Cardiff is the venue for this year's RNA National Conference weekend, and the Welsh capital is a vibrant city with plenty to keep everyone entertained both in the city itself and in Cardiff Bay.

If you are new to South Wales, please see the links below to give you a flavour of the area:

<https://www.visitwales.com/inspire-me/city-breaks/cardiff-first-timers-your-mini-guide> and <https://www.visitcardiff.com/>

Organisers of the Conference hope you all want to attend the Gala Dinner on Saturday 15 June in the St David's Hotel, Havannah St, Cardiff Bay. There will be a drink on arrival at 800 – 1845, and dinner will be served at 1900. Rig is No.1 or lounge suit for the AGM; and No.1, lounge suit or black tie for the Gala Dinner (equivalent for ladies).

Your dinner will cost you £40 a head and should be booked with Cheryl at Just for Groups on 01603 886740. She will take payment, details of any dietary requirements (such as vegetarian, gluten intolerant, dairy allergy) and make a note of any requests for seating.

There will be a seating plan and they will do their best to meet all requests, but this cannot be guaranteed.

The menu for the dinner is as follows:

- Welsh leek and potato soup with mini Harlech croutons



- Free-range chicken breast, apricot and Brecon honey stuffing, potato gratin and lemongrass jus.
- Welsh cake & Brecon honey cheesecake
- Tea or coffee

To help with organising the seating arrangements for the dinner, please contact S/M Graham Warner on [vicechair@rna-7area.org](mailto:vicechair@rna-7area.org) stating your requirements, such as a branch/association/group table. This will enable them to try to accommodate your needs. Tables are able to seat

10/11 people.

**Please note, there is still time to register as a delegate for the Association's main business meeting of the year – the AGM, which will be held on the Saturday.**

The more branches that are represented, the more chance there is of a wide consensus on matters of importance to the whole Association.

The relevant form to register as a delegate is available at the back of this Circular.

Please also note that important documents for the Conference - the agenda, statement of accounts, trustees' report and minutes from the 2023 AGM - are all available to download from the same location as this Circular - that is, in the Members/Downloads sections, in the May sub-folder in the 2024 Circulars folder.



## **ARMY v ROYAL NAVY RUGBY UNION MATCHES – TWICKENHAM – 4 MAY 2024**

The Army and Royal Navy Rugby Unions will compete for the Babcock Trophy at Twickenham on Saturday 4 May 2024. This will be the 105<sup>th</sup> Senior Men's match and the third time the Senior Women's fixture will be played on the main pitch as part of a double-header fixture. Tickets are already on sale for those who wish to attend, with all revenue generated going directly into enabling rugby within the Services. This year a cheaper £25 ticket has been introduced, as the Match Committee recognise the challenges of inflation and the cost of living and wish to keep this event reasonably priced so that everyone can enjoy the chance to visit the home of England Rugby for a fantastic day out. It is a unique, high-profile occasion for the Armed Forces.

Working with the Rugby Football Union, we continue to help develop the next generation of rugby players with the Youth Rugby competition expanded this year to include both boys' and girls' teams. Representatives from the Army Cadet Force and the United Services Portsmouth and Devonport Rugby Teams will have the opportunity to play on the hallowed turf at Twickenham. There is also a dedicated, alcohol-free, seating area for families. If you wish to bring younger family members to the event, special discounted children's tickets are on sale for £10.

There are other procedures to ensure a safer and more friendly event, including even better local transport provision with the re-development of Twickenham train station complete. There will be plenty of porta-loos along the pedestrian routes from the railway station and Rosebine coach park; please do make use of these facilities if required so we can maintain our positive relationship with local residents. You may also notice a more obvious local and military police presence to help keep everyone safe and to prevent anti-social behaviour.

Our purpose in writing now is to thank you for supporting our drive to improve the quality of the experience for all attendees, which has, on occasion, been marred by the actions of a very small number of individuals. We ask that attendees continue to make sure that we uphold the high values and standards of the Services and the standards of Rugby Football Union, namely Teamwork, Respect, Enjoyment, Discipline and Sportsmanship. In doing so, we will undoubtedly reflect the best of the Army and Royal Navy during such an important sporting spectacle.

Behaviour in the stadium and in its vicinity, prior to, during, and after the match - in service stations, train stations, pubs and clubs – has improved significantly, and we thank you for your role in assisting with this. However, we do not take this for granted, and we must all continue to ensure that our behaviour is beyond reproach, respecting each other and the local community. We cannot afford to return to past years when the behaviour of some attendees has caused offence to other spectators and members of the general public.

The Army v Navy match is our opportunity to showcase the very best of our Service traditions. We ask that you consider your behaviour and how it is perceived throughout the day, and also that of your friends and colleagues. Please do not condone or encourage unacceptable behaviour in others, and challenge where necessary. Our long-term aim is for the Army v Navy match day to become better known for the inclusive sporting environment and entertainment that it provides,

highlighting positive aspects about the Services, rather than for isolated incidents of drunken behaviour.

Rest assured, we recognise that it is not just serving people who attend the event, hence we ask that this letter is communicated through Regimental and Veterans' Associations to ensure that the wider military family understand that they too have an important part to play.

We are passionate about this historic and prestigious sporting fixture. We wish it to serve as an affirmation of our shared commitment to generating professional teams that compete fiercely and demonstrate physical and mental fitness, courage and commitment. Both Services hold dear the unique attributes of our elite sports teams that demonstrate the battle-winning qualities that we promote and develop in our people. So let us continue to work proactively to protect the culture of this event and generate an overwhelming atmosphere of positivity that celebrates camaraderie and the best of service life.

May the 4th be with you!



2SL



DCGS

## ➤ FREE HOLIDAY HOMES BREAKS AVAILABLE FOR VETERANS

UK Home 4 Heroes is a charity that supports veterans who find themselves homeless or at risk of being homeless. Since the charity started in 2010 they have purchased "two beautiful static holiday homes", one in Whitstable, Kent (Heroes Retreat), and the other, Knights Retreat, based in Weeley Bridge Holiday park near Clacton-on Sea in Essex.

The retreats offer veterans a much-needed respite break away with their families, out of the usual routine, and is totally FREE for former members of the Armed Forces.

The main objective is to help those who have served our country and may now be in need of a respite break, including sufferers of PTSD, elderly veterans who are lonely, isolated and vulnerable, and their families who are always the ones left to pick up the pieces.

To apply for a break with UKH4H, applicants need to request an application form by emailing [ukhomes4heroes@prideandpassion.org.uk](mailto:ukhomes4heroes@prideandpassion.org.uk) or contact the charity on 0207 237 6363.

Acceptance is on a first-come, first-served basis and availability

dependent – if you're preferred location is not available, they may be able to offer you an alternative. For further information on the charity and the retreat locations please see the links below:

**Heroes Retreat - Kent**  
<https://www.ukh4h.org.uk/heroes-retreat>

**Knights Retreat – Weeley Bridge Holiday Park Nr Clacton on Sea Essex**  
<https://www.ukh4h.org.uk/new-heroes-retreat>

**Also available at Weeley Bridge is Hargolds Retreat:**

<https://www.ukh4h.org.uk/hargolds-retreat>

Heroes Retreat is in a seaside location a short drive from Whitstable and is on a park with a family-friendly clubhouse and bar, a restaurant and mini-mart shop, and a heated outdoor pool.

Weeley Bridge Holiday Park is set in the countryside, so is ideal for rejuvenating getaways, yet it is close enough to the coast when you want to enjoy all the fun of the seaside.

For more details on UK Homes 4 Heroes - Pride & Passion see <https://www.ukh4h.org.uk/>

## RNA CALL FOR D-DAY VETERANS

The RNA would like to hear from any branches who have a D-Day veteran in their ranks. These veterans will be in line for a gift from the Association, and also an invitation to a VIP event. If you know of such a person, please contact RNA Comms lead Sarah Bewley on [cml@rnassoc.org](mailto:cml@rnassoc.org) or call her on 07435 642883 as soon as possible.

## THRIVING TOGETHER

Following the success of the Welsh walking and waterfalls weekend, the Thriving Together programme rolls on with a Snowdon Walk on 18 May. On the weekend of 28-30 June there will be a women-only walking and waterfalls weekend in and around the Brecon Beacons in South Wales, an introduction to dry stone walling on Dartmoor on 13 July, and an introduction to surfing weekend in North Devon on 20-21 July. The postponed bushcraft weekend will now take place on the weekend of 10 August.

For more details contact Scouse Reeves on [scc@rnassoc.org](mailto:scc@rnassoc.org)



# Uckers

## English 'Open' Championships (Singles) 2024



**Saturday 18 May 2024**  
**1030 first dice**

**Our hosts for 2024**

**WALLESEY RNA**

**Riverview Road WALLASEY**

**Merseyside CH44 6PX**



To join the RNA:  
<https://linktr.ee/rnassociation>

To book: [engagement@rnassoc.org](mailto:engagement@rnassoc.org)

# ➤ BRIDLINGTON PLAQUE HONOURS COMMANDOS OF OP CHARIOT - THE RAID ON ST NAZAIRE

Richard M Jones has recently been highlighting a lot of aspects of World War 2 in Bridlington in both talks/lectures and also the unveiling of blue plaques (four George Medal blue plaques in Bridlington alone!).

But recently it came to his attention that Bridlington is the birthplace of the elite No 5 Commando, an Army unit consisting of a group of very determined men who set up their HQ in Bridlington on the orders of Winston Churchill himself.

Based at No 6, The Crescent, the unit formed on 18 July 1940 and training commenced straight away, the missions achieved by this unit going down in history which included the very deadly Operation Chariot – the raid on St Nazaire.

This was where an old American destroyer was renamed HMS Campbeltown when taken over by the Royal Navy and purposely rammed a dry dock that was large enough to repair the German battleship Tirpitz and, after timed charges were detonated, destroyed any hopes of the ship being able to conduct repairs and create further havoc with the convoys. The raid cost the lives of more than 500 people, including 169 of those taking part in the raid.

Now a special green plaque will be unveiled to mark this remarkable piece of history by the relative of one of those lost in that raid.

The story of No 5 Commando was highlighted to Richard by local Royal Navy veteran Martin Barmby and after putting several plaques up in and around the town he decided that this was another opportunity to put Bridlington history on the map.

The owner of The Carlton Apartments (which is what the building is today) gave Richard permission straight away and was equally fascinated to hear the story of his building. Combined with the fact that the plaque was paid for straight away by one of the families after a very short

campaign just goes to show the enthusiasm for this unit to be remembered and commemorated.

The unveiling of the plaque took place at The Carlton Apartments on 3 April and was well-attended. This was Richard's 16th plaque unveiling, the sixth one in the last twelve months.

Richard's Facebook page is [www.facebook.com/shipwreck.data](http://www.facebook.com/shipwreck.data)

## ➤ NEW-LOOK EMAILS

A reminder to shipmates that emails announcing the publication of Semaphore Circulars and Shorts look a little different now – and the new arrangement brings its own benefits.

The communications team has signed up to an email client, Moosend, which will enable us to deliver emails and newsletters more effectively.

Your email will now come from the address [hoc@rnassoc.org](mailto:hoc@rnassoc.org) and the main section will look like the email on the right.

The new service is supported by the Powder Monkey Brewing Company, based at Priddy's Hard in Gosport, and they are offering a special discount code with 10% off all for all RNA members – please enter RNA10 at checkout. See [www.powdermonkeybrewing.com](http://www.powdermonkeybrewing.com)



## ➤ 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

Date	Presenter	Subject
Mon 6 May	Early May Bank Holiday	No Fireside Chat
Mon 13 May	Iain Greenlees	HMNB Portsmouth Infrastructure
Mon 20 May	Geoffrey Salvetti	The Hilsea Lines story 1600-1945
Mon 27 May	Spring Bank Holiday	No Fireside Chat
Mon 3 June	Normandy Battlefield Tour taking place	No Fireside Chat
Mon 10 June	Chris Taylor	Nine Lives, Four Collisions and a Ditching – part II
Mon 17 June	David Griggs	HMS Beagle - the ship that changed the course of history

# ➤ NEW LIFE INSURANCE PARTNER FOR TRINITY

Trinity now has a new Life Insurance partner, LifeSearch: <https://www.lifesearch.com/life-insurance>

The search for a new life insurance partner was conducted personally by Trinity's CEO and involved extensive scrutiny and due diligence. LifeSearch emerged as the clear partner of choice and Trinity are very pleased to be entering into a partnership with them.

LifeSearch is an independent intermediary that has been protecting individuals and families since 1998. They have found the right cover for hundreds of thousands of families and over 1.8m individuals.

As such, LifeSearch has a proven track record that has demonstrated to Trinity that they are a worthy partner that can be entrusted to serve the military community.

As part of their commitment, LifeSearch have offered to make a voluntary donation of £50 per sale to the charity/association nominated by each purchaser.

This facility will run in the same way as Trinity's current Buildings & Contents insurance donation scheme. The Royal Naval Association has



teamed-up with Trinity Insurance Services Ltd to bring attractive benefits to RNA members.

Trinity is a veteran-run insurance brokerage and the only specialist military insurance business that meets the needs of Britain's serving military and veteran communities.

Trinity has provided exceptional service to serving personnel for the past 24 years. As a veteran-led company and the first UK specialist military broker to expand its offer to veterans, Trinity seeks to establish a long-term relationship with its customers by protecting them, their property and loved ones whilst serving, through transition and second careers into full retirement.

Trinity sees how critical Service associations like Royal Naval Association are to the UK's veteran

community.

Associations help build a strong sense of community and are a vital support network.

This is not only good for physical and mental wellbeing, but also for financial wellbeing as associations are key platforms for sharing experiences and advice on financial matters. This is why Trinity supports associations like the RNA by offering tangible benefits in the form of discounts and exclusive access to products and services to help attract and retain members.

As a result of this relationship, RNA members benefit from preferential rates or discounts and exclusive access to products and services including Personal Accident, Life, Health, Travel and Household cover.

As an example, RNA members are eligible to join an exclusive 50Plus multi-trip annual travel insurance scheme that requires no medical screening at a very competitive price.

This and other offers are available via the Members' Offers tab in the Members' Area of the RNA website, or Talk to Trinity on 01243817777 or by email at [hello@talktotrinity.com](mailto:hello@talktotrinity.com)

**Now booking free sailing weeks for May half-term and the Summer**  
[rnsayouthcrew.org.uk](http://rnsayouthcrew.org.uk)

# SAIL TOGETHER

Funded by **GREENWICH HOSPITAL**  
Delivered through **ANDREW SIMPSON FOUNDATION**

## ➤ FREE SAILING FOR NAVAL YOUNG PEOPLE

The RNSA Youth Crew delivered successful courses throughout the Easter holidays. Building on that success, they are now focussed on filling the next courses.

Bookings are now open for the forthcoming May half-term and the summer holidays for the RNSA Youth Crew, which is fully funded by Greenwich Hospital, delivered by the Andrew Simpson Foundation and open to young people aged 11 - 17 years from RN, RFA and RM families.

The project offers:

- A weeks free Sailing Course to the young person at Andrew Simpson water sports centres across the country and other affiliated centres;

- The courses are run in school holidays;
- Participants receive their RYA 1 & 2 qualifications and Swim Safety;
- The chance to take their Sailing further with ten free sessions offered by the Andrew Simpson Centres after the completion of the course;
- Meet and sail with other RN young people, share experiences of Armed Forces life and make firm friends
- Ignite an interest in Sailing that includes the whole family and RN community;

No previous experience of sailing needed!

Booking is simple - see [www.rnsayouthcrew.org.uk](http://www.rnsayouthcrew.org.uk)

# Uckers Ya Uckers!

*We are proud to announce and re-confirm 'Uckers Ya Uckers as our official partner and supplier*



**The Royal Naval Association's  
World Uckers Championships**  
Saturday 12 October 2024

**Royal Maritime Hotel Portsmouth**

*More details*

**Sat 12 Oct 2024**

**Royal Maritime Hotel, Portsmouth.**

More details coming soon: engagement @royalnavalassoc.com



## ➤ BRANCH NEWS

### Chatham Branch

Paddle steamer Medway Queen celebrated its centennial birthday on 23 April, and shipmates from Kent helped mark the occasion.

The ship is still being restored by the terrific crew of the Medway Queen Preservation Society, <https://www.medwayqueen.co.uk/> Many Armed Forces representatives came from afar, including Sea Cadets from Medway Towns, Medway Victory Cadets, and Royal Marines Chatham Cadets, who put on a great show.

HMS President and the RBL Standard Bearer were also in attendance. RNA Area 2 Standard Bearers were resplendent - they are pictured (above) with Admiral Lord West of Spithead, Pictured right is S/M Philip Robinson receiving his GSM from the CO, Princess of Wales Regt, Lt Col Nathan Horsman. Initially Philip was in the Queens Regiment as a dog handler and parades the Army Dogs Standard, on other occasions he parades the Chatham branch standard for which the branch is very grateful.





**Above and left:  
scenes from  
the ANZAC  
Day service at  
West Chevington  
cemetery**



### **Wansbeck and District Branch**

The annual St George's Day parade took place last month in Ashington. Last year it was at Morpeth, and the year before it was at Alnwick. As usual there was a very good turnout, both from those taking part and the general public.

The band of the Royal Fusiliers led the march, followed by four contingents of Royal Northumberland Fusiliers (now known as Royal Regiment of Fusiliers), some in Blues, some in Lovats, some in combat rig, also members from the Cadets, followed by a large contingent of veterans from various Services, with some of the bikers bringing up the rear.

The march began from the Woodhorn car park, along past the bus station, and along Station Road, Main Street, past the shops, with a saluting dais outside Greggs on the Main Street in Ashington, before turning left into Kenilworth Road where the parade was halted and dismissed near the cricket club, and new Ashington railway station, which is soon to be reopened following the new passenger rail line from Newcastle later this year.

Following the dismissals some of the marchers were loaded onto waiting buses and taken to their respective units for refreshment.

The veterans, however, were going to Ashington Masonic Hall in John Street in a quickly filled up hall, where a presentation was given of a statue of St George and the Dragon (pictured right) to the present Commanding Officer of the Fusiliers by a retired Major.

An excellent hot and cold buffet was available, and a well-stocked bar.

Some of Wansbeck RNA members were in attendance, as well as from the local Royal British Legion, and members of Ashington branch of the Royal Regiment of Fusiliers.

The Annual ANZAC Day service and parade took place at West Chevington Cemetery near Hadston, Northumberland, to remember men and women who lost their lives in the service of UK, Australian and New Zealand forces.

The day started off rather wet and very windy before and during the service.

Music was provided by the Backworth Colliery Band, with a very good bugler for the Last Post and Reveille part of the service.

Nine standards were on parade, as well as the Union Flag and a 16-strong escort guard provided by 44 Squadron Northumbria Universities.

There were 14 wreaths laid by representatives from Australian and New Zealand Air Forces, the RAF,



RAFA (Newcastle and Gateshead branch), county and parish councillors, and the local residents' housing association.

There were also nine individual crosses laid for named personnel by the RAF Cadets contingent from Cramlington.

It was a very good turnout by veterans and bikers alike, as well as members of the general public, especially considering the bad weather conditions.

The salute for the march past was taken by the Commanding Officer from RAF Boulmer, and representatives of the Australian and New Zealand Air Forces were also afforded that courtesy.

Following the dismissal, refreshments were taken at the Trap public house further along the main road, not too far from the cemetery.

As usual, after all this the weather improved considerably, as it generally does AFTER the event...



### Falkland Islands Branch

A photo of members of the Falkland Islands RNA at dinner after their AGM on 28 March. They hold their meetings in the Malvina House Hotel, Stanley - the deal being they have free use of the meeting room if they have a dinner afterwards. The branch has 23 members, but some were away in the UK at the time. Incidentally, if you are wondering about the name of the hotel - it was named after the daughter of the original Scottish owner and is nothing to do with their neighbours across the water...

### Ferndown and District Branch

On 8 April at Weymouth Manor Rest Home, S/M Anthony 'Tony' Cash, whose 101st birthday falls this month, was presented with a Certificate of RNA Life Membership by Ferndown and District Branch Vice President and Chairman S/M Gareth Peaston. Tony, who joined the Merchant Navy before the outbreak of war, served in the Royal Navy under T124 regulations from 1940-42. He said that they wore Royal Navy uniform and served under Royal Navy regulations and discipline but continued to receive Merchant Navy pay and conditions - for example, if their ship was sunk they received no pay from the time of sinking. He said that it was a great honour and privilege to accept the RNA's kind offer, not just for himself but for all the other members of the Merchant Navy who have 'crossed the bar' and who served under the T124 regulations, as often this service is not recognised. Throughout the war he served on Atlantic Convoys and in the Far East. He continued to serve in the Merchant Navy until he retired with the rating of Coxswain. A founder member of the Weymouth, Portland & District branch of the Merchant Navy Association, Tony has, as a World War 2 veteran, been twice honoured with a role in the RBL Festival of Remembrance at the Royal Albert Hall.





### Torre Vieja Branch

The band of civilians, ex-RAF, ex-Army, ex- Merchant Navy, ex-Mariners and, of course, ex-Royal Navy and their brothers in arms-in-arms ex-Royal Marines, all collectively known as Shipmates of the RNA Torre Vieja branch enjoyed another fun-packed meeting which took place at the Lakeview Bar & Restaurant in Quesada. Some 50 per cent of the total 120 members were in attendance to enjoy the banter and frivolity along with some of the formalities, and were able to congratulate S/Ms Joan Ward and Rick Ward with a huge round of applause when they each had their photos taken with the branch Chairman while receiving their individual Certificates for 15 years' service as a member. Members had voted in a new branch Social Secretary, S/M Lenny Manning, at the recent AGM and he also received an enormous round of applause when he had his photo taken receiving his Social Secretary badge from the Chairman.

The recently-appointed Raffle Assistant, S/M Kim Hemingfield, had a colossal round of applause when she had her photo taken receiving her badge. Branch Schoolie S/M Graham Shelton also received his badge with a joint role of Schoolie and Assistant Rum Bosun, which was well-received by members. Two new members, S/Ms Ken Nobes and Amanda Clancy (pictured right with branch Chairman Tony Jenkins), were warmly welcomed into the branch with the presentation of their Membership Booklet, Card and Badge.

S/M Teresa Strama was welcomed back after her recovery from illness, after which S/M Tony Jenkins gave an amusing synopsis of his time in the Mob. This month's toast at the routine Tot Time was as usual, well received and enabled shipmates to toast St George's Day and all their comrades with a birthday over the next month.

S/M Graham Shelton once again rose to the challenge of entertainingly further educating members of the branch with more RN vernacular - Jack Speak - which this month was on watches and bell (in civilian terms, working shift patterns and knowing what time it is!)

The finale was once again the exciting Raffle, which always send shipmates home in high spirits and enthusiasm for the next social event. As part of the ongoing annual support of local charities, the shipmates were pleased to make a donation this year to the Alzheimer's Association and Age Concern within the Torre Vieja area. Each year at the AGM, shipmates nominate and

vote for preferred charities to receive donations from funds collected during the year.

This year the four recipients were the Naval Children's Charity, the local Association of Movers and Shakers, who support people with neurological diseases, the AFA Torre Vieja Alzheimer's Asociacion and Age Concern Costa Blanca Sur.

AFA Torre Vieja implements programs that allow people with neurodegenerative diseases to improve their physical, mental and emotional condition, while increasing their social skills and reducing symptoms of anxiety and depression.

Age Concern was nominated by shipmates not only because they believe and appreciate the service they provide to the mature UK expats living in the area, but also as a 'thank you' to the Melody Makers, who perform in aid of Age Concern, and who provided a tremendous rendition of Christmas Carols to the shipmates and guests at the Christmas Dinner and Dance.

The donation was presented to the Age Concern Centre Manager, Rita Blades, and Shirley Watmough, one of the Age Concern volunteers, by branch Chairman Tony Jenkins, Treasurer Carl Loudon and organiser locum Maureen Jenkins, who took the photo (above).





### Chichester Branch

Chichester branch members dined in style on 27 April at their St George's Day Dinner. The branch took this annual occasion to present their Shipmate of the Year Award to S/M Tom Cornwell. The award is given to the shipmate who is not a committee member, but who goes above and beyond to support the Branch and its members. Tom is a worthy recipient of this award for all he does for the branch and its members. Tom is pictured above (centre) receiving his award from President and Area 3 National Council Member Paul Stone (left) and branch Chairman Jim Gibb. Sara Field from Central Office would like to extend a special thank you to the branch for inviting her to attend as their guest.



### Torfaen Branch

Members of Torfaen branch at one of their regular meetings, held at Panteg House, a local community hub. The branch donates food to the food bank every meeting.



### Portsea and Portsmouth Branch

Shipmates from Portsea and Portsmouth branch attended the annual ANZAC Memorial Service on Sunday 21 April. The Lord Mayor of Portsmouth, Cllr Tom Coles, and Lady Mayoress Nikki Coles were in attendance as one of their final duties before handing their Chains of Office over to their successors. Tom is also a branch member and members hope to see him at more meetings now his diary will be a bit easier!

### Chepstow Branch

At the end of World War 1, German U-boat UB-91 surrendered to the Royal Navy, and later its 105mm gun was presented to the town of Chepstow by King George V. This honour was in recognition of the bravery of William Charles Williams VC.

Williams was raised in Chepstow and joined the RM Boys Service in 1895. He went on to serve in 18 different ships. In 1910 he returned to civilian life and served in the police in South Wales, and also worked at the Newport steel works. But in August 1914 he was recalled to serve in the war. On 25 April 1915 a major landing was part of an invasion of the Gallipoli peninsula. A British division was to advance six miles along the peninsula on the first day and seize the heights overlooking the beaches. Williams was in HMS River Clyde that, together with transport barges towed behind her, carried 2,000 soldiers.



The plan was to come alongside another ship that would have already been beached to form a jetty from which to disembark the soldiers in the shallow waters, but that other ship was not able to reach the shore. As they approached, heavy enemy fire began to rake the beach. Two companies of soldiers emerged from River Clyde but were cut to pieces, suffering 70 per cent casualties. Later, another company made an attempt which also failed.

So, the Captain of the River Clyde led Williams and others outside to manhandle three of the transport barges into place to form a bridge to the shore. Under intense machine-gun and shell fire Williams stood chest deep in the sea holding a rope keeping the barges together, helping two battalions of soldiers disembark onto the beach. AB Williams, who was 34 and single, died at Gallipoli performing this act of bravery, and was posthumously awarded the Victoria Cross. On Thursday 25 April Chepstow branch held its annual ceremony to commemorate the bravery of AB Williams. Members of his family were at the service at the war memorial adjacent to the gun. The President of Chepstow branch, Cdr Christopher Wilson, spoke of our world of turmoil, where we continue to ask our sailors, soldiers and airmen to stand into danger for causes that we believe to be right.





### Burgess Hill Branch

Members of the Central Office team were invited to the Burgess Hill branch 30th Anniversary Dinner marking three decades since their commissioning, and Sara Field and Kathryn Brindley duly attended representing RNA General Secretary S/M Bill Oliphant. Chairman S/M Peter Taylor and Hon Secretary S/M Sarah Voce, who is a founding member, cut the celebration cakes.

The Burgess Hill ship's bell is pictured **(left)**, accompanied by plenty of Pusser's Rum.

One of the three remaining founding members of the branch, S/M Nigel Harbourt, is pictured **(right)** with Jubilee Greetings from Bill Oliphant.



### Dorchester Branch

Dorchester branch shipmate George Osborne has celebrated his 102nd birthday.

George was Dorchester's first Chairman when the branch was commissioned in 1999, and he is now the branch's Life Vice President.

Until recently George lived alone in his own home.

One son was only a 15-minute walk away, his daughter a five-minute drive away, and he had wonderful neighbours who kept a watchful eye on him. But then George decided that it was time for him to go into residential care, which he did a few months ago.

On his birthday he was visited by a number of branch shipmates and the Dorchester Town Mayor, Cllr Alistair Chisholm, and a tot or two may have been drunk...

In 1937 George joined the Royal Navy and on the outbreak of World War 2 he was serving in cruiser HMS Sheffield in the Denmark Strait.

George was in the ship at the sinking of the Bismarck.

During the hunt for the German battleship, in poor visibility, Sheffield was mistaken for Bismarck and attacked by Fairey Swordfish torpedo bombers from aircraft carrier HMS Ark Royal.

George was on the upper deck when the aircraft approached, but fortunately the torpedo detonators malfunctioned and the torpedoes did not hit the cruiser.



One of the pilots realised it was Sheffield and called off the attack.

When Shipmate George was recounting this tale at a presentation on the sinking of the Bismarck, a lady stuck her hand up and announced that her late husband was that pilot!

Sheffield spent much of the war on Arctic Convoy duties and was also involved in action with cruisers HMS Belfast and HMS Norfolk against the German battleship Scharnhorst.

George was not involved in D-Day but he had the honour of being in the Victory Parade in Paris on Armistice Day after the end of the war in Europe in May 1945.



### Monmouth Branch

Monmouth branch Vic President Adrian Hamilton presented a Certificate of Appreciation to S/M Tony Martin **(left)** for his loyal service as Branch Standard Bearer for the past 25 years. Tony, together with S/M Josie Coates, have represented the Branch at so many Parades and Events throughout Wales and Nationally. A presentation was also made to Josie **(right)** for transporting Tony to all the venues.



## Torbay Branch

Members of Torbay branch gathered at Roundham Head, Paignton, on Sunday 21 April for the annual memorial service to Lt Cdr Arthur Leyland Harrison VC, Royal Navy.

Lt Cdr Harrison was born in Torquay in 1886 and died during the Zeebrugge Raid on 23 April 1918.

He was awarded the Victoria Cross posthumously for Most Conspicuous Gallantry during the deadly operation to block the path of U-boats to the North Sea via Zeebrugge.

The memorial service was led by the Torbay Branch Chaplain, S/M Paul Lomas.

The Act of Remembrance was led by Branch President S/M Norrie Millen.

The Victoria Cross Citation was read at the service by branch Chairman, S/M Terry Membery.

In addition to friends and family members, the



service was attended by representatives and Standard Bearers of **Brixham** and **Dartmouth** RNA branches, Torbay branch of the Royal British Legion, detachments from the Torbay Sea and Air Cadets, Torbay MP Kevin Foster and Torbay Councillor Nicole Amil.

S/Ms Millen and Membery are pictured (**left**) at the memorial which was installed by the branch at Roundham Head on 21 April 2000.

Lt Harrison won the highest military honour in the Zeebrugge Raid for leading a storming party from the cruiser HMS Vindictive onto the exposed harbour mole in order to silence the guns. He was struck by a shell fragment before he even left the ship, but carried on at the head of the party, urging them on until he was shot down. His body was never recovered.

## OBITUARY

### Shipmate Charles Jenkinson

With profound regret the committee of Port Phillip Bay branch in Australia committee have announced that their esteemed Shipmate and Life Member of the RNA, Charles Jenkinson, crossed the bar at approximately 0130 on Tuesday 30 April at Lifestyle Argyle Court in Chelsea, Victoria.

Charles Box Jenkinson was born on 17 April 1925 in Hull, Yorkshire.

Charles saw service in the Merchant Navy, on Atlantic convey duties during 1940 and 1941 but was discharged medically unfit after being shipwrecked, the result of a U-boat attack in mid-Atlantic. However, in response to an appeal by Prime Minister Winston Churchill for volunteers to man and operate the Royal Navy's auxiliary vessels, Charles 'signed on' in the wartime reserve as a Able Seaman in June 1943 and served firstly at HMS Nimrod, the New Entry Establishment located in Campbeltown, Scotland, then he was drafted to the Rescue Tug Base to serve on HMS Champion and HMS Sea Giant.

Charles was discharged from service on 15 August 1945. He was awarded the 1939-45 Star, the Atlantic Star, France & Germany Star, Pacific Star and Normandy Service Medal.

He joined the Royal Naval Association on 6 June 1999. Charles was, and will always remain in memory, a highly respected member of the RNA Port Phillip Bay branch - more so as Charles was the last World War 2 Port Phillip Bay branch veteran who saw active service, firstly as a Merchant Navy seaman on Atlantic convey duties and then as an Able Seaman serving on RN deep sea rescue tugs and salvage vessels.

Charles was famous for his quiet, polite, and respected but friendly 'Yorkshire humour from the City of Hull'. He



was truly a branch 'living treasure'.

Charles's closest relatives are Christine, his daughter, and her husband Paul, Charles's sons Bruce and partner Kay, Keith and partner Sue.

Charles's funeral service will be held at the Frankston Naval Memorial Club on Thursday 9 May commencing at 1130, dress as for Ceremonial Divisions.

For those unfamiliar with the FNMC, it is located at 36 Barretts Rd, Langwarrin South, VIC 3911.

Our image is of is rescue tug HMT Champion, pictured in 19 August 1943 in Harwich. The image is from the Imperial War Museum collection (© IWM (A 18817)).



HMS Catterick. See 1 May. Image from the Imperial War Museum collection (© IWM FL 188)

## ► MAY SWINGING THE LAMP

### 1 May 1945

Hunt-class destroyer HMS Catterick, Greek sister ship HHMS Kriti and K-class destroyer HMS Kimberley provided naval gunfire support for commando amphibious assaults on the islands of Rhodes and Alimia in the Aegean Sea on 1 May 1945. Rhodes is the major island in the Dodecanese group, with a population today of more than 100,000, and since 1912 had been under Italian rule, while Alimia is a much smaller island of just three square miles, and during the war just a handful of people lived there (it was abandoned in the 1940s and now lies empty). The Allied invasion brought success in a week – the German garrison, which had been in place since the Battle of Rhodes in September 1943, surrendered Rhodes and the rest of the Dodecanese to the British on 8 May. This was the last wartime action for all three ships. Catterick had been earmarked for service in the Far East but she was under refit in Durban, South Africa, when Japan surrendered, and she returned to the Mediterranean. She was transferred to the Greek Navy in May 1946 as HHMS Hastings (later reclassified as a frigate) and served until 1963. Kimberley, a Thornycroft-built destroyer, had a busy war including Mediterranean patrols and escort duties; she was part of the Norwegian campaign and the Battle of Crete and was on occasions part of the Force K strike group. In August 1944 she embarked CINC Mediterranean Admiral John Cunningham on the 14th to monitor the Allied assault convoys heading for the South of France on Operation Dragoon, and Winston Churchill in the 15th to see the assault area for himself. For the remainder of the war she was mainly in Italian and Greek waters, and it was on board Kimberley that Maj Gen

Wagner, the commander of German forces in the Dodecanese, formally surrendered on 8 May. After the war Kimberley was placed in reserve, then put up for disposal in 1948; she took part in ship target trials on the Clyde before being scrapped in 1949. Only two of the eight-strong K-class survived the war. HHMS Kriti started life as a Type II Hunt-class destroyer, HMS Hursley, being commissioned in April 1942. She was transferred to the Greek navy in November the following year but continued her escort and support duties, based in Algiers, and she was also part of Operation Dragoon. After the Rhodes assault she remained with the Royal Hellenic Navy until the end of 1959, when she reverted to Royal Navy control and was placed on the disposal list. She was broken up in Greece later the same year.

### 2 May 1945

Minesweeping trawler Ebor Wyke was sunk by U-979 seven miles north of Skagi in Iceland on 2 May 1945 – and she has the unenviable claim to have been the last British warship sunk by a U-boat in the war. She was built in September 1929 by Cochrane and Sons at Selby for the West Dock Fishing Co in Hull, and almost exactly a decade later she was requisitioned by the Admiralty for conversion to a minesweeping trawler. As HMS Ebor Wyke she operated out of Liverpool before switching to Reykjavik in Iceland. Early in the afternoon of 2 May 1945 the 350-ton trawler was hit by two torpedoes from U-979 in Faxa Bay off Reykjavik, causing her to sink rapidly. Only one of her crew of 24 survived. U-979 had a very low-key war record; she was commissioned in May 1943, and never took part in any wolf pack attacks. She damaged two Allied ships (one an American auxiliary,

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the other a merchantman) but Ebor Wyke was the only vessel she sank, and the submarine was lost just three weeks later, after running aground on the south coast of Amrum, a German Frisian island in the North Sea. She was scuttled where she lay, and evidence of the wreck can still be seen under certain conditions.

### 3 May 1968

Ice patrol ship HMS Protector arrived in Portsmouth on 3 May 1968 at the end of her final commission in the Antarctic. The ship was originally built at Yarrow's in Glasgow as a fast netlayer, being completed in late 1936. Netlayers set down and maintained protective steel anti-submarine and anti-torpedo nets for ships or harbour facilities. She saw service in the Norwegian campaign and was also deployed to the South Atlantic before being damaged by an aerial torpedo in the Mediterranean, which curtailed any further action during hostilities. She was modified in Devonport in 1955 for duties at the Falkland Islands Guardship and Antarctic survey vessel, carrying out her first such patrol in the South Atlantic later the same year, taking with her two Westland Whirlwind helicopters. Protector carried out more than a dozen patrols in total, some of which made headlines – she rescued passengers from a research vessel that struck an iceberg in 1957, and in December 1963 two of her ship's company sadly lost their lives when a depth charge they were preparing for a seismic survey exploded, injuring several other sailors. Protector was succeeded by HMS

Endurance, formerly Danish merchant ship MV Anita Dan, which was undergoing conversion at Harland and Wolff in Belfast when Protector made her final entrance to Portsmouth Harbour.

### 4 May 1982

Tuesday 4 May 1982 saw the first loss by the Royal Navy of a warship in combat since World War 2 when Type 42 destroyer HMS Sheffield was crippled by an Argentine missile, sinking almost a week later, during the Falklands Conflict. 20 sailors were killed in the attack. The day had started with an RAF Avro Vulcan long-range bombing attack on Stanley airfield which, although it failed to hit the runway, proved useful as a cluster of bombs landed at one end of the runway, preventing it being lengthened to handle fast jets. Later in the day it was the turn of Argentine aviators to go on the offensive, with two Super Etendards of the Argentine Navy setting out for the Falklands exclusion zone seeking targets that had been identified earlier by surveillance aircraft. In the event it was Sheffield that bore the brunt of the attack. Anti-air specialist Type 42 destroyers Sheffield, Glasgow and Coventry were on picket duty some 20 miles west of a frigate screen, which were also shielding the carriers at the heart of the British task force. Around 0900 on 4 May the two Super Etendards from Rio Grande air station were skimming the waves in low-level flight, popping up twice to obtain radar contacts - on the second attempt they were successful. This distinctive flight pattern was detected by Glasgow, which

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**HMS Protector alongside the ice shelf at the head of Laube Fjord in Antarctica in March 1963. See 3 May. Image from the Imperial War Museum collection (© IWM A 34734)**

Type 21 frigate HMS Arrow alongside the stricken HMS Sheffield shortly after the destroyer was struck by an Exocet missile in the Falklands Conflict. See 4 May. Image from the Imperial War Museum collection (© IWM FKD 2319)



alerted air defence controllers on Invincible and went to action stations, but Sheffield, some 20 miles away, was transmitting at the time and her radar did not pick up the contacts, neither did she receive the signal alerting ships to the danger. While more than 20 miles from Sheffield and Glasgow, the aircraft launched their Exocet missiles then turned for home. Glasgow had fired decoy chaff clusters but Sheffield did not react until lookouts spotted the smoke trail of the Exocets just seconds before one struck amidships. The strike badly damaged the destroyer's power supply and firefighting water main, leaving her ship's company unable to effectively fight or even contain the fierce fires that broke out. In the immediate aftermath of the attack frigates HMS Arrow and HMS Yarmouth went to the picket line to investigate and assist, though they also had to maintain the defensive formation. As sailors fought a losing battle with fire aboard Sheffield, Arrow and Yarmouth went alongside to help, but the risk of a massive explosion in the Sea Dart missile magazine, and the risk to other ships from further air or submarine attacks, prompted Capt Salt to order Sheffield be abandoned, around four hours after the missile attack. A group of 26 wounded men had already been taken off Sheffield and transferred to aircraft carrier HMS Hermes, while most of their remaining 260 or so shipmates were taken off the destroyer by Arrow, with a handful going to Yarmouth in small boats. Later around 170 survivors of the attack were transferred to RFA Fort Austin, along with the destroyer's Lynx helicopter. Although Sheffield was physically lost on 10 May when she foundered in rough seas while under tow, she

was a dead ship within hours of being struck by the Exocet – and the first Royal Navy vessel to be sunk in action since World War 2. A memorial to the 20 men who died in the form of a cross and cairn stands on a headland on Sea Lion Island, the closest part of the Falklands to the position in which Sheffield was hit. There was one further Royal Navy fatality in the Falklands on 4 May, when a Sea Harrier of 800 Naval Air Squadron on a bombing mission from HMS Hermes was hit by cannon fire at Goose Green and crashed, killing pilot Lt Nick Taylor. He was buried, with military honours, by local residents under the supervision of Argentine forces in a grave close to where his Harrier came down.

#### **5 May 2011**

CPO Claude 'Charlie' Choules, ex-Royal Navy and ex-Royal Australian Navy, died in Perth, Western Australia, on 5 May 2011 at the age of 110 - the last surviving combat veteran of World War 1, who also saw service in World War 2. Originally from Pershore in Worcestershire, he joined the RN in 1915 (having unsuccessfully tried to join the Army at 14) and joined battleship HMS Revenge in October 1917. He personally witnessed the surrender of the German Imperial Navy at the Firth of Forth in November 1918 and the scuttling of the German fleet at Scapa Flow. In 1926 Claude was loaned to the Australians as an instructor, meeting his future wife Ethel Wildgoose on the voyage south – they were to be married for 76 years. He quickly decided to remain in Australia, and though discharged from the navy in 1931 he returned to active service as a CPO torpedo and anti-submarine instructor,

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serving as torpedo officer at naval base HMAS Leeuwin in Fremantle and Chief Demolition Officer for the whole of Western Australia. To prolong his service he joined the Naval Dockyard Police, serving until 1956 when he was 55. The former RFA auxiliary landing ship Largs Bay was commissioned into the RAN in December 2011 as HMAS Choules, honouring the service of enlisted sailors in the Australian Navy in its centenary year as well as reflecting the link between the two navies in which Claude served.

### **6 May 2000**

HMS St Albans, the last of the 16-strong Duke-class Type 23 frigates, was launched at the Yarrows yard Scotstoun on the Clyde on 6 May 2000. Since commissioning in June 2002 the frigate has been a regular visitor to the Gulf and Middle East region, and on her voyage home after one deployment she was rerouted to Beirut to pick up almost 250 evacuees fleeing Lebanon following the outbreak of intense fighting between that country and Israel in the summer of 2006. On the same day five years later HMS Norfolk, the first of the class, was paid off at Devonport. St Albans began a major refit at Devonport in 2019, replacing engines, upgrading her air defence missile from Sea Wolf to Sea Ceptor and fitting new sonar and radar, making her the most advanced frigate currently in the Fleet.

### **7 May 1945**

The last British merchantman and last U-boat to be sunk by enemy action in World War 2 both met their fate on 7 May 1945. SS Avondale Park, a 2,900-ton general cargo ship, was built in Canada in 1943-44 and taken under charter by the Ministry of War Transport as the war in Europe entered its final year. The ship, with a crew of 38, was part of Convoy EN 491 from Hull to Belfast which departed Humberside on 6 May 1945. The following day the convoy was attacked by U-2336 in the Firth of Forth, and two ships, the Norwegian freighter Sneland I and Avondale Park, were sunk. Seven men died when Sneland exploded and two were lost from Avondale Park, which sank at around 2300 – exactly 24 hours before the formal German surrender. A signal had been sent to all U-boats by the German naval command on 4 May ordering them to cease further attacks but U-2336 apparently never received the message. The submarine, which was on its first war patrol, was surrendered to the Allies a week later at Wilhelmshaven, and the following month was taken to Lough Foyle in Northern Ireland. She was sunk by gunfire from destroyer HMS Offa during Operation Deadlight in January 1946. 7 May also saw the end of U-320, which was on her second war patrol and had no kills to her name. The 1,070-ton Type VIIC/41 boat was attacked with depth charges by RAF Catalina aircraft in the North Sea, badly

damaging the boat and forcing it to the surface. It struggled back towards Norway but had to be scuttled at Sotra Island before it could reach port.

### **8 May 1941**

County-class heavy cruiser HMS Cornwall sank German auxiliary cruiser – aka disguised raider – Pinguin (Schiff 33) in the Indian Ocean on 8 May 1941. Pinguin, built as a commercial freighter, was the most successful German commerce raider of World War 2, sinking or capturing almost 30 ships in and around the Southern Ocean and Indian Ocean. On 7 May Pinguin sank 3,700-ton tanker British Emperor north of the Seychelles, taking her crew as prisoners, but the tanker managed to transmit a distress signal, which was picked up by Cornwall 500 miles to the south. Cornwall had been a fixture on the China Station before the war, and much of her war tasking saw her hunting commerce raiders in the Indian Ocean. Using her aircraft to scan the ocean ahead of her, Cornwall hunted down Pinguin and challenged her; the Germans claimed to be a Norwegian ship but suddenly opened fire with her 15cm guns, damaging Cornwall's steering gear. Cornwall returned fire and Pinguin blew up at just before 0530, a shell presumably detonating the mines she carried on board. More than 500 men died, around 200 of them prisoners taken from ships that crossed Pinguin's path; 22 British prisoners and 60 German survivors were rescued. When Japan entered the war at the end of 1941 Cornwall added the task of convoy escort to her repertoire. In April 1942 she and sister cruiser HMS Dorsetshire were deployed to investigate sightings of a Japanese fleet on the move. On 5 April the pair were spotted by an aircraft from Japanese cruiser Tone some 200 miles southwest of Ceylon (Sri Lanka) and both sunk within 20 minutes by dive-bombers from the three aircraft carriers (Akagi, Hiryu and Soryu) in the enemy group; a total of 424 sailors died in the attack while a further 1,122 were picked up by light cruiser HMS Enterprise and destroyers HMS Paladin and HMS Panther.

### **9 May 1941 – and 1945**

On 9 May 1941 B-class destroyer HMS Bulldog was escorting Convoy OB 318 off Iceland when fellow escort ship, Flower-class corvette HMS Aubretia, forced German submarine U-110 to the surface in a depth-charge attack. Bulldog and HMS Broadway attacked the submarine with guns, but as the German crew was abandoning the damaged boat the two warships approached to pick up survivors, and a party from Bulldog, led by Sub-Lt David Balme, went on board U-110 and removed paperwork, code books and an Enigma machine – a massive boost to Allied efforts at Bletchley Park to crack German encrypted signals. U-110 was taken in tow but scuttled the following day. Realising the importance of the

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haul – particularly the code books, which were valid until the end of June and provided a crucial insight into how the codes were created – the Commanding Officer of Bulldog did not refer to the capture of the U-boat in signals, and kept the enemy crew members isolated, ensuring the German naval command believe the submarine had been destroyed in the initial attack and thus would not suspect the Enigma system had been compromised. Incidentally, U-110's captain, Fritz-Julius Lemp, who died in the Bulldog incident, was the man responsible for sinking the SS Athenia in the first hours of the war in U-30 – one of the most controversial acts of the Battle of the Atlantic, as it was a liner carrying just over 1,100 passengers and 315 crew, many of them Americans and Canadians heading home before the expected outbreak of war. The incident caused Germany serious headaches, raising the spectre of the Lusitania from the Great War, which is why the Nazis denied involvement throughout the war. Lemp escaped censure for this apparent blunder - then went on to present the Allies with the gift of U-110's code books and Enigma machine less than two years later. Bulldog survived the war, having been a regular on Atlantic and Arctic convoys and being repaired three times, twice as a result of collisions. On 9 May 1945 she sailed for Guernsey, where she took the formal surrender of German representatives in the occupied Channel Islands. Later that month she was reduced to reserve, and

was approved for scrapping before the year was out.

#### 10 May 1988

HMS Abdiel, last ship to be purpose-built as a minelayer, paid off on 10 May 1988. The order to Thornycroft in June 1965 specified an "exercise minelayer" with her role being to train sailors in the art of minelaying using practice devices, but she could have been used to lay live mines in a conflict without if required. She was launched in January 1967 and commissioned in October the same year. She had an additional role as a support ship for mine countermeasures vessels, and was used in that role on the Armilla Patrol in the Gulf in 1987 and 1988. She was paid off in 1988 and sold for scrapping, leaving the Royal Navy with no purpose-built minelaying vessels, although other ships had been identified as being suitable for the role with modifications.

#### 11 May 1982

HMS Alacrity proved the versatility of the Type 21 class of frigates by acting as a makeshift minehunter in the Falklands Conflict on the night of 10-11 May 1982 – and that wasn't even half of the story. Having left the offshore Carrier Battle Group at midday on 10 May under the command of Cdr Christopher Craig, and started her dangerous mission just before midnight, Alacrity spent the early hours of 11 May slowly making her way northwards in Falkland Sound, the stretch of water separating East and West Falkland. While watching for Argentine supply ships, a crucial part of the mission was to assess the risk of mines, which would have been a significant factor in plans to land British troops at San Carlos Water, a bay off the northern part of Falkland Sound. Alacrity was running as quietly as possible, with her ship's company dispersed throughout the ship in the least dangerous areas, on high alert

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British officers and officials with the German military representative Capt Lt Zimmerman (right) on board HMS Bulldog for the signing of the surrender document that officially liberated the Channel Islands. See 9 May. Image from the Imperial War Museum collection (© IWM D 23595)



HMS Abdiel (N21) at Port Said in Egypt in May 1974 during mine clearance operations in the Suez Canal, in her role as a support ship for mine countermeasures vessels. See 10 May. Image from the Imperial War Museum collection (© IWM CT 419)

in case of an incoming shell or a detonated mine. Shortly after 0030, in poor weather, the bridge team spotted a radar contact six miles away and increased speed; the contact also sped up and began taking evasive action. The frigate began firing at the unknown vessel shortly after 0100, and after a short barrage of shells a bright orange glow was seen through the rain and fog – the death throes of Argentine naval supply ship ARA Isla de los Estados, a 3,900-ton former merchant vessel that was used as a transport ship and minelayer after the Argentine invasion. The violence of the explosion, which sank the ship and killed all but two of her crew of 24, was caused by her cargo of aviation fuel and ammunition. This was the only surface action between British and Argentine surface ships during Operation Corporate. With her cover blown, Alacrity dashed through the remainder of the Sound, reaching the northern entrance at 0300 having detected no evidence of mines. Having rendezvoused with sister ship HMS Arrow, the two frigates began to head back to the Carrier Battle Group, but had been spotted by Argentine submarine ARA San Luis, which fired two torpedoes. One failed to leave the tube, and the other is believed to have deflected off Arrow's towed decoy, which was found to be damaged when it was later recovered, and possibly detonated against the sea bed. San Luis, which had suffered a fault in its fire control system, did not have time to attack again before the frigates were out of range, and the submarine, which had been at sea for a month

or more, began her return passage to Argentina later that day.

Alacrity, which was first commissioned in July 1977, survived the Conflict and served in the Royal Navy until 1994, when she was transferred to the Pakistan Navy as PNS Badr. She was decommissioned by her new owners in April 2013.

#### **12 May 1946**

HMS Vanguard, the last battleship ever launched – and Britain's largest battleship – was commissioned at Greenock in Scotland on 12 May 1946. The only ship of her class, Vanguard displaced just over 52,000 tons fully loaded, and was originally ordered from John Brown's yard in Clydebank in March 1941, but her design work and building was a stop-start process as other ships took priority, design changes were made because of the lessons learned in the war, and the shortage of skilled labour and material. At one point, in 1942, there was a proposal to convert her to an aircraft carrier, but that was rejected. She was finally sent down the slipway on 30 November 1944 by Princess Elizabeth – the first ship the future Queen launched. With the war over, there was no pressure of time to put Vanguard on the front line, and she was commissioned on 12 May 1946 in a ceremony again attended by Princess Elizabeth, who reportedly made an overnight train journey from London to be there. Much of her career was spent flying the flag for the UK and as a flagship, while she also served as a Royal Yacht before HMY Britannia arrived in the mid-

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1950s. In October 1959 the Admiralty declared Vanguard obsolete – such ‘capital ships’ were relatively easy prey for missiles and carrier-borne aircraft by this time – and it was announced that she would be scrapped. She left Portsmouth for the last time on 4 August 1960, famously slewing off course and almost ramming the Still and West pub at the mouth of the harbour. She was refloated by tugs an hour later and continued her five-day final voyage to Faslane. The scrapping process was completed two years later. Although the last battleship launched, Vanguard was not the last battleship completed – that honour goes to the French Richelieu-class Jean Bart, which was launched in March 1940 but completed in the early 1950s, entered front-line service in 1955, and was scrapped in 1970.

#### 13 May 1926

Submarines HMS M3, L23 and K26 had been navigated up the Thames to help supply electrical power to infrastructure at commercial docks in east London during the General Strike of May 1926. The nine-day strike began on 4 May as a result of efforts to cut the pay of miners and increase hours worked as the international coal market became increasingly competitive. Miners refused to accept mine owners’ proposals, and when negotiations broke down at the beginning of May 1926 the General Council of the Trades Union Congress (TUC) called for a general strike in support of the miners. The strike was well-supported from the start (at least 1.5 million workers downed tools on the first day), with transport and heavy industry most affected, but as each day went by each side – government and unions – became more entrenched and the atmosphere soured, with fears that extremists

from both ends of the political spectrum (Bolsheviks and fascists) would use the strike to further their own narrow causes. On 11 May the Flying Scotsman express was derailed by striking miners just north of Newcastle-upon-Tyne, but appetite for the strike was waning. The government had spent months beforehand making plans and stockpiling material to maintain supplies and services, and crucial legal judgments went against the TUC. On 12 May the TUC General Council informed the government that they were ending the dispute, though there was an uncoordinated drift back to work as individual unions negotiated terms for their own members. Royal Navy warships were deployed to various ports and docks around the UK on standby, while Army units were on the streets during flashpoints and outbreaks of violence. Submarines were moved into docks in the capital around 9 May on Operation Blackcurrant, with the 2,000-ton monitor submarine HMS M3 (she was armed with a single 12in gun) responsible for maintaining power to four meat cold stores, two cranes and a number of pumps. By 13 May the submarines had been stood down and returned to more normal duties.

#### 14 May 1918

Acheron-class destroyer HMS Phoenix was torpedoed and sunk by Austrian submarine U-XXVII in the Adriatic on 14 May 1918 – the only British warship to be sunk by the Austro-Hungarian Navy. Launched in October 1911 at the Vickers yard in Barrow-in-Furness, the 990-ton warship was completed seven months later. At the start of World War 1 she was operating in the North Sea as part of the First Destroyer Flotilla, and along with her sisters was attached to the

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Grand Fleet when hostilities commenced. Phoenix was an early casualty of the conflict, being involved in the inconclusive skirmish off the mouth of the Elbe on 16 August 1914 when the flotilla took on a German armoured cruiser and Phoenix, along with Goshawk, were damaged but able to return to port. She also took part in the Battles of Heligoland Bight and Dogger Bank, and was escorting Australian troopship Ballarat on 25 April 1917 (ANZAC Day) when the trooper was attacked by a U-boat in the Channel – none of the 1,752 men on Ballarat were lost in the attack. In September that year Phoenix was transferred to the Fifth Destroyer Flotilla in the Mediterranean, and on the morning of 14 May 1918 she was struck by a torpedo fired by U-27 along the Otranto Barrage, the Allied blockade of Austro-Hungarian Navy ships in the Adriatic. An attempt was made to tow Phoenix to port in Albania but she sank just off the coast. Two men died in the torpedo strike but the remaining 70 or so on board were taken to safety before she capsized. U-XXVII, built in what is now Pula in Croatia to a German design, was arguably Austria-Hungary's most successful submarine; besides Phoenix she

also damaged the Japanese destroyer Sakaki and sank or captured more than 30 other vessels of various sizes. Launched in late 1916, the boat survived the war and was handed to Italy as part of the war reparations programme, and she was scrapped in 1920.

#### **15 May 1942**

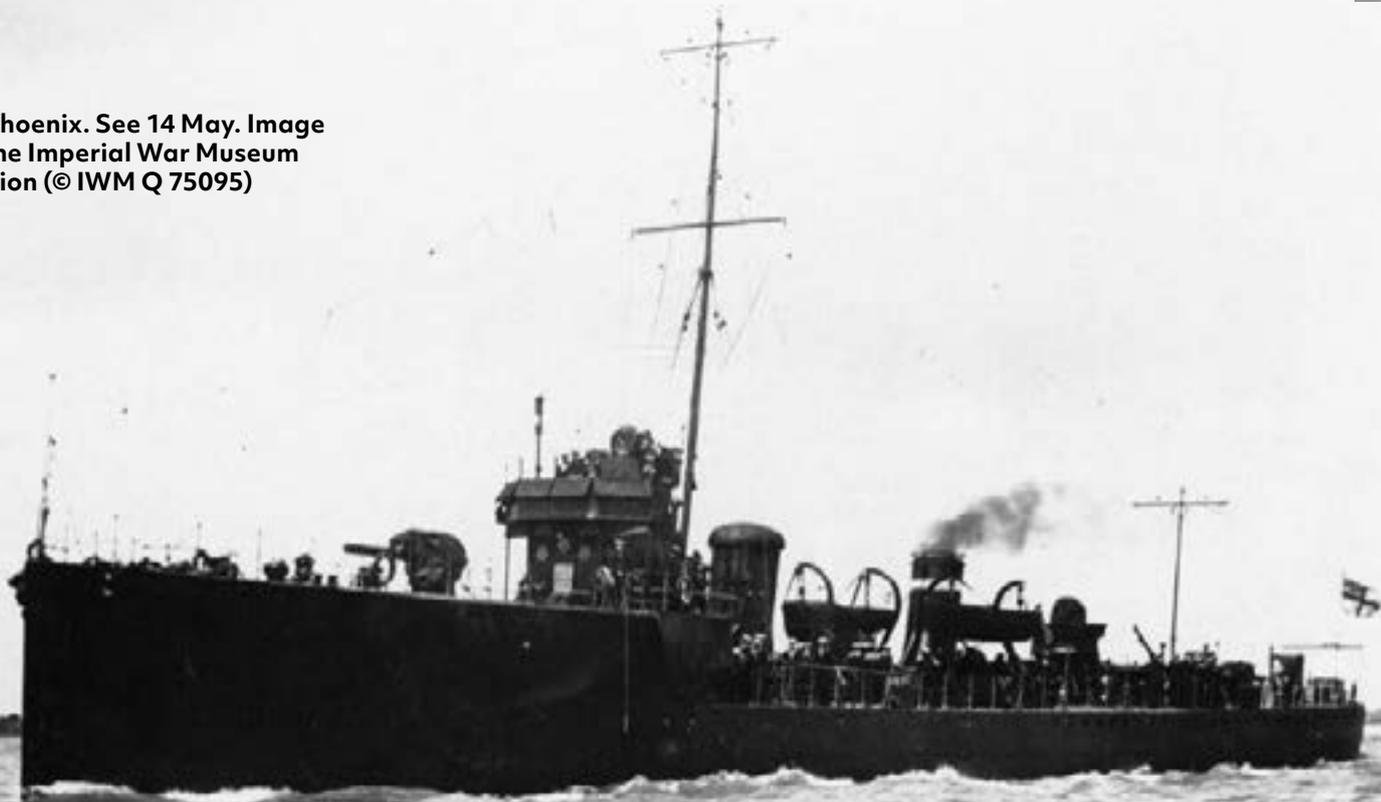
HMS Trinidad – the ship that torpedoed itself – was scuttled on 15 May 1942 after the light cruiser had been set on fire by German bombers. It would seem that the fates were against Trinidad that year as she so nearly escaped enemy attacks. Launched in March the previous year, the 8,700-ton cruiser was escorting Arctic Convoy PQ13 in March 1942 when she was involved in a skirmish with heavily-armed German Narvik-class destroyers Z24, Z25 and Z26 on the 29th. She was damaged by fire from Z26, which itself was damaged by destroyer HMS Eclipse, and Trinidad fired a torpedo to finish off the German warship, but the torpedo malfunctioned (possibly because of the icy water) and ran erratically at a slower speed than normal. In zigzagging to avoid incoming fire, Trinidad inadvertently steamed

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HMS Vanguard fires her main guns. See 12 May. Image from the Imperial War Museum collection (© IWM A 31509)



**HMS Phoenix. See 14 May. Image from the Imperial War Museum collection (© IWM Q 75095)**



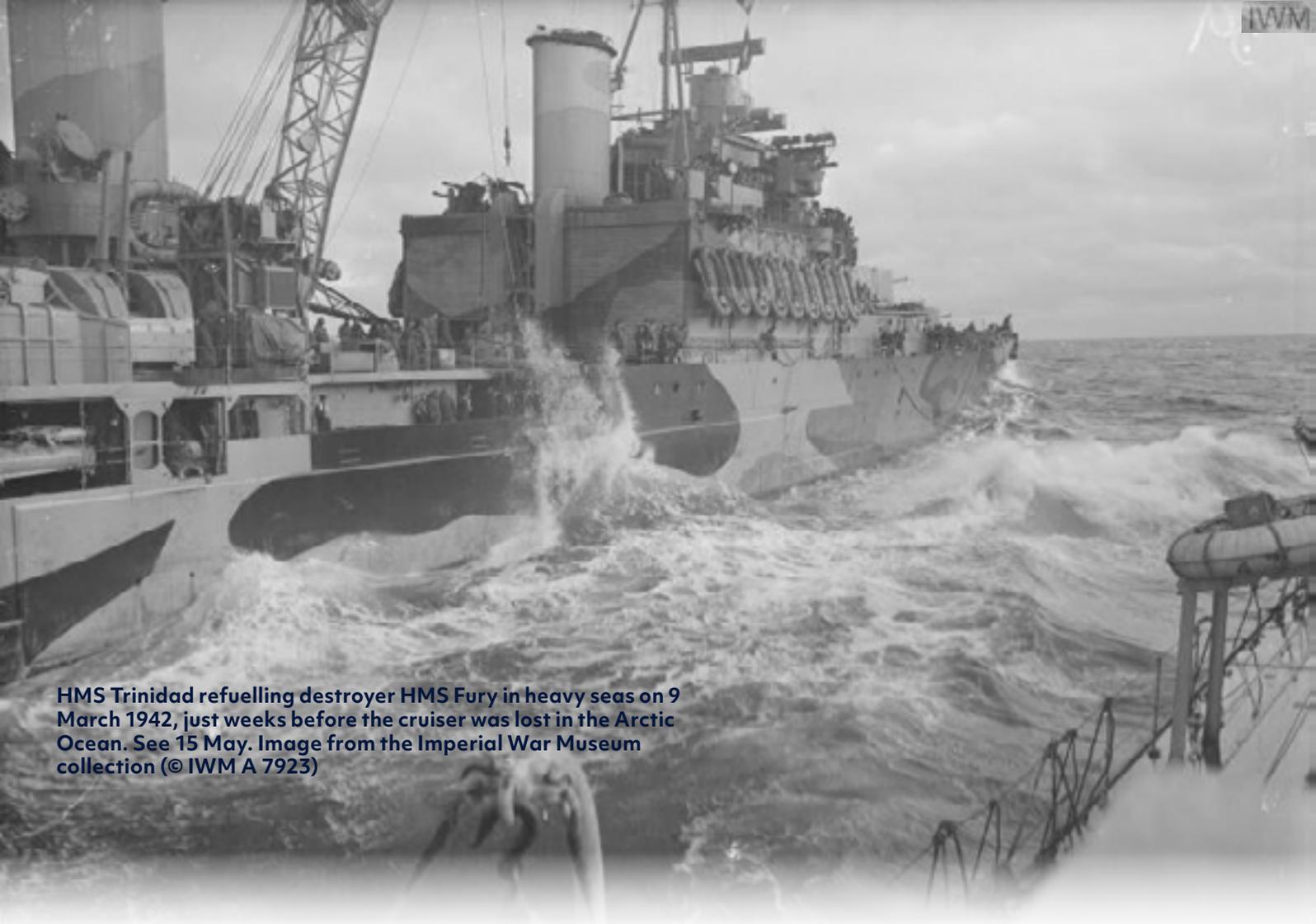
ahead of the errant weapon and was hit forward of the bridge, killing 32 sailors, flooding a boiler room and starting a serious fire. Trinidad was taken in tow until her engines could be restarted and she made her way on to Murmansk (narrowly avoiding an attack by U-378, which was driven off by destroyer HMS Fury) where temporary repairs were made. Trinidad set off on the return leg to the UK on 13 May with plenty of covering vessels, including four destroyers in close company. But with her speed reduced to around 20 knots by the damage, she presented an easier target than might be expected, and was set upon by a formation of more than 20 Junkers Ju-88 bombers the following day. As it happened, most bombs missed – but those that struck her exploded close to the previous damage, killing 63 men (including 20 survivors of the sinking of cruiser HMS Edinburgh two weeks earlier) and starting a major fire. The decision was made to scuttle Trinidad on 15 May, with the coup de grace being administered by three torpedoes from destroyer HMS Matchless, and the cruiser sank in the Arctic Ocean, north of North Cape.

#### **16 May 1945**

Five sailors were killed by splinters from a Japanese bomb as their ship, destroyer HMS Virago, began to refuel from aircraft carrier HMS Hunter in the Indian Ocean on 16 May 1945. The V-class destroyer, which first commissioned in November 1943, was frequently in the heat of battle in her short wartime career. Within weeks of joining the front line she was involved in the

Boxing Day Battle of North Cape, helping to sink the battered German battleship Scharnhorst with her torpedoes, and a month later rescued 78 men from the stricken destroyer HMS Hardy on Arctic Convoy JW56B. On D-Day Virago bombarded German positions behind Sword Beach, covering Allied troops as they fought inland, and she remained off the beaches until 6 July, when she resumed her tasking off Norway and escorting Arctic convoys. The warship was switched to the Eastern Fleet in January 1945, patrolling the Malacca Strait and taking part in Operation Dracula, the Allied assault on Rangoon in Burma (now known as Yangon in Myanmar). In mid-May she helped sink Japanese heavy cruiser Haguro in the night-time Battle of the Malacca Strait, stopping the enemy ship with two well-aimed torpedoes; Haguro sank half an hour later after further torpedo strikes and heavy gunfire. On the afternoon of 16 May Virago was closing with American-built escort carrier HMS Hunter to refuel when they were caught by surprise by Japanese bombers. Fragments of a bomb which just missed the destroyer killed five of her crew – the only casualties the ship suffered during the war. At the end of hostilities Virago moved to Hong Kong with the British Pacific Fleet, returning to Chatham at the end of 1945. The destroyer served in the Mediterranean until 1949, and after two years in reserve she was converted to a Type 15 frigate, though much of her remaining career was spent in reserve or as part of the Dartmouth Training Squadron. She was decommissioned in 1963 and scrapped two years later.

**Continues on page 34 →**



**HMS Trinidad refuelling destroyer HMS Fury in heavy seas on 9 March 1942, just weeks before the cruiser was lost in the Arctic Ocean. See 15 May. Image from the Imperial War Museum collection (© IWM A 7923)**

#### **17 May 1993**

The White Ensign was hauled down at the Tamar naval base in central Hong Kong on 17 May 1993 and the Royal Navy's operational base moved to Stonecutters Island in Victoria Harbour. The island, named for the quarrying that was carried out there during Hong Kong's rapid expansion under British tenure, hosted a number of military installations over the years, including a Royal Navy radio interception and direction-finding station dating from 1935 and a base for the RN's hovercraft unit in the 1970s and 80s, when two SRN6 craft were used to intercept illegal immigrants. It was also something of a rest and recreation resort, with chalets, a NAAFI shop and restaurant and swimming pool. It was also the location for the manufacture and storage of explosives by commercial firms for a period, being some distance from the heart of the commercial and residential areas of Hong Kong. With the handover of Hong Kong to China in the summer of 1997 the island became a base for People's Liberation Army Navy, and reclamation work carried out in the 1990s means it is no longer an island, being permanently connected to the Kowloon peninsula to facilitate work on the construction of road and rail links to the new Chek Lap Kok international airport and a container terminal, while the 'island' now also houses a major sewage treatment works.

#### **18 May 1943**

Rescue and salvage tug HMT Barwick was caught in a huge petrol/benzene explosion off Alexandria in Egypt on 18 May 1943, killing 12 men and wounding a further five. The tug had been standing by the tanker SS Delphinula, which had run aground on a sandbank more than a week earlier. With no suitable ships to take off her highly volatile cargo, and with the sea whipped up by stormy weather, attempts to refloat the tanker initially failed, but with the fuel on board desperately needed at the front line a second attempt was made, this time lightening the load by forcing her cargo out using compressed air. The attempt started on 17 May, with the petrol vaporising quickly in the hot conditions, and petrol floated on the water around the stranded vessel. The operation resumed early the following morning, with crew members again being warned of the danger of sparks and naked flames. With Barwick tied up alongside the tanker, at 0630 the local tug Taurus came alongside Barwick; survivors reported feeling a slight jolt, then a muffled explosion, followed by a massive blast. The superstructures of the two tugs were badly damaged and all three ships – as well as much of the sea between them – were on fire. Survivors managed to find clear patches of water to dive into and were picked up by rescue craft. It was suggested by one survivor that the

**Continues on page 35 →**

explosion could have been triggered by a spark generated when the two tugs came into contact, but no conclusive answer was possible. The fire on board and around the Delphinula was eventually extinguished a month later, and the wreck broke in half four weeks after that. There was a further explosion in September that year, and the wreck was finally recovered in 1947 and scrapped in Spain. Both the American-built Barwick, displacing 420 tons, and the British tanker Delphinula had been busy during the war. Barwick was already 24 years old by the time she was caught in the blast, and had been involved in numerous Atlantic convoys, including the mauling of SC 42 from Canada to Liverpool in September 1941. Remarkably, the tug was still afloat in Alexandria Harbour, and was repaired, renamed HMT Behest, and served on further Mediterranean convoys. She was sold in 1948 and continued to work until she was scrapped in 1962. Delphinula, by contrast, was a modern ship, built on the Clyde in 1939 and was the pride of the Anglo-Saxon Petroleum fleet – the parent company of Shell. She is thought to have taken part in more than 50 convoys, including more than a dozen across the Atlantic. Anglo-Saxon subsequently sued the Admiralty for

compensation.

#### **19 May 1940**

HMS Princess Victoria, an Irish Sea ferry hired by the Admiralty in the role of a minelayer, sank on 19 May 1940 after striking a mine in the Humber Estuary. The vessel, built by William Denny of Dumbarton, was the first stern-loading cross channel vehicle ferry and had a capacity of up to 64 cars, with two turntables to facilitate movement of vehicles. She was ordered by the London, Midland and Scottish Railway and entered service on the Larne (Northern Ireland) to Stranraer (Scotland) route on 8 July 1939 but just two months later she was requisitioned by the Admiralty and converted to an auxiliary minelayer with a capacity of 244 mines. Commissioned as HMS Princess Victoria, the ship laid a total of more than 2,750 mines in her short career. She met her end after laying a minefield off the coast of the Netherlands in May 1940 – steaming back home she struck a mine in the mouth of the Humber and sank, taking 36 of her crew with her, though 85 men were rescued. She was replaced in 1947 by a near-identical ferry with the same name on the same route, also built by Denny's, although the later version

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**HMS Virago pictured in November 1952 after conversion to a Type 15 frigate. See 16 May. The image is from the Imperial War Museum collection (© IWM A 32381)**



was one of the earliest roll-on, roll-off ferries to be built. Although she survived longer than her predecessor, she met a similarly tragic end. In the same violent storm that caused extensive and deadly flooding along the North Sea coast on 31 January 1953 the ferry left Stranraer but suffered damage to her stern door in the wild seas of the North Channel. The ship gradually took on more and more water and began to list, and because of the gales rescue services were also trying to deal with numerous other emergencies. Drifting from her reported position, by the time rescue ships, including Royal Navy vessels, arrived she had sunk in 300ft of water. Some lifeboats were found and 44 men rescued, but 135 men, women and children died.

#### **20 May 1941**

Hunt-class minesweeper HMS Widnes was badly damaged during a dive-bombing raid by German aircraft in Suda Bay, Crete, on 20 May 1941 and was beached as the island was stormed

**HMS Sickle returns to Algiers from patrol in April 1943. See 21 May. Image from the Imperial War Museum collection (© IWM A 16831)**

by German invasion forces. The ship, which was launched just months before the World War 1 Armistice, was repaired by the Germans, and set back to work as submarine chaser UJ-2109. She was sunk again, this time by gunfire thought to be from destroyers HMS Hursley and Greek warship Miaoulis, with HMS Jervis and Penn involved in the wider skirmish, in Kalymnos Harbour on 17 October 1943 during the German Operation Eisbar (Polar Bear), the assault on the island of Kos. UJ-2109 attempted to assist an Axis merchant ship which had been torpedoed, but she fell victim to the guns of the Royal Navy, her original owner.

#### **21 May 1943**

S-class submarine HMS Sickle sank U-303 with two torpedoes while the U-boat was leaving the port of Toulon on 21 May 1943; most of the German crew managed to get onto life rafts and make it the ten miles back to shore, though ten sailors died in the blast. Sickle was launched at

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Cammell Laird in Birkenhead at the end of August 1942 and conducted her first (uneventful) war patrol off Norway in January 1943. Switching to the Mediterranean, her second patrol, in April, saw her first attack, on an Italian merchantman, but her torpedoes ran under the freighter's hull and her deck gun jammed so she had to break off the attack. She made up for that on her third patrol, out of Algiers, when she sank a German submarine chaser off the French coast on 15 May, narrowly missed U-755 on 20 May (the German was sunk by aircraft a week later) and on 21 May hit U-303 off Toulon, causing it to sink rapidly. Over the course of the year Sickie sank several Axis minesweepers and escort vessels and a handful of merchant ships, operating out of Algiers, Beirut, Haifa and Malta. One of her victims was carrying a cargo of citrus fruits, which provided a welcome addition to their diet. She left Malta on what would be her final patrol on 31 May 1944, picking off a German merchant ship and several caiques as well as bombarding a shipyard on 14 June, but that was the last that was heard of her, and it was thought she possibly struck a mine around 18 June on her way back to Malta.

#### **22 May 1809**

Rear Admiral Eliab Harvey was court-martialled on 22 May 1809 for his outspoken criticism of his

senior officer Lord Gambier, who gave command of a squadron to a more junior officer at the Battle of the Basque Roads, much to Harvey's displeasure. The incident neatly encapsulates the essence of this colourful Naval officer – blunt, eccentric, argumentative and a reckless gambler on the one hand, but a hero at the Battle of Trafalgar and a parliamentarian of long-standing on the other. Born in Chigwell, Essex, 1758 to a well-to-do family (though his father, also an MP, died when he was five), Harvey joined the Royal Navy in 1774 at the age of 15 and spent a good deal of time on the western side of the Atlantic, punctuated with periods as an MP in Essex. While an MP he took full advantage of the pleasures of London life – the death of his eldest brother in 1779 left him a wealthy man – and he gained a reputation for being a high stakes gambler; one incident on his 21st birthday saw him stake £100,000 in a single roll of the dice, which he lost. His opponent, realising it would bankrupt him, insisted he would only take £10,000 and roll again to decide who would get the remaining £90,000. Harvey won the second throw (and allegedly never paid the initial £10,000 to his fellow gambler). Harvey commanded several ships, the most famous being HMS Temeraire, which he took into battle at Trafalgar. His eagerness to join the fray initially irritated Nelson, who rebuked Harvey for allowing his ship to pull ahead of Victory.

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During the battle Harvey displayed great skill and courage as his ship reduced two French vessels (Redoutable and Fougueux) to impotence while drifting entangled with Victory and Redoutable. He was (somewhat controversially) singled out for praise in accounts of the battle by Collingwood, who took command after the death of Nelson. After the battle Harvey was wont to brag about his exploits, annoying fellow officers, and his abrasive character blighted his career when in 1809, when serving in the Channel Fleet, he was passed over for command of British ships at the Battle of Basque Roads, and when he expressed his outrage at Lord Gambier's decision he was booted off the admiral's council. Harvey resigned his commission, and although he returned to the Navy a year later he never saw active service again (thanks in part to Gambier's opposition). He did, however, gain seniority and several promotions, ending as a full admiral in 1819. He was also knighted in 1815. He spent many of his final years back in Parliament and died in 1830.

### 23 May 1955

Type 41 frigate HMS Leopard was launched at Portsmouth Dockyard on 23 May 1955. She was the lead ship of the seven-strong Leopard class, of which three were built for the Indian Navy, and designed as an anti-aircraft ship powered by diesel engines – the first such class of ships in the Royal Navy. They were powered by eight diesels, with a further four driving alternators for generating electricity – and, as hoped, the ships

proved to be economical and have a long range. They were also fitted with an early stabiliser system which proved very effective. However, the design of Leopard and her sisters was regarded as somewhat obsolete by the end of the decade as advances in steam turbine technology made the Type 12 (Whitby-class) frigate a more attractive proposition. Leopard began her service career in the South Atlantic, and in 1960 sailed more than 1,100 miles up the Amazon River (see 27 May). The following year she was involved in the relief effort after a volcanic eruption on Tristan da Cunha. Later deployments saw her spend a year in the Far East, and she also had a role to play in the fishing disputes with Iceland (the Cod Wars) of the early 1970s. The frigate was scrapped in 1977.

### 24 May 1943

Admiral Karl Donitz, head of the German Navy, ordered the temporary withdrawal of U-boat 'wolf packs' from the North Atlantic as a result of unsustainable losses during the month (known as Black May to the U-boatmen). Although May 1943 saw the German submarine fleet at its strongest, with 118 of the Germans' 240 operational U-boats at sea, much improved Allied convoy tactics and equipment saw the number of merchant ships lost continue to fall dramatically while U-boat losses climbed rapidly. The month started with the gruelling 'battle for Convoy ONS 5', which saw 13 merchantmen and six U-boats sunk. Three further convoys saw seven vessels fall victim on each side, but by the third week of May Convoy SC

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Protected cruiser HMS Pelorus. See 27 May. Image from the Imperial War Museum collection (© IWM Q 75405)



130 made it to Liverpool with no losses, while five U-boats sank trying to attack it (including U-954, in which Admiral Donitz's son Peter died). U-boats returned to the fray in the autumn of 1943 but never posed the same threat again, which is why May 1943 is seen as the turning point in the Battle of the Atlantic, and Donitz's order to withdraw as a pivotal moment in the war.

### **25 May 1981**

The final Navy Days weekend at Chatham Dockyard came to an end on 25 May 1981. Part recruitment drive and part public spectacle, the event always proved popular with Londoners, many of whom used special trains to visit the yard. A Navy Days weekend was scheduled for the end of May 1982 but was cancelled because of the Falklands Conflict, and as the closure of the yard had been set for March 1984 no further such events were planned.

### **26 May 1941**

German battleship Bismarck was attacked by Swordfish aircraft from HMS Ark Royal on the evening of 26 May 1941 with the German warship less than a day away from the protection of Luftwaffe aircraft and German Navy U-boats off the Atlantic coast of France. Bismarck and heavy cruiser Prinz Eugen, setting out to target Allied merchant shipping in the Atlantic, had sunk much-loved battlecruiser HMS Hood in the Denmark Strait on 24 May, and the Royal Navy was out in force to avenge the loss of the iconic warship. Bismarck had been damaged in the encounter with Hood and battleships HMS Prince of Wales, and was leaking oil, so Admiral Gunther Lütjens, who was leading the German Operation Rheinübung) decided to head for a port on the Atlantic coast of France. U-boats were positioned to protect the battleship as she made her way towards safety, but the forces ranged against the ship were formidable, including six battleships and battlecruisers, two aircraft carriers and 13 cruisers. A torpedo bomber attack by Fairey Swordfish from HMS Victorious managed to temporarily slow the German battleship – a vital development as it had the capability to outrun its pursuers. But still the odds were in the Germans' favour on 25 May, as the ship had shaken off the pursuers, but as Bismarck headed for France Lütjens signalled German Naval HQ in Paris; the signals allowed bearings to be worked out for his ship and the messages were decrypted by British codebreakers. However, when Bismarck was spotted again it was within striking distance of U-boat cover and the port of Brest – many Royal Navy pursuers were too far away to intercept, and in any case were running low on fuel. The only option was an air strike from HMS Ark Royal, part of Force H. By mid-evening on 26 May a group of Swordfish aircraft were rumbling in to attack, and one aircraft struck the German capital ship near its port rudder, jamming the steering, and by 2115 Lütjens reported the ship to be unmanoeuvrable. Only capable of steaming in a wide circle, the battleship was harried overnight by Allied

destroyers, then engaged by the capital ships, including battleships HMS King George V and Rodney, and cruisers. A combination of hundreds of shells, numerous torpedoes and detonated scuttling charges caused the battered warship to sink at 1040 on 27 May; 114 out of Bismarck's crew of 2,200 were rescued.

### **27 May 1960**

Frigate HMS Leopard arrived in Portsmouth from the Atlantic having steamed almost 1,150 miles up the Amazon River in South America, the furthest any British warship ship had been up that river since HMS Pelorus in 1909. She took with her vital food and medical supplies for villagers along the banks of the river as she made her way towards the river port of Codajas. Pelorus, a Victorian-era heavily-armed protected cruiser of 2,200 tons with a relatively shallow draught of 16ft, managed to navigate 2,300 miles up the river to the town of Iquitos in Peru. Part of the 2nd Cruiser Squadron, Pelorus was sent upriver by squadron commander Vice Admiral Sir Percy Scott; the warship left Montevideo on 27 December 1908 and steamed north to Para on the mouth of the Amazon. After a game of cricket against the locals (which the sailors lost, making up for it by winning a tug-of-war) the ship set off on 19 January 1909 onto the Amazon proper - she is believed to be the first British warship to venture upstream. Using native pilots and working hard against a flow of water that in places exceeded five knots, Pelorus made steady progress, anchoring every night and carrying out the normal ship's routine as if she was in open sea. Hemmed in by thick jungle, oppressed by equatorial heat and beset by mosquitoes and other biting insects (and creatures) the British sailors could have found the voyage trying, but they were warmly welcomed at every village and town along the way, lightening the mood considerably. Pelorus reached the city of Manaus on 26 January, more than 1,000 miles from the sea - a bustling river port accommodating steamers from as far afield as the United States and Europe. Pelorus's cricket team again came off second best, this time against British ex-pats, but the Navy football team upheld their ship's honour. Traders reportedly refused to accept payment from the British sailors for food and drink in the city, and in turn the ship's company was said to have displayed exemplary behaviour, with not one report of drunkenness or misdemeanours. Continuing upstream, Pelorus crossed from Brazil to Peru on 14 February, steaming into Iquitos two days later - by this stage the ship was at the foot of the Andes and just 400 miles from the Pacific. After week's stay (described in newspaper reports at the time as being akin to a fiesta) and more success for the footballers and tug-of-war team, Pelorus departed on 23 February and made good speed with the flow now in her favour. She made Manaus on 1 March, Para on the 9th and was back in the South Atlantic and heading for Devonport by the 14th

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**HMS Vitality, formerly HMS Untamed, moving away from her berth. See 30 May. Image from the Imperial War Museum collection (© IWM FL 22809)**

### **28 May 1891**

Converted tug boat HMS Hearty sailed from Kinsale on her first fishery protection patrol on 28 May 1891 – regarded by some as the first Royal Navy ship fully dedicated to the task. Previous ships with the long-established squadron – one of the oldest military formations in the world – had always been allocated on an ad hoc basis, and included frigate HMS Albermarle, commanded by Capt Horatio Nelson, in 1781 off the American East Coast. Hearty was built as the tug Indra at the Thompson yard in Dundee, Scotland, and launched in 1885, by which time she had been bought by the Royal Navy and was renamed Hearty at the end of that year. She was commissioned in September 1886 to serve as a Special Service Vessel on fishery protection patrols in the North Sea as well as a tug, and she later undertook harbour duties at Chatham and Sheerness. Hearty was recommissioned as a survey ship in 1910, carrying out tidal surveys of the English Channel and the North Sea from her base at Dover; her survey work carried on throughout World War 1 while based at the Nore. Hearty was sold as a salvage vessel to a commercial firm in late 1920 and continued to work under the name Dalhousie until she was scrapped in the 1930s. The Fishery Protection Squadron (now known as the Overseas Patrol Squadron) dates back to at least 1481, with some claiming its roots lie further back in 1379. Although it began in the herring fisheries of the North Sea, early iterations of the squadron

protected British fishermen off the Dutch coast and as far way as Iceland, and by the 18th century the squadron also patrolled as far west as the coast of North America.

### **29 May 1922**

Hawkins-class light cruiser HMS Raleigh, flagship of the North America and West Indies Station, arrived at Washington DC on 29 May 1922, the first Royal Navy ship of her size to fly the White Ensign within sight of the Capitol for more than a century. The 12,400-ton ship was built as part of class designed to hunt and sink commerce raiders - impressive-looking ships capable of 31 knots with a long range and heavy armament. Launched in August 1919 by the William Beardmore yard in Dalmuir, Clydebank, the ship left the UK for her base in Bermuda on 26 July 1921 expecting to meet Vice Admiral Trevelyhan, CINC NAWI Station, but the officer died on 30 July and Admiral Sir William Pakenham hoisted his flag as the new CINC on 12 August. There then followed a series of visits, including Montreal, Quebec, Jamaica and San Francisco (via the Panama Canal). In May 1922 the cruiser visited ports around Chesapeake Bay, including Washington DC, where Admiral Pakenham was received by President Warren Harding. After a visit to Canada, where the ship attracted crowds of people during port visits, the admiral transferred his flag to HMS Calcutta on 3 August. Five days later Raleigh was on passage from Labrador to Newfoundland when she ran

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into thick fog in the Strait of Belle Isle. The cruiser ran aground at L'Anse Amour, a tiny village in Labrador, and strong winds forced her stern onto rocks, causing considerable damage. The order was given to abandon the ship, with 12 men dying of drowning or hypothermia in the process. By the following morning Raleigh's hull had been ripped open so the remaining crew were marched to the nearby town of Forteau and from there eventually transported back to Britain, though some of the sailors were kept back to protect the wreck and help salvage anything of worth. The wreck, sitting in the shallows, was something of an embarrassment to the Admiralty, and as Raleigh could not be refloated the order went out to demolish it and render it unrecognisable as a British warship. Demolition work using depth charges was led by Capt Andrew Cunningham, who later made his name as wartime CINC Med (known by his initial ABC) and went on to achieve the rank of Admiral of the Fleet as First Sea Lord, but no attempts were made to recover the wreckage of the ship and as recently as 2016 there were reports of ammunition from the ship being found in the vicinity.

### **30 May 1943**

U-class submarine HMS Untamed sank during a training exercise on 30 May 1943 in the Firth of Clyde. The boat was commissioned on 14 April 1943 and was taking part in an exercise with the 8th Escort Group on 30 May, acting as target for armed yacht HMS Shemara, when she failed to respond to signals early in the afternoon. The submarine was quickly located using sonar and those on the surface picked up the sounds of her

engines being run and tanks being blown, but all noises ceased by 1745 that afternoon. Stormy weather prevented divers investigating until 1 June, but they could see no damage, and it was only after the boat was salvaged on 5 July that the cause of the sinking could be ascertained – she had apparently been flooded through an open sluice valve, killing all 35 men on board. The boat was refitted and renamed HMS Vitality and returned to service in July 1944, but her war record was unremarkable, and she was scrapped at Troon in early 1946.

### **31 May 1918**

C-class destroyer HMS Fairy rammed and sank UC-75 in the North Sea on 31 May 1918, but in doing so she was herself badly damaged, and while limping back towards the coast she sank some ten miles south of Flamborough Head. The 400-ton ship, capable of 30 knots, was launched in May 1897 at Fairfields yard at Govan on the Clyde as a "three funnel, 30-knot destroyer" (the C-class designation came in 1913), and after commissioning in August 1898 joined the Channel Fleet. At the start of World War 1 she was attached to the Grand Fleet, then in the summer of 1917 she transferred to the 7th Destroyer Flotilla for convoy work off the east coast of Britain. On 31 May 1918, submarine UC-75 was spotted and rammed by the steamer SS Blaydonian. Fairy also rammed the submarine as it surfaced (two German submariners managed to leap from their stricken boat onto the destroyer's deck) but was so badly damaged that she sank as she limped back to port



**HMS Fairy. See 31 May. Image from the Imperial War Museum collection (© IWM Q 38854)**

# ▶ LONGCAST

2024	
4 May	Army v Navy rugby, Twickenham
11 May	No 5 Area Quarterly meeting, to be hosted by Stowmarket branch
16 May	Inter-Services T20 cricket, Lord's
18 May	No 4 Area meeting to be hosted by Christchurch and District branch
18 May	National Standard Bearers Competition
18-19 May	Battle of the Atlantic commemorations, Londonderry
3-7 June	RNA Battlefield Memorial Tour to Normandy
14-16 June	RNA National Conference, Cardiff
3 Aug	Cheshire Maritime Ball, Tatton Park
12 Oct	World Uckers Championships, Royal Maritime Hotel, Portsmouth
Autumn (tbc)	D-Day Memorials Cycle Event in Normandy

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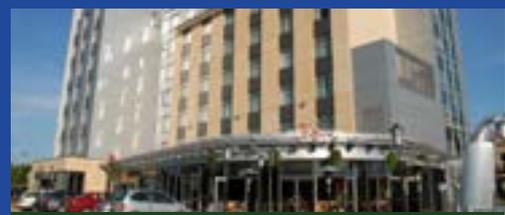
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The hotel offers car parking (charges will apply) and Cardiff Bay train station is within a 10 minute walk.

<b>2 nights</b> £145 per person sharing £249 single occupancy	<b>3 nights only</b> £215 per person sharing £369 single occupancy
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## FUTURE INN - CARDIFF

The Future Inn Cardiff is located within Cardiff Bay and walking distance of Mermaid Quay and the Welsh Millennium centre.

The hotel hosts 197 air-conditioned en-suite bedrooms fully equipped with tea/coffee making facilities, flat screen TV, hairdryer, and iron/ironing board. There is complimentary on-site car parking.

<b>1 night</b> £115 per person sharing £190 single occupancy	<b>2 nights</b> £199 per person sharing £329 single occupancy
<b>3 nights</b> £269 per person sharing £439 single occupancy	

Booking conditions apply



## Delegate to Annual Conference 2024 - CARDIFF

Branch secretaries should note the following before submitting their application.

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

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

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

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

**NB: A Delegate will not be confirmed as such unless or until the Branch Balance Sheet for 2023 and Branch Annual Report for 2023 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, Building 1/087, Scott Road, HM Naval Base, Portsmouth, PO1 3LU or email to [sara@royalnavalassoc.com](mailto:sara@royalnavalassoc.com)

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