

SEMAPHORE CIRCULAR

► MEMORIAL SERVICE UNDER ANCIENT STONES

Britain's most iconic ancient site was the fitting setting for an 80th anniversary service to a lost World War 2 submarine.

HMS Stonehenge vanished on her second patrol sometime in mid-March 1944 in the Bay of Bengal or the Andaman Sea.

On Friday 22 March shipmates from Salisbury branch supported Royal Navy veterans and representatives from the Submariners Association and serving personnel from the Royal Navy who gathered around the ancient stones on Salisbury Plain for a commemorative service led by the Rt Reverend Stephen Lake, Bishop of Salisbury, and the Lord-Lieutenant of Wiltshire, Mrs Sarah Rose Troughton, to remember the tragic loss of the submarine and its entire crew. HMS Stonehenge was one of the third batch of S-class submarines built during the war at Cammell Laird in Birkenhead. She was commissioned in June 1943 and had a ship's company of just under 50.

The original S-class submarines were designed for work in the more confined waters of the North Sea and Mediterranean, and accordingly she left Lerwick in Shetland on 10 September 1943 for her first patrol off the coast of Norway.

That first foray drew a blank – no ships were sighted during the two weeks – but on her return she was assigned to patrols in the Far East – being one of the bigger S-boats, at 1,010 tons, Stonehenge was capable of undertaking more far-ranging missions than her older sisters. She left home waters on 5 November 1943 and called at Gibraltar, Beirut, Port Said, Aden and Colombo as she made her way via the Suez Canal to Trincomalee in Ceylon, now Sri Lanka, arriving on 23 January 1944. From Gibraltar to Port Said she was part of Convoy KMF 26.

She started her second war patrol, in the

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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 3 May.



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Malacca Strait, on 1 February and this time she found targets – on 5 February she sank the Japanese merchant ship Koryo Maru 2 off Penang using her deck gun after two torpedoes failed to hit the 720-ton coaster, having passed beneath her shallow keel.

One week later she torpedoed and sank the 900-ton Japanese minelayer Choko Maru to the west of Malaya.

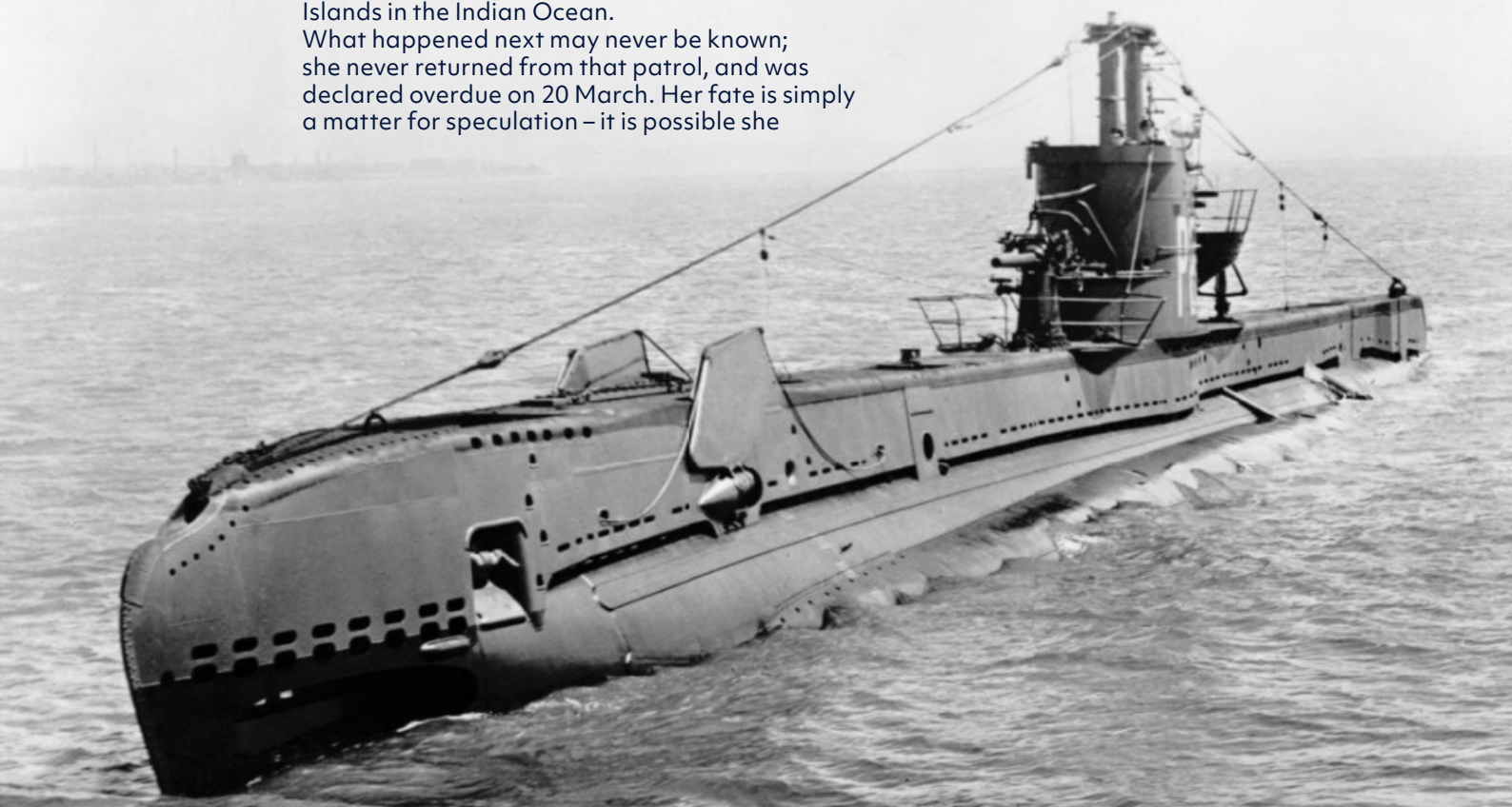
That patrol ended on 18 February, but she was back out to sea a week later to patrol the area to the north of Sumatra and around the Nicobar Islands in the Indian Ocean.

What happened next may never be known; she never returned from that patrol, and was declared overdue on 20 March. Her fate is simply a matter for speculation – it is possible she

struck a mine, maybe she suffered a mechanical problem. Her wreck has never been found, and there are no known reports from the enemy of any action which involved the possible loss of a Royal Navy submarine.

National veterans' charity Alabaré organised the remembrance service to commemorate the submarine and are grateful to English Heritage for the opportunity to gather at the iconic site.

Image of HMS Stonehenge from the Imperial War Museum collection (© IWM (FL 19381))



➤ CONTACTS



Central Office Contacts	
For all contacts and general enquiries 023 9272 3747	admin@rnassoc.org
CEO/General Secretary	ceo@rnassoc.org
Executive Assistant to the CEO	ceo-ea@rnassoc.org
COS (Chief of Staff)	cos@rnassoc.org
Finance / Membership Support	kathryn@rnassoc.org
Communications	hoc@rnassoc.org
Semaphore Circular	comms@rnassoc.org
Planning – Special Events	malcolm@rnassoc.org
Membership Support	ams@rnassoc.org
Governance Support Officer	gso@rnassoc.org
Wellbeing Programmes	wdm@rnassoc.org
Project Semaphore	gemma@royalnavalassoc.com
Engagement	engagement@rnassoc.org
Comradeship and Sports Coordinator	scc@rnassoc.org
National Advisors	
National Branch Retention and Recruiting Advisor	rna.brra@outlook.com

Find Semaphore Circular online

<http://bit.ly/RNADownloads>

or

RNA Website / Members Area / Downloads /
Circulars / Code (shipmate)

Snail Mail – Postal Address

RNA Central Office,
Building 1/087,
Scott Road,
HM Naval Base,
Portsmouth
Hants PO1 3LT



Steam pinnace 199 at Boathouse 4 Open Pontoon Weekend

➤ RESTORATION PROJECT BRINGS STEAM PINNACE BACK TO LIFE

Since retiring from working as a tour guide on HMS Victory in 2015 Paul Woodman has been a volunteer on the National Museum of the Royal Navy (NMRN)'s Steam Pinnace 199. With his background as a Victualler in the Royal Navy he was immediately made the Bosun, taking charge of the boat's equipment. No tot to issue now though! Here Paul tells the story of the historic craft.

The pinnace was completed on 7 August 1909 by J Reid of Portsmouth in the Camber, where Vosper's later built small warships.

In the 1880s the Admiralty commissioned a range of small steam boats, Steam Pinnaces of between 28ft and 65ft overall, as support vessels for the Fleet. Our 50ft Steam Pinnace 199 typifies any of the 786 pinnaces built for the Royal Navy between 1888 and 1929. Designed to be carried on the boat deck of a battleship or cruiser, these multipurpose ship's boats quickly became indispensable for the many tasks required by a warship at anchor – transporting officers and men, collecting stores and mail, carrying out the function of the Captain or Admiral's barge and a myriad of other duties. During times of hostility, the steam pinnace could be armed with a Hotchkiss quick-firing gun, Maxim machine gun or torpedoes. 199 now carries an original 1887 3pdr Hotchkiss gun with its own remarkable story. During World War 2 the gun was carried by an unknown small warship which was sunk in the North Sea. In the early 1980s a trawler scooped up the gun in its nets and the gun was taken to the Armament Depot at Gosport, where it was refurbished and donated to the NMRN to be fitted to 199 in 1984.

On completion in 1909 she was originally destined for HMS St Vincent, but was assigned to battlecruiser HMS Inflexible. After a brief period of service as the Admiral's barge on board Inflexible during a visit to the USA, she was returned to the Boat Store at Portsmouth Dockyard, prior to a career as a harbour duties pinnace, where she was also used as the Captain of the Port's barge. She remained in this role for the remainder of her service with the Royal Navy.

On 21 July 1948 Steam Pinnace 199 was entered onto the Disposal List, and on 11 August was purchased by Fred Watts Boatyard at Gosport.

In 1952 she was bought by a private owner, named Treleague, and steamed to the Thames where she was subjected to various unsuccessful conversion attempts, including removal of her steam machinery for replacement with a petrol engine.

Becoming more and more dilapidated she was finally recognised for the proud little vessel she once was and rescued from the Thames mud by volunteers.

In 1979, aided by a generous grant from the Friends, she was purchased by the Royal Navy Museum at Portsmouth (now the NMRN).

The initial restoration project, carried out at the Maritime Workshop in Forton Creek, Gosport, lasted four years and closely followed original drawings and specifications and saw 199 faithfully brought back to life in 1984. The original steam auxiliaries were recovered from a yard in Belgium and HMS Sultan contributed the period engine and boiler. She was refitted again in 2000 and steamed until her 102nd birthday in 2011, when it became obvious that if

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she was to continue for the next 100 years it was time for a major conservation project. Carried out mainly by volunteers, this took five years to complete. Their efforts were recognised by several national awards. Steam Pinnacle 199 is part of the NMRN's collection of historic vessels and is a member of the National Historic Fleet, as she is designated as a vessel of 'pre-eminent, national or regional significance'. Of the 786 steam pinnaces built for the Royal Navy only 199 survives as the last known functioning representative of this unique part of our Naval heritage. The pinnacle displaces 14.4 tons, was capable of 12 knots at 624rpm, though today she typically cruises at 10 knots at 300rpm. Steam Pinnacle 199 is now a guest

of Boathouse 4 in Portsmouth Naval Base. Usually berthed on the BH4 piers opposite HMS Warrior, she can be viewed afloat during BH4 'Open Pontoon Days' during the summer months. We recently obtained a new boiler certificate and intend to be in steam in Portsmouth Harbour and around the Solent this summer.

Our small group of volunteers welcome new crew members, so if you are interested they meet on Wednesday mornings. At Boathouse 4 ask for Paul on 199 or contact him at p_woodman@yahoo.com To stay in touch you can register for the 199 monthly newsletter by sending your name and email to editor, Martin Marks at martin.marks@nmrn.org.uk



➤ WITH THE CHAIN GANG

RNA members had the opportunity to get together to experience a one-day course on the use of chainsaws.

The aim of the event was to bring together serving and former serving members of the RNA who have served in recent conflicts.

Collectively the shipmates who took part served in the following operations: Corporate, Banner, Armilla, Sharpguard, Granby, Telic and Herrick.

Those who attended thoroughly enjoyed themselves, and declared it a great success.

The RNA Thriving Together programme gives shipmates the opportunity to attend experience days, sports and challenging activities across the UK and Europe to reunite, step outside their comfort zones or connect with shipmates. We have a varied range of activities planned and confirmed so far this year, with more dates, venues and activities to be confirmed later. If there is something you would like to experience, then contact our Sports and



Comradeship Coordinator (Chris 'Scouse' Reeves) on scc@rnassoc.org

The Thriving Together Programme is funded by the Armed Forces Covenant Fund Trust via Royal Navy and Royal Marines Charity.

Please note – the bushcraft weekend in Dorset scheduled for the end of this month has been slipped right and will now take place on the weekend of **10-11 August**. Other upcoming events include a Snowdon walk (**18 May**), a women-only walking and waterfall weekend in Brecon (**28-30 June**), and introduction to dry stone walling on Dartmoor (**13 July**) and an introduction to surfing weekend in North Devon (**20-21 July**).

► FROM THE GENERAL SECRETARY

Ahoy Shipmates,

Just looked out the window – it's still raining. Through the murk I can see that HMS Prince of Wales is back in Portsmouth after being activated in February when HMS Queen Elizabeth discovered a shaft problem. As we all know, or at least those who have served, reducing a ship's notice for sea from 30 days to 7 days is a massive task and as former naval officer Tom Sharpe's excellent article in the Daily Telegraph of 13 February attests, beating a 30-day notice to sail by 22 days is not a failure. Please take a moment to read it.

British aircraft carrier was rapidly scrambled to take the lead on major NATO exercise (telegraph.co.uk)

It appears the gloominess of the weather is matched by current affairs. The Ukrainian-Russia war is at a dangerous stage with the Ukrainians short of ammunition; the situation in the Middle East is at boiling point with the threat of the Israel-Hamas conflict looking like it could ignite wider conflict; and, closer to home, the stats on illegal immigration into the UK are going through the roof while UK industrial relations make it seem like we are back in the 70s. Meanwhile, we read in the media a constant drip about the state of our Armed Forces. Is it really so bad, or is this opportunism to squeeze more out of the Treasury for Defence? Certainly Sir Alex Younger, former MI6 chief, on the radio the other morning has called upon the public to "ready themselves to fight for their country." Unless you are a complete warmonger, none of this is good for morale and we know that all the Armed Forces are struggling with recruitment and retention. What joy then to see the fantastic job done by Capt Will Blackett and his



Ship's Company in getting Prince of Wales together again and out to sea in the way they did. BZ Cap'n Will and all your people, you make us proud!

Back to earth, I bring better news, indeed, much better news. I am delighted to announce that we have done a deal with the insurance company Trinity to bring discounted tailored insurance products to RNA members – please see the separate article in this Circular. Good news too for Uckers fans who can now play Uckers online through a new app which has just been released. More details here: **Uckers.com**

com has Launched!

Better again, I can announce that for our 75th anniversary next year, the shanties group **Fisherman's Friends** have agreed to support the RNA with two charity concerts (matinee and evening performance) in Portsmouth's Guildhall on 22 October 2025, performing along with the Royal Marines Band. It promises to be a spectacular event which will celebrate the success of the Association in a year which will also mark the 80th anniversary of the end of WWII and the 220th anniversary of the Battle of Trafalgar – Traf 220. More to follow...

Please also see the details later in this Circular for the RNA D-Day 80 Battlefield Tour of Normandy. There are still half a dozen or so places left so please come along. I anticipate demand will outstrip availability so if you have a D-Day family connection please say so and you will be prioritised.

Best news of all – I'm off on leave tomorrow proving the adage that 2nd leave is best!! Now, where did a put that bottle of Factor 30 which I last used in September?

Bill

HMS Prince of Wales leaves Portsmouth for NATO exercises in February. Image: MOD Crown Copyright 2024





➤ SINGING THE PRAISES OF HOSANNA HOUSE GROUP

Have you heard of the Joint Services Hosanna House Group, which is part of HCPT? Each year in June a group of veterans with special needs join the British Contingent to form part of the International Military Pilgrimage (IMP) to Lourdes in France. This is an annual event where veterans with disabilities are cared for by veterans for a respite break, which also means respite for their carers. They also take a full medical team. The IMP includes around 20,000 military participants all in their national uniforms from over 20 countries, each supplying their own military bands. The RNA

play an important part, with most of the veterans coming from Area 4, in which the leaders and organisation come from Plymouth RNA.

Easter sees the children's pilgrimage take place, in which three groups from the RN travel from Plymouth, Portsmouth and Scotland. These children with special needs are siblings from serving members of the RN or veterans.

Next year sees their 30th anniversary – feel free to join them

For more information please contact Richard Tipping at tipping.richard@outlook.com



➤ CALLING THESEUS 144!

Kate Hanna, Liz Dalton, Di Williams & Penny Viney (all maiden names) are planning a 60th Reunion for the girls who joined up on 15 September 1964 and were assigned to Theseus 144 at HMS Dauntless. Sadly, some have crossed the bar

and they have lost contact with others. If there is anyone out there who would be interested in a reunion, some time in September (dates and venue to be confirmed) please contact Kate at katewoodfin@hotmail.com.

➤ CHANGE OF NAME AT HISTORIC DOCKYARD WILL BETTER REFLECT GROUP'S MISSION

As of 28 March, Portsmouth Naval Base Property Trust is now officially known as Portsmouth Historic Quarter.

This change comes as part of their ongoing commitment to better reflect their mission and values.

While their old name served them well, they felt it no longer fully encapsulated the breadth and depth of their work. They remain steadfast in their commitment to serving as custodians of historic buildings, boats, and spaces in and around Portsmouth Harbour, ensuring their preservation and accessibility for generations to come.

As Portsmouth Historic Quarter, they aim to highlight their role in breathing new life into our Naval Heritage, fostering energy and vibrancy while ensuring sustainability and accessibility for all.

They actively create authentic, educational, and enjoyable places, experiences, and opportunities.

This name change aligns perfectly with their mission to break down barriers to access and make the Historic Dockyard feel welcoming and inclusive to all.

They are committed to continuing free access to Portsmouth Historic Dockyard through their Historic Quarter Pass, ensuring that everyone, especially local communities, feels empowered to explore and enjoy our shared heritage.

Hannah Prowse, Chief Executive of the newly-renamed organisation, says they are incredibly excited about this new chapter and look forward to continuing their journey with you as Portsmouth Historic Quarter.

➤ SPORTING CHANCE

If there are any shipmates out there who are looking to take up a career or new job in sport, it might just be worth your while checking out the jobs section of the Club Mirror website – current openings include bar/catering manager, greenkeeper, coaching and marketing and comms manager.

See <https://www.clubmirror.com/jobs-board>

➤ 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).

➤ WELSH UCKERS CONTEST

Builth Wells branch of the Royal Naval Association Area 7 is hosting the Welsh Open Uckers Competition. The event will take place on Saturday 8 June at HMS Swan/ Builth Wells Rugby, club starting at midday.

Singles and doubles teams are welcome. If you would like to take part in the competition, then please email Donna Pauli, Hon Secretary of Builth Wells branch, on Rnabuilthwells@outlook.com

➤ CAMPAIGN TO IMPROVE ACCESS TO HEALTHCARE

The government has launched a campaign to help improve veterans' access to healthcare services, and opened applications to the £2.52 million Veterans Mobility Fund. The Veterans Mobility Fund gives veterans with physical disabilities grants for mobility equipment that is not usually available on the NHS, such as specialist wheelchairs, and mobility scooters, to improve their quality of life. The fund – which is administered by Help for Heroes and Blesma – is open to veterans across the UK and can be accessed through Op RESTORE: The Veterans Physical Health and Wellbeing Service, an NHS service available across England.

The government's new campaign will help GPs identify which patients are veterans to ensure they receive the right diagnosis and referral to veteran mental and physical healthcare such as Op RESTORE and Op COURAGE: The Veterans Mental Health and Wellbeing Service. At the same time, the Office for Veterans' Affairs (OVA) is working with NHS England and the Royal College of General Practitioners (RCGP) to encourage more GP practices to become 'Veteran Friendly' accredited. Currently, 83.9 per cent of Primary Care Networks in England now include an accredited practice. See <https://tinyurl.com/y339kpps> for more information.

➤ SERVICE OF REMEMBRANCE

This year the annual Service of Remembrance will be held at the Cenotaph on Whitehall on Sunday 10 November 2024.

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 – 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

➤ STATEMENT ON NORTHERN IRELAND VETERANS SUPPORT OFFICE CLOSURE

In 2019, the UK government established the Office for Veterans' Affairs (OVA) to lead the cross-government delivery of the Strategy for our Veterans and to provide leadership, advocacy and improved coordination of veterans' issues across the UK.

The UK government and the Minister for Veterans' Affairs are dedicated to ensuring that Northern Ireland's veteran community fully benefits from the OVA's resources and expertise. The OVA will therefore establish an enhanced presence in Northern Ireland to provide strategic coordination of organisations, programmes and initiatives that support veterans' wellbeing locally. Service providers and veterans will be able to make the most of the full range of policy, research, data and communication competencies the OVA has to offer. To avoid duplication of purpose and to facilitate greater alignment with the Strategy for our Veterans, the Northern Ireland Veterans Support

Office (NIVSO), which has been instrumental in coordinating veteran support in Northern Ireland, will close on 30 September 2024. The OVA would like to thank the NIVSO's three dedicated staff for their commitment to supporting veterans and their families over a number of years. The OVA will work closely with the NIVSO to ensure a smooth transition over the next six months. Further information on the UK government's plans to improve support for

veterans in Northern Ireland will be shared in the coming weeks. In the interim, veteran support services will continue as normal across Northern Ireland, including those grant-funded posts and projects facilitated by NIVSO. In parallel with this, the Veterans Welfare Service Northern Ireland (VWS NI) continues to deliver high quality, holistic welfare support to all veterans through its Field Teams across NI.

➤ CARRY ON, ADMIRAL

Prime Minister Rishi Sunak and Defence Secretary Grant Shapps have confirmed that Chief of the Defence Staff Admiral Sir Tony Radakin will be extended in his post until autumn 2025.

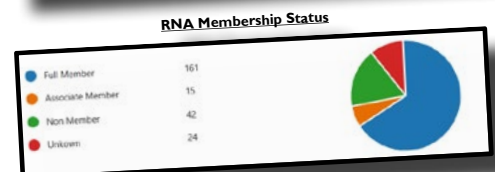
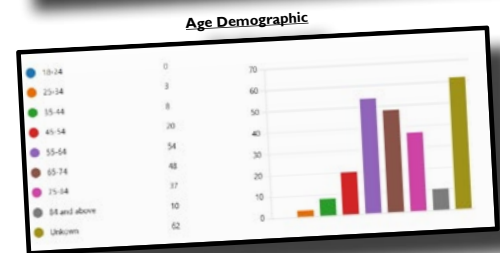
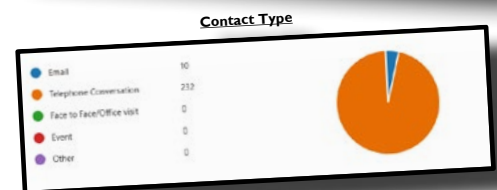
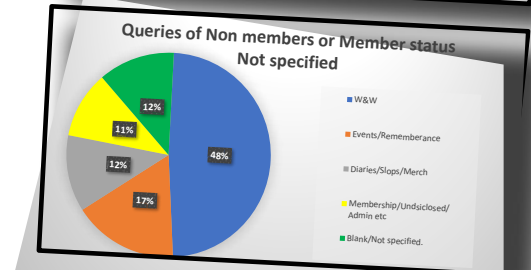
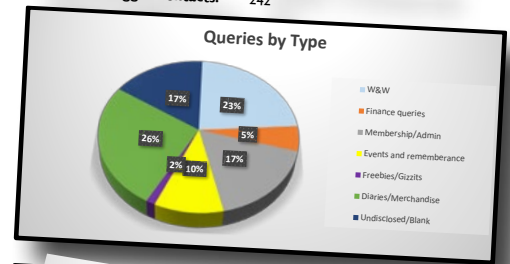
Mr Shapps said: "Admiral Sir Tony Radakin has the expertise and leadership we need in an increasingly dangerous world.

"I'm pleased he will remain as Chief of the Defence Staff and I look forward to continuing our work together to keep our nation and our allies safe and secure. From our support for Ukraine to security in the Red Sea, we're committed to ensuring our Armed Forces have what they need as they defend our interests and support our prosperity."

The Association sends our best wishes to Admiral Radakin.

Central Office Contact Record Form Data Insight

Data Collection Period: July 2023 – 14th November 2023
Number of Logged contacts: 242



► 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.

► DIVING OPPORTUNITY IN THE ADRIATIC

There is a rare opportunity to enjoy some amazing diving – and do your bit for the environment – in Croatia next month.

The HRM Veterans Association, in collaboration with the National Park Mljet and with the support of the municipality of Mljet, is organising an event to clean up the seabed on Mljet and within the Mljet National Park on 24-26 May.

In cooperation with other SCUBA and underwater diving centres on the mainland and from the island of Mljet, a large amount of various wastes is collected every year, brought by sea currents from other parts of the Adriatic, as well as waste from vessels that sail or pass through our waters.

There is the possibility of free

accommodation and food for four people in Hotel Odisej during that period on a first-come first served basis.

Diving equipment can be provided by the diving centre that operates as part of the hotel, or if you prefer you can bring your own equipment, except the oxygen bottles that will be provided on the island.

If you are not skilled in diving, you will sail on small boats that will collect rubbish bags from divers in the sea.

It is recommended to come to Split in the afternoon or evening on Thursday, 23 May 23 – arrival, departure, transportation from and to the airport and accommodation in Split would be at your own expense. You can book a room in a large

number of private accommodation or small family hotels in Split via booking.com or elsewhere.

The drive from the airport to Split is approximately 40-50 minutes depending on traffic.

Expenses covered would include, on Friday 24 May, transportation from Split to the national park Mljet, accommodation in hotel and dinner. Transportation to Mljet.

Saturday 25 May, breakfast, diving, lunch, free time to explore the park, or diving depending on the weather, dinner at the hotel.

Sunday 26 May, breakfast, diving..., departure from the hotel in the early afternoon and return to Split.

If you are interested please contact Bill Lawless on billylawless14@gmail.com

➤ 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 to sign up.

➤ INTERESTED IN DIVING?

Bill Lawless is hoping to get a Special Interest Group going, for anyone who is interested in diving, Initially this would involve meet-ups to discuss a way forward, perhaps arranging diving days or weekends and to get a group of like-minded people together, Bill can be contacted at billylawless14@gmail.com – get in touch to discuss any ideas you may have.

➤ CONFERENCE – ARE YOU COMING TO CARDIFF?

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

If you are new to the city and South Wales, please see the link below to a 'first-timers' web page to give you a flavour of the city, the Bay and what is available.

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

and

<https://www.visitcardiff.com/>

Organisers of the Conference weekend programme 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. This is a black tie event with equivalent dress for the 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

➤ 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

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

Cricket – Mark Smith : Markmiff1962@gmail.com

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

Decorative Ropework – Bob Jones: oldsalt69@hotmail.co.uk

Divers – Bill Lawless: billylawless40@yahoo.com

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

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

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

If you are interested in forming a Special Interest Group please contact admin@royalnavalassoc.com



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

The organising team look forward to welcoming you to Cardiff

To help with organising the seating arrangements for the dinner, please contact S/M Graham Warner on vicechair@rna-7area.org stating you 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 Annual General Meeting, 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.



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

➤ TATTERED ENSIGN FROM HMS WATCHMAN DEMONSTRATES POWER OF ARCTIC STORMS

This tattered remnant (**pictured right**) was taken down from the jack staff of HMS Watchman on 2 March 1944 following an eventful and stormy Arctic convoy. Watchman was a V&W-class destroyer, dating from World War 1. David Hill's father, Ralph Hill, then just 19 years old, joined her straight after training as a signalman, in October 1943. At that time she had just completed a Long Refit and formed part of a Convoy Support Group based in Londonderry, whose primary mission was to protect convoys between the UK and Gibraltar. In February 1944, however, she was detached to join the escort for Arctic convoy JW57, leaving Scapa Flow on 20 February to join the convoy of 100 ships on the 22nd. Initially part of the outer screen, she just managed to avoid a surfaced mine by putting her helm hard over. On the 23rd she was transferred to the inner screen after a fire put her ASDIC set out of action.

The convoy was attacked by aircraft and by numerous U-boats which sank a number of ships, including one of the escorts. There was also a threat from the surface raider Gneisenau, which fortunately did not materialise. Watchman left the convoy on 27 February, having sunk a large U-boat with three depth charge attacks at noon. Running south in a 100mph gale, she suffered damage from the heavy seas, which resulted in sea water contaminating three of the four oil tanks on the ship's starboard side. She was soon running out of fuel and listing heavily as the port side tanks emptied, so she headed for Skalle Fjord in the Faeroe Islands, smashing through the anti-submarine net on the last ton of fuel in the early hours of 2 March. As duty signalman, my father eventually got around to lowering the flag and found it - as you see it - reduced to a fraction of its size by the force of the wind, and incorporating a couple of bullet holes



➤ 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](#)

Date	Presenter	Subject
Mon 8 April	Easter Break	-
Mon 15 April	Easter Break	-
Mon 22 April	Anthony Moth	RN v the World, 1974 – Now
Mon 29 April	Cdr Lee Paddock	Improving the 'Leave Well' Package
Mon 6 May	Early May Bank Holiday	-
Mon 13 May	Iain Greenlees	HMNB Portsmouth Infrastructure
Mon 20 May	Cdre David Eagles	COMRFA
Mon 27 May	Spring Bank Holiday	-
Mon 3 June	Normandy Battlefield Tour	-
Mon 10 June	Chris Taylor	Nine Lives, Four Collisions and a Ditching – part II
Mon 17 June	David Griggs	HMS Beagle

* Lecture subjects may change at short notice.

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

4th May Twickenham Stadium



Army Navy Rugby match

 **RNA still has some
subsidised tickets available**

engagement@rnassc.org for more details

The RNA's Branch Support Fund can help out with up to £250 towards transport (tickets must be purchased via the RNA)

Exclusive RNA Bar for RNA members only

at the Business Debenture Lower Lounge, level 4 in
the South East corner of the stadium

Open from midday on match day



engagement@rnassc.org for more details



➤ **MASSED BANDS OF THE ROYAL MARINES BEATING RETREAT IN LONDON – TICKETS NOW ON SALE**

A spectacular evening of outstanding military music and pageantry will take place in the heart of London this summer, featuring more than 200 of the world's finest military musicians, the precision drill of the 40-strong Corps of Drums and a 100-strong Royal Marines Guard of Honour.

This historic parade, including the emotive Naval Sunset ceremony, is performed on Horse Guards Parade in front of the beautiful backdrop of St James's Park.

Following the success of this event in 2022, the more intimate layout will be used once again, enabling the audience in all seating areas to get a close-up view of the parade as it unfolds in front of them.

The event is staged over two evenings – Thursday 11 July and Friday 12 July, with both evenings starting at 6.45pm. Finishing time is expected to be around 8.15pm. Gates open at 5.15pm, and there will be a security search.

The parade is unlikely to be cancelled in bad



weather. Organisers recommend you bring a coat in case of rain during the event.

For tickets to the Thursday night go to <https://tickets.rnrmc.org.uk/navy-beating-retreat/event-1/seat-selection.htm>

If you would like to attend the Friday night event then you can buy tickets at <https://tickets.rnrmc.org.uk/navy-beating-retreat/event-2/seat-selection.htm>

Seated and special access tickets are available from £15 to £40.

A wheelchair ticket, at £12.50, includes a companion on the same ticket.

All proceeds from this event will go to the Royal Navy and Royal Marines Charity and RMA - The Royal Marines Charity.



► FESTIVAL OF MUSIC CATERS FOR ALL TASTES

The world-famous Massed Bands of His Majesty's Royal Marines played their spectacular annual showpiece – the Mountbatten Festival of Music – at the Royal Albert Hall last month for the 52nd year.

In front of a packed auditorium, the Band – whose members are

among the world's finest military musicians – opened the show with the National Anthem in honour of King Charles III, who is also Captain General of the Royal Marines.

The stunning night of pageantry celebrated the 360th anniversary of the Royal Marines, recognising

360 years of global deployments, battle honours and a valuable presence across the world.

Musician Issie Chadwick, a first-time performer at Festival, said: "This is my first time performing at the Royal Albert Hall, and although I'm not front and centre for my first song, I haven't really done many solos before.

"This will be one of my first solos on one of the world's biggest stages."

A highlight from the evening was the collaboration between the Royal Marines Band Service (RMBS) and Nicko McBrain, the drummer from legendary heavy metal band Iron Maiden.

Nicko played his own drum kit, named Legacy of Royals, alongside the Massed Band and Corps of Drums for the piece The Maiden Legacy, a medley of Iron Maiden's most popular songs. His drumkit will now be sold at auction in order to raise money for the Royal Marines Charity and the Grand Order of Water Rats Charity.



Continued on page 18 →



Continued from page 17

When asked about his collaboration with RMBS, Nicko said: "I was so stoked. It was suggested 'would you like to do next years [Mountbatten Festival of Music]?' and I went 'of course I'd love to do it!' – what an honour, a great honour to be asked and to be involved."

The evening saw the showcase of another performance, Invictus. This piece, centred around the Invictus Games, also featured a video of Team UK alongside other athletes, including four serving members of the Royal Navy and Royal Marines.

Amongst the athletes featured in the video is former Royal Marines Musician Becky York.

Becky plays the clarinet and piano and joined the Royal Marines Band Service at just 18 years old. During her time with RMBS, she performed at many high-profile events including the Royal wedding of the Prince and Princess of Wales, but was medically discharged in 2014 due to an injured hip. This piece is a tribute to

the Invictus Games, Team UK and all the wounded, injured and unwell Service personnel involved in the Games.

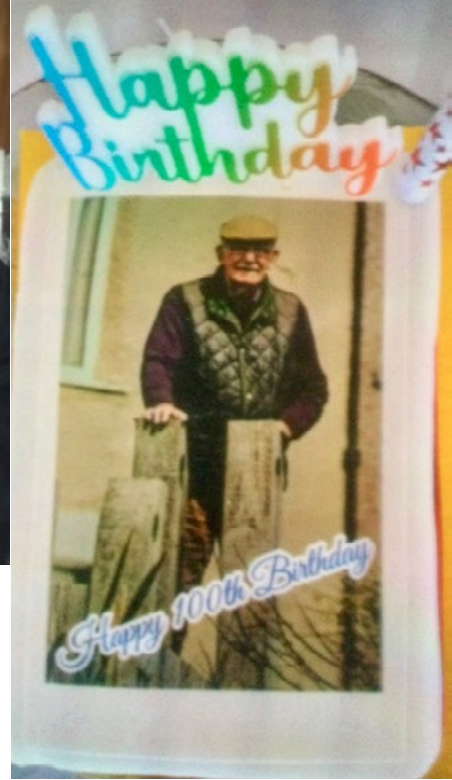
Throughout the evening, the band performed pieces such as Top Gun and Commando Force, featuring the world-famous Corps of Drums, Saved from the Waves, a piece commemorating the 200th anniversary of the RNLI, and Splashes of Tartan, featuring dancers and pipers from the Royal Edinburgh Military Tattoo performers.

Lt Col Huw Williams RM, Principal Director of Music for RMBS, said: "We have a wide variety of styles and pieces at this year's Mountbatten Festival of Music.

"Alongside the regular ceremonial pieces and modern arrangements, we have some guest artists including pipers and dancers from the Royal Edinburgh Military Tattoo and athletes from the Invictus Games.

"We also have an incredible collaboration with Nicko McBrain from Iron Maiden, who is performing a fantastic piece with us which is really exciting for all involved."





➤ 100TH BIRTHDAY FOR GEORGE

George Benning, a Royal Navy World War 2 veteran, had a really good day at Newbiggin-by-Sea Golf Club in Northumberland at his 100th birthday party organised by his granddaughter Sarah Knowles.

The clubhouse was full of relatives and friends alike to honour him.

George received a written letter, framed, from the First Sea Lord, presented to him by Cdr Kevin Stockton who

has 41 years of service in the Royal Navy behind him.

S/M Derek Wilkinson, RNA Wansbeck branch secretary, presented S/M George with his RNA Life Membership and Certificate of Appreciation, along with a framed crest photo of Wansbeck RNA and lapel pin badge.

Also present were fellow branch members S/M Ian Robson, a former Merchant Navy stalwart, and S/M Joan Venables, a former

Wren.

During World War 2 George, who joined the Royal Navy as a boy of 16, served on board HMS Loch Monteith, a commissioned trawler (FY135), from 1942-1945 doing escort duties for submarines, mainly to and from Scapa Flow, among other places.

An excellent buffet was also available after the presentations, and a vast amount of photos were

taken by a lot of people who were there.

As an additional bonus S/M George and his granddaughter were invited to come to any of our branch meetings in Ashington if he so wished, where another surprise awaits him from the Secretary and members...

➤ UCKERS APP IS UP AND RUNNING

Uckers.com is a one-of-a-kind platform that offers a unique and entertaining experience for users of all ages. With a wide range of features including a tutorial and custom rules, Uckers.com is the go-to destination for those looking to add a little fun and excitement to their day. For those who have played before, look no further – this is the true Uckers experience on your phone or tablet!

Uckers.com is jam-packed with all the bells and whistles you could ever want, from unlimited online games against friends to two or four-player games against the computer. With regular updates and new features being added all the time, you'll never run out of things to do.

Whether you're a seasoned pro or a newbie, you'll feel right at home among fellow Uckers enthusiasts. Share tips, tricks, and dits about '8-piecing your oppo' with like-minded individuals who share your passion for all things Uckers.

Head to the App Store or Google Play Store and download the Uckers.com iOS and Android apps today.

For more details see <https://uckers.com/>



Wishing Boyd Salmon a very happy 100th birthday!

Shipmates Brian Rolls and Jay Snell from Christchurch branch visited S/M Boyd on 23 March to wish him many happy returns.

Boyd was reunited with S/M Brian from his days as an RBL volunteer. Brian and Jay took

along a certificate, card and some Pusser's Rum for Boyd for what was a very special day.

Boyd joined the Navy at the age of 17. After training at the former HMS Vernon in Portsmouth, he travelled to Normandy in the immediate aftermath of the D-Day invasion.

➤ RNA D-DAY 80 BATTLEFIELD TOUR TO NORMANDY

Apologies for the somewhat late update on the planned Normandy trip in June which was mentioned in an earlier edition of the Semaphore Circular.

It's been a bit of a job trying to get information with respect to whether we can get access to the organised events in Normandy on 5 and 6 June, and we are still not in possession of the full facts. It may be something to do with who will be rep'ing the UK at these events – the King? The PM?...

It means that the programme attached at the back of this Circular may be a little fluid, but we will certainly aim to visit a number of the key locations in the first few days of the Battle of Normandy which commenced on D-Day 80 years ago. Ferries from Portsmouth to Caen are booked, as is accommodation in France.

Timings: Outbound: Monday 3 June, 1630 ferry from Portsmouth, returning

on 6 June, 1630 ferry from Caen (ETA Portsmouth 2130). We plan to have a briefing in the RNA offices at 1400 on Monday 3 June before loading up the buses and nipping round to the ferry terminal to check in.

Travel to Portsmouth: By train to Portsmouth Harbour – our offices are only a few hundred yards from the station. By car, give us your car details in advance and we can arrange parking in Portsmouth Naval Base for the period we are away.

France Accommodation: The accommodation is in a large house – somewhat grandly described as The Chateau, in Amaye-sur-Orne, just to the south-west of Caen. Originally this was going to be a cycle trip therefore, as far as accom goes, you would be expected to share; whether that's with a spouse/partner or a friend or, if you are a singly like me, we may have to buddy you up. You would

certainly have your own bed though. **Finance:** The personal contribution will be £225. This includes: return ferries, accommodation in France, all transport from arrival in Portsmouth and all meals taken at the Chateau. Not included in this figure: meals taken out on the road/ferry, booze, any museum admission fees, accommodation back in Portsmouth on the Thursday night should it be necessary, travel to/from home to Portsmouth. Conscious that accommodation in Portsmouth for the evening of 6 June is already becoming booked up and expensive, accommodation in the Premier Inn at Port Solent and Havant is still showing room prices at £63 and £60 respectively – we can drop off as they are ten minutes from the ferry port.

Rig: The trip will be relaxed rig throughout, ideally with an item of RNA-branded clothing should you have it, stand fast the ceremonial event on Thursday morning where we ought to wear at least an RNA tie if not a blazer. Ladies equivalent.

Comms: We plan to establish a WhatsApp group for news/admin details for those on the trip.

Signing Up: Please can you let Dave MacAskill know you are in or otherwise by either phone on 07596 530499 or email: engagement@rnassoc.org There's no rush for payment at the moment.

Questions: to Dave MacAskill on 07596 530499 or engagement@rnassoc.org

➤ FREE SAILING COURSES

The RN Sailing Association (RNSA) is running free sailing courses in Plymouth for the children of serving personnel.

Greenwich Hospital and the RNSA are delighted to announce the launch of this exciting new project that will provide free sailing opportunities for young people of families of personnel in the RN, RM and RFA.

The free RYA start sailing weeks are delivered through the Andrew

Simpson Foundation (ASF).

The dedicated courses started at Easter and the aim is to get hundreds of 11-17 year olds sailing. Every effort will be made to make these weeks fully accessible and inclusive, and no previous experience is needed. They will include a water safety element.

Enquiries should be directed to youthsailing@rnassoc.org and the website is available for bookings – see www.rnsayouthcrew.org.uk

➤ PIPERS PLAY 80-DAY TRIBUTE TO D-DAY HEROES

On 6 June 1944 Piper Bill Millin, personal piper to Simon Fraser, 15th Lord Lovat, Commander of the British 1st Special Service Brigade, bravely led his comrades onto Sword Beach, leading them through to Pegasus Bridge, Normandy France, under heavy fire

By way of tribute to the thousands who died to secure freedom, organised by D-Day 80 Pageantmaster Bruno Peek, from 18 March through to 6 June, Pipers will play Highland Laddie at 0800 every morning at locations around the UK, Channel Islands and the Isle of Man, led by Piper John Millin, followed by his son Jacob Millin – son and grandson of Piper Bill Millin.

Bill Millin played Highland Laddie to help rally the troops on the first morning ashore in Normandy, and Highland Laddie was one of the tunes he played amidst the carnage and chaos of war.



➤ RNA TEAMS UP WITH TRINITY INSURANCE

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.

Knowing which providers to turn to for your insurance and financial services eases the stress of managing a household, and having a trusted brand that understands the distinctive needs and characteristics of the Armed Forces community helps avoid becoming prey to some less-principled operators within the mass market.

Trinity has provided exceptional service to serving personnel for the past 24 years.

It takes its inspiration from America, where financial institutions and organisations offer specialised services tailored to the specific needs and risk profile of members of the Armed Forces



community.

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 the physical and mental wellbeing of

the Armed Forces community, but also for its financial wellbeing as associations are key platforms for sharing experiences and advice on financial matters.

This is why Trinity supports associations like 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 new relationship with Trinity, 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.

See panel below for further details.

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



Introducing Combined Services Travel Cover

As a member of the Royal Naval Association and if you are over 50, you qualify for exclusive access to a new travel insurance scheme introduced by Trinity Insurance Services Ltd.

Over 50's Annual Travel Scheme

Especially for associations/organisations affiliated with Trinity Insurance Services Ltd

Worldwide Cover, No declaration of medical conditions

How to Apply

Online via the Members Tab in the Members' Area of the RNA Website:
<https://royal-naval-association.co.uk/members/offers/1/>

By Telephone: 02392 419 856

(Monday to Friday 9am – 5pm, closed Bank Holidays)

About Combined Services Travel Cover

Combined Services Travel Cover provides tailored travel insurance to members of associations/organisations affiliated with Trinity Insurance Services Ltd. Our aim is to provide a quality service at a competitive price, to a standard that provides true peace of mind to the frequent traveller.

Eligibility

The scheme is open to UK resident members of associations / organisations affiliated with Trinity Insurance Services Ltd aged between 50 and 74 and their families. Once a member of the scheme, no upper age limit will apply provided cover is not allowed to lapse and membership of the qualifying association is maintained.

What's included?

- ✓ Full worldwide Cover
- ✓ No medical screening
- ✓ No limit to the number of journeys
- ✓ Any single trip can last up to 65 days (45 days for North America and Caribbean)
- ✓ Winter Sports cover up to 17 days
- ✓ Can opt to include partners, spouse and children (up to 21 years)
- ✓ Pre-existing medical conditions are covered if members are fit to travel and not terminally ill



In procession on the quarterdeck of HMS King George for a church service. At the rear is the Archbishop of Canterbury, William Temple, and leading is the Chaplain of the Fleet, during the former's visit to the Home Fleet at Scapa Flow. Image from the Imperial War Museum collection (© IWM A 11567)

➤ D'YOU HEAR THERE...

Commodore Rich Harris, former Captain of HMS Raleigh, has been collecting pipes... not the smoking type – rather the pipes that you would hear on a warship on specific occasions. Cdre Harris has kindly offered to share some of these pipes with us.

'D'you hear there, a Church Service will take place in the Junior Rates Dining Hall at 1100. All are welcome...'

There are a number of almighty forces that influence the life of a sailor: the Captain, the DEPCO, and maybe God if one is a Christian.

A ship will usually conduct a Church Service on a Sunday at sea irrespective of whether a Chaplain (aka the Bish) is embarked or not. If a Bish is not embarked, Church will either be organised by a volunteer, or someone will be 'voluntold' to organise it. The assistant church officer might be a CW Candidate (a CW candidate is a rating showing promise to become an officer). Despite either not being Christian or having no religious faith at all, this is no impediment to imparting spiritual guidance to the eight members of the congregation. Provision is also made for other religions (such as a prayer room for other faiths).

Each Mess takes turns to sponsor Church, and they will help reconfigure the Dining Hall or Flight Deck into a Church by stacking tables, placing chairs in neat rows, and providing an altar (table). Attendance varies, but when the Chefs sponsor Church, this Service will attract a congregation akin to the Sermon on the

Mount given that cakes will, like a miracle, appear at the end.

Musical accompaniment might be provided by a volunteer musician, or a compact disc. Sometimes the Bish might choose hymns that people actually know.

A Bish might come and go according to the ship's programme. Typically, one can expect to see the Bish embark in the Med during the summer, or to the Far East, but he or she won't necessarily be seen climbing the gangway in Faslane before Ex Joint Warrior. The same can be said of dentists and education officers ☐.

Most guests are welcome onboard (apart from the SIB, Squadron officers, FOSTies, Admirals, and HMRC). Welcome guests might involve expats evacuated from areas of unrest, Sea Cadets, or some of the guests from a cocktail party... although, to this day, it is unclear how five working ladies found their way into the ship's Cocktail Party in Rio. The Young Officer verifying access on the gangway was overwhelmed by all accounts. Rio was a good run ashore. The subsequent two runs ashore, in the Falkland Islands and Tristan da Cunha, were not as good. Cape Town was a good run. However, the saying 'there is no such thing as a bad run ashore' is untrue. Whoever came up with phrase has never been to Nouakchott or Avonmouth.

The keen eyed will note that this particular pipe commenced with a theme involving the Bish and ended with beer-fuelled runs ashore. There is a link there.

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 1st Oct 2024

Royal Maritime Hotel, Portsmouth.

More details coming soon: [engagement @royalnavalassoc.com](mailto:engagement@royalnavalassoc.com)

➤ BRANCH NEWS

Chard Branch

It was with great pride that nine members of Chard branch attended the excellent Area 4 Reunion in Bideford, with two members playing very active parts in the event. The annual Sunday service saw Chard's President and standard bearer Shipmate Malcolm Day, as the Area 4 ceremonial advisor, take on the role of Parade Marshall, with the nine standards paraded.

The service was conducted by the resident Vicar, duly supported by the branch's resident shipmate and Area 4 Chaplain Martin Kirkbride, who added a humorous contribution to the service to the appreciation of all former matelots present.

As well as spending a great weekend with branch shipmates members also enjoyed meeting up with friends and shipmates from the many branches present.





Wansbeck and Tyne Branches

The ship's bell and other artefacts from former Royal Navy minehunter HMS Blyth have been handed over to the town of Blyth for safekeeping – and in the hope that they may be handed back one day...

A ceremony was staged at Bede Academy North in Blyth on 14 March which attracted a large audience, including MPs, civic dignitaries and representatives from all branches of the Services.

The event included a display by the bugles and drums of the Royal Marines Corp of Drums, and a presentation of promotion to some of the Sea Cadets from TS Tenacity in Ashington by Cdre Tom Knowles, who is Flag Officer for Northern England and the Isle of Man.

During a speech by the Commodore about his role in the Royal Navy, he observed that the handover was only a temporary one as a loan to the town of Blyth, as it would need to be handed back again should a new HMS Blyth be built in the future...

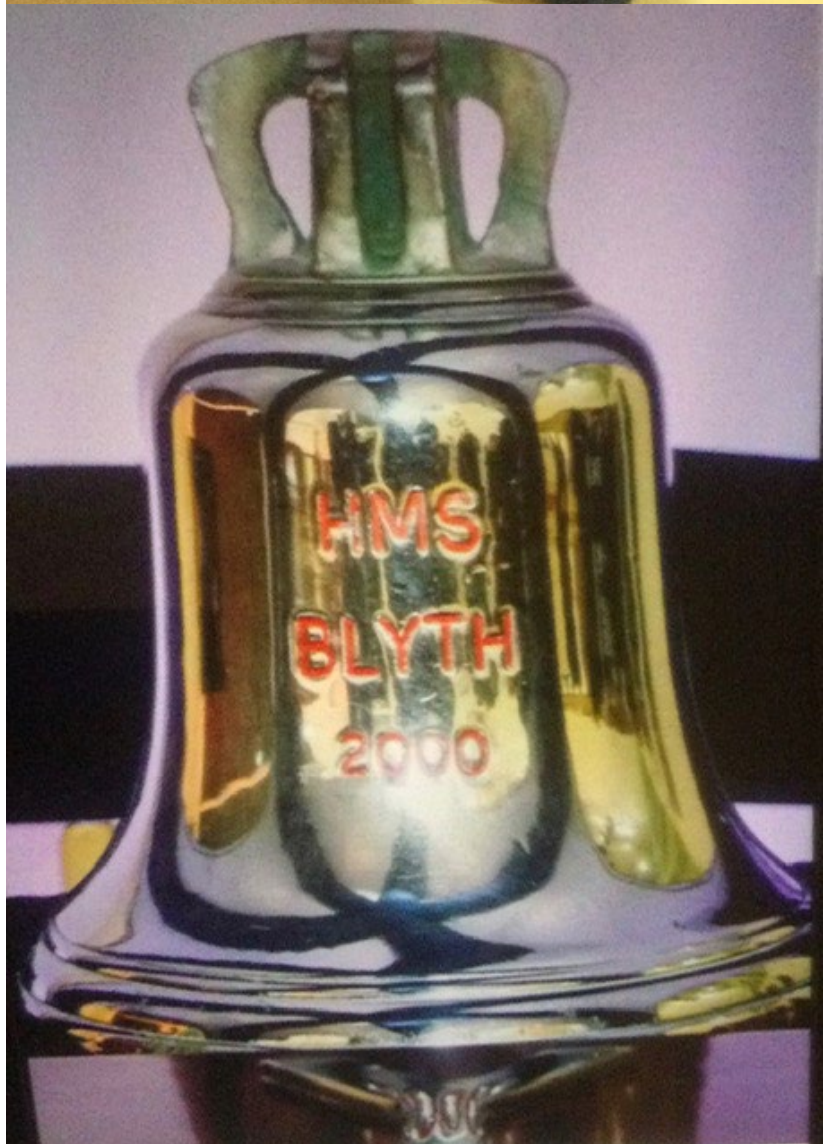
The Mayor of Blyth, Cllr Warren Taylor, spoke about the role of Blyth during the wars, including a mention about the Blyth Battery on the Links, which proved a very useful lookout and warning of aerial attacks to the harbour, and the submarine base in North Harbour which undertook repairs and refits to the submarines of various Allied navies.

This was followed by a film and talk by Cdr Kevin Stockton, who has 41 years' service in the Navy, about the role and job of the Royal Navy today and in the future, giving details about the deployment of our ships throughout the world, and their reason for being there.

This was followed by the signing and handover ceremony itself in a tented area within the hall. An excellent buffet was provided in the dining area of the school.

The ceremony was also a recruiting exercise by the Royal Navy to the people of Blyth and surrounding areas – a proud day for the Port of Blyth.

Among the many guests were the Secretary and his wife from Wansbeck & District branch, and members from Tyne Branch.






Swansea Branch

The recently-reformed Swansea branch held their official Commissioning Ceremony in Brangwyn Hall, Swansea, on 23 March.

The branch was commissioned by the Lord Lieutenant of West Gwent before an audience of more than 100 guests, including members of Swansea Council, Neath Port Talbot Council, the Commanding Officer of HMS Cambria Cdr Carolyn Jones, and members of HMS Cambria ships company.




WELCOME
TO THE
COMMISSIONING
CEREMONY
OF THE
ROYAL NAVAL
ASSOCIATION
SWANSEA BRANCH

SATURDAY 23RD MARCH 2024

Torrevieja Branch

Members of Torrevieja branch make donations to different charities each year, and this year one of the four chosen charities was the Movers and Shakers. The Association of Movers and Shakers (AMS) is a charity which supports people with five neurological diseases and their families.

The local Almoradi-based group working across the Costa Blanca meets each Friday between 1-3pm at O'Brien's Bar and Restaurant El Raso and can be contacted at info@amscb.org.es; they also have a Facebook page and a website <http://www.amscb.org.es> which has more details of the diseases including Huntington's, Parkinson's and Multiple Sclerosis. S/M Brenda Maw nominated the Movers and Shakers as one of this year's charities and was at the presentation of the donation from branch treasurer Carl Loudon to AMS President Marion Smith. Also present were AMS treasurer Peter Jones along with members Steve and Diane Douglas, Andrew Busby, David Smith (Huntington's sufferer) and Mick Gray, together with branch Welfare Officer Kath Marks, Standard Bearer Nicola Louen and S/ Ms Brenda Maw and Graham Shelton.



Eastbourne Branch

Eastbourne branch was extremely pleased to present a talk by their President Rear Admiral John Kingwell CBE. His talk was based on his book 'Maritime Strike', the untold story of his time in command of the RN Task Group off Libya in 2011. The event was attended by nearly 60 people, including branch members and maritime and veterans organisations from Eastbourne and the surrounding area. They were also pleased to host the Mayor of Eastbourne, Cllr Cindy Vaughan. John gave an enthralling talk about his career in the Royal Navy up to taking command of the Task Group – a revealing insight into the pressures and difficulties of such a command, working with and commanding NATO allies and the decision-making process behind committing forces to a combat situation. John highlighted that this was UK Defence at its best, with Army helicopters launching from Royal Navy ships in support of what was largely an air campaign. The talk elicited many questions from the audience who were pleased to gain such a valuable first-hand account of this little-known example of the cooperation, comradeship and courage of the Armed Services and our NATO allies in challenging circumstances.



Christchurch Branch

Christchurch members honoured dedicated branch standard bearer S/M Ian Prescott at their recent AGM. Ian was awarded the Dennis Morris Trophy, named after a past president. In recognition and appreciation of Ian's loyal service and hard work for the branch he received an RNA Pennant and certificate.

S/M Ian has selflessly represented the branch as standard bearer at many veterans' funerals and services of commemorations. He is a worthy ambassador for the branch for which this award is a recognition of appreciation. The award was presented by Branch President S/M Rick Squibb and Branch Chairman Cliff Espin.



Rayleigh Branch

Rayleigh branch held its AGM at the Royal British Legion (RBL) in Rayleigh. Vice Chairman S/M Mike Sandbrook presented the Shipmate of the Year award to SM Mike Burnham for his hard work in covering the following roles during 2023: Hon. Secretary, Hon. Treasurer and Membership Secretary. Rayleigh branch meets every other Wednesday evening at the RBL, Rayleigh and welcomes visitors.



➤ ARMED FORCES TEAMS LOCK HORNS IN TOURNAMENT AT HOME OF CRICKET

If you fancy a great day out on Thursday 16 May, come along to the home of cricket – Lord's, in London and support the Men's Senior Cricket team at the Inter Services T20 tournament.

Not only will you enjoy a fantastic day's cricket, but veterans will also receive a 50 per cent discount and tickets will cost £10 per person.

The day at Lord's starts when the gates open at 0900, and the first match of three matches programmed begins at 1000.

The Women's match – MCC v UKAFCA Ladies – is scheduled to finish at 1245, after which there will be a half-hour lunch break which includes the Red Devils landing on the main ground and Kwik Cricket on the Nursery Ground.

Match 2 will be the Inter Services match between the RAF and the losers of the first T20 match, when the Royal Navy take on the Army at Middleton on Sea Cricket Club on Tuesday 14 May.

This second match at Lords will finish around 1600, when there will be a 30-minute tea break featuring a military band playing on the main ground.

The final match will see the RAF take on the winners of the Tuesday match between the RN and the Army, and is scheduled to finish at 1915. Timings are subject to change, depending on the weather and other conditions.

RNA Members and Guests can come along to the Lower

Grand Stand on the day between 1400 – 1600 and enjoy a cash bar.

Here you will be able to meet both serving Royal Navy and Royal Marine cricketers (male and female players) as well as old shipmates.

This is our inaugural year and, if successful, we aspire to look to do a sit-down lunch next year, but that will only be possible if we get the interest and support.

If you are interested in attending this year, please email S/M Mark Smith (RNA SIG Cricket) on markmiff1962@gmail.com and he will include you in the expected numbers.

It is a great day out and one for us all to get together – partners very welcome. Come along and support the Royal Navy cricket team and have a great day out at the home of cricket.

Some useful dates for this year in the RNA SIG Cricket

Fixtures list: (awaiting two firm dates):

Sunday (July dtbc) RNCC v RMCC (Richard Hollington Memorial Match) – 100-ball format (Match Manager – Mark Smith RNCC Sec / Treasurer) – Hilssea, Portsmouth;

Wednesday 10 July: RNCC Honourable Artillery Company, 40-over Match or two T20, City of London – (Match Manager – Jonathan Parker) – City of London;

Sunday 28 July: Legends Game – (Match Manager – Piers Moore) – Wormsley JPG Ground;

August tbc: RNCC V Ditchling – (Match Manager – Grash Graham) – Ditchling Cricket Club.

➤ OBITUARY

Shipmate Ray Wiltshire

Ray Wiltshire, former Wansbeck & District member crossed the bar on 18 February 2024 at the age of 93 years.

He was born in Portsmouth in 1930, and joined the Royal Navy in 1946. He served for 24 years, retiring from service in 1970 as a Chief Petty Officer, having been a ship's gun specialist.

Amongst the ships in which he

served were aircraft carriers HMS Ark Royal and HMS Indomitable. After leaving the Navy Ray worked at various companies, including Draeger Safety Systems in Blyth. He had been a member of the RNA since the early 2000s and regularly attended meetings at Ashington for many years before resigning membership in 2017 on health grounds. He had been married to his wife

Dorothy for 60 years before she died in 2014.

One of their daughters, Alison, died only a few years before this.

Ray and Dorothy met in Portsmouth while Dorothy was visiting her aunt, but she was originally from the North of England. After they were married they moved back up north and lived in Blyth, Northumberland, where Ray eventually died after being ill for some time.

He had been in a care home since January where he had a bad fall and injury to his head, causing a bleed on the brain.

Ray's other daughter Susan still lives in Blyth with husband Malcolm.

Ray's funeral was on Tuesday 5 March at Blyth Crematorium, attended by four generations of family members and friends.

A Guard of Honour was provided for him by veterans from the branch, members from the RNA and Royal British Legion, and there were two standards from the RNA in front of the hearse at the crematorium.

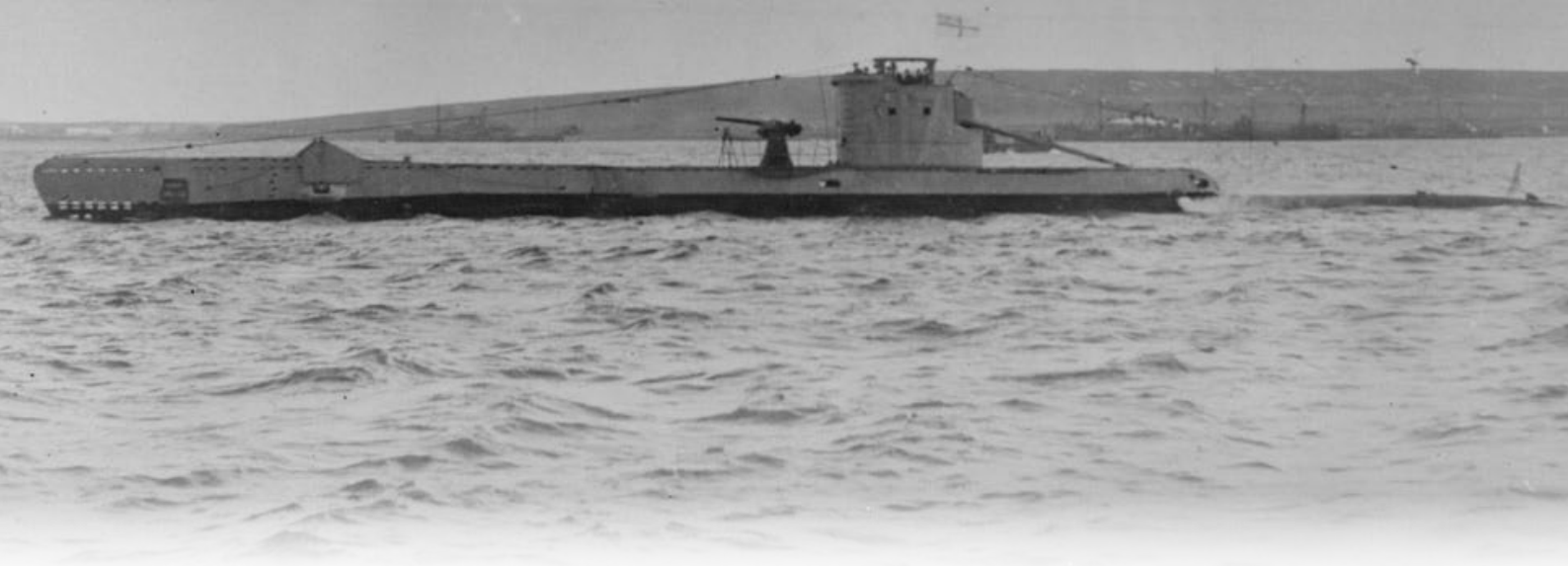
Refreshments after the funeral were at the South Beach pub in Blyth.

An anchor wreath was provided by RNA Wansbeck branch, and there were many floral tributes from family members and friends.

He will be sadly missed by all who knew him.



HMS Urge. See 1 March. Image from the Imperial War Museum collection (© IWM FL 3433)



➤ APRIL SWINGING THE LAMP

1 April 1942

Submarine HMS Urge sank the Italian cruiser *Giovanni delle Bande Nere* in the Mediterranean 11 miles south east of Stromboli – the last of four sister ships sunk by the Royal Navy. Urge is possibly not one of the best-known of Royal Navy submarines, but she was one of the most highly-respected boats of the war, and her Commanding Officer, Lt Cdr Edward Tomkinson, would probably have ended the war as one of the most decorated Naval officers had his submarine survived. One of the second group of U-class boats built by Vickers Armstrong at Barrow at the start of World War 2, Urge served almost exclusively in the Mediterranean, causing havoc during a short but intense career. So dangerous was this submarine to enemy forces that she sank a 10,000-ton Italian tanker in the Bay of Biscay in April 1941 while en route to Gibraltar to enter the Med and join the 10th Submarine Flotilla, based in Malta. She also damaged another Italian merchant ship which was practically underwater by the time it made it back to port. In December 1941 torpedoes fired by Urge damaged Italian battleship *Vittorio Veneto* during the First Battle of Sirte, and another battleship, *Littorio*, just managed to evade an attack by Urge. On 1 April 1942 Tomkinson had cruiser *Giovanni delle Bande Nere* – on passage to La Spezia to repair storm damage – in his sights at a distance of almost three miles, and two torpedoes struck the ship, breaking her in two. She was the last of the four *Alberto di Guisano*-class ships lost in action – two were sunk by British and Dutch destroyers at the Battle of Cape Bon in December 1941

while the third had been lost at the Battle of Cape Spada in July 1940. Urge would have sunk many more ships, military and civilian, if her torpedoes had not malfunctioned, and she was also responsible for launching numerous commando and Special Forces raids on shore-based targets. It is thought she had more kills to her name but they could not be confirmed at the time, and post-war British admirals who knew Tomkinson firmly believed that had he survived the war he would have “almost certainly” have gained a third bar to his Distinguished Service Order and should have been awarded the Victoria Cross. A number of members of the crew were also recognised with Distinguished Service Crosses and Distinguished Service Medals. With Malta under almost constant attack by late April 1942 it was decided to move the 10th Flotilla to Alexandria. She sailed from Grand Harbour on 27 April with 32 crew, 11 Naval personnel on passage and a war correspondent, but never reached Egypt. It was not until her wreck was discovered in 2019 that her fate became clear – she had struck a mine while on the surface just minutes after leaving Malta, and had sunk rapidly with no survivors. A memorial to Urge was unveiled at Fort St Elmo on 27 April 2022.

2 April 1969

The White Ensign was hauled down for the last time at HMS St Vincent, the Boys Training Establishment at Gosport, when the site was formally decommissioned. Training had ceased at the end of the autumn term 1968 and a closing ceremony was held on 8 December. The site had been known as

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Forton Barracks, but was commissioned as HMS St Vincent on 1 June 1927, taking the name of the hulk at Haslar Creek that had been used for training boys between 1862 and 1905. At the outbreak of World War 2 training was switched to HMS St George on the Isle of Man while St Vincent assumed the role of training Fleet Air Arm officers, with a signal school and torpedo training unit also opening in the early months of the war. At the end of hostilities St Vincent reverted to training boys, reopening in December 1945. On closure the site was handed over to civilian authorities on 3 April 1969, by which time all new entry training had been concentrated at HMS Raleigh, Torpoint. © IWM A 18353 Naval airmen under training are pictured while in Divisions are in progress at HMS St Vincent on 5 August 1943

3 April 1974

A tribute to their fellow mariners by the ship's company of HMS Endurance went slightly awry on 3 April 1974 during the first Whitbread Round-the-World Race. Ice patrol ship Endurance was positioned off Cape Horn to monitor the progress of the 14 yachts still competing in the third leg of the race, which was organised by brewing company Whitbread and the Royal Naval Racing Association. The yachts had already endured some fierce weather (three men died during the race when they were lost overboard from various yachts) when they approached the dreaded cape at the southern

point of the South American continent during the second of four legs. HMS Endurance fired blank rounds as a salute to their colleagues on board Naval race entry Adventure, which had won the first leg and was competing hard for overall honours. A piece of wadding from the final round pierced Adventure's headsail as the Nicholson-55 yacht was buoyed up on large wave, which meant the yacht crew spent the rest of day patching up the hole. On the final leg back to Portsmouth Adventure had to beat their rivals from Mexico on board Sayula II by more than three days, but ongoing rudder problems and light winds slowed their progress, which mean they had to be content with second place. The race, known subsequently as the Volvo Ocean Race and now just the Ocean Race, is still run every three or four years.

4 April 1798

HMS Pallas, a 32-gun 5th rate, dragged her anchors in a gale in Plymouth Sound, and was wrecked on the Mount Batten reef. She was one of three frigates built between 1791 and 1793, in her case at Woolwich Dockyard while her sisters Stag and Unicorn were built at Chatham Dockyard. Pallas, which had a ship's company of around 250, saw service in the Channel and Mediterranean. She was returning from a patrol off the French coast in early April 1798 when she anchored in Plymouth Sound in squally weather, and with winds easing overnight the watch was sent to bed, but a gale sprang up on the morning

Naval Airmen under training are pictured while Divisions are in progress at HMS St Vincent on 5 August 1943. See 2 April. Image from the Imperial War Museum collection (© IWM A 18353)

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**HMS Illustrious pictured in August 1942.
See 5 April. Image from the Imperial War
Museum collection (© IWM A 13560)**



of 4 April, causing Pallas to lose an anchor and be driven towards the shore. Her other anchors held her in shallow water and the crew brought down her topmasts and yards to counter the wind, but still she was forced towards rocks. Even the removal of her masts failed to save her, and she was driven stern-first onto rocks at the north of Jennycliff Bay, on the eastern shore of the Sound. At first she was kept head-on to the waves by her remaining anchors, but they parted mid-afternoon and she was washed broadside-on to the rocks. Many onlookers had gathered on the shore to help rescue the stranded sailors and to watch proceedings, and all the crew bar one man were rescued. During the night Pallas swung round on the reef and stuck firm, close enough to shore to allow work parties to recover stores and copper sheathing at low tide, however she had been damaged and could not be refloated, so was broken up on the rocks where she came to rest.

5 April 1939

Aircraft carrier HMS Illustrious was launched at the Vickers Armstrong yard in Barrow-in-Furness – the first carrier and, at more than 23,000 tons, the largest ship built there. The lead ship of a class of four, Illustrious was built under the restrictions imposed by the Second London Treaty of 1936, and as such operated on a different principle to predecessor HMS Ark Royal – instead of carrying a large air group including fighters to protect her, she relied more on anti-aircraft armament and an armoured flight deck. In effect, the armour – ranging from 3in to 4.5 in – made the hangar a strong steel box which, though it had less headroom than other classes of carriers, provided enhanced protection for aircraft and mechanics. She was the first carrier in the world to have radar fitted in build – Type 79Z early-warning radar. When completed she had a ship's company of around 1,300, but by the last year of the war that had ballooned to almost 2,000. Illustrious

began her sea trials in the western Channel but the fall of France to Germany made that too dangerous, so the programme was completed in Bermuda. Her early war service saw her in the thick of the action in the Mediterranean, initially with Force H, attacking Axis shipping and ports. Of particular significance was her role as the carrier in the Battle of Taranto, when she launched 21 Swordfish in two waves on the night of 11-12 November 1940 against the Italian fleet. The Fleet Air Arm's success that night helped tip the balance in favour of the Allies in the Med; one battleship put out of action for the rest of the war, two more were seriously damaged and there was also damage to lesser warships and aircraft. Two Swordfish were lost, with two aircrew killed. In January the following year Illustrious was herself badly damaged in attacks by Stuka dive-bombers, knocking out her aircraft lifts, starting fires and flooding. More than 120 men died in the attacks, but Illustrious managed to limp back to relative safety in Malta. Further bombing raids on her in January caused further serious damage, such that she was sent via the Suez Canal to Durban to have her hull inspected, after which she sailed the Atlantic for Norfolk, Virginia, for full repairs and modifications. On her way back to the UK in company with HMS Formidable, which had also undergone repairs, the two ships collided, and Illustrious required further repairs at Birkenhead. In 1942 she took part in operations in the Indian Ocean, hampered slightly by a hangar fire that destroyed 11 aircraft, after which she joined the Eastern Fleet. Back in the UK in early 1943 she took part in numerous flying trials and underwent a refit as well as escorting RMS Queen Mary part of the way across the Atlantic as the liner took Winston Churchill to Canada for crucial Allied talks. At the end of the year she returned to the Indian Ocean, taking a leading role in attacks on Japanese infrastructure and oil refineries/storage depots in the Andaman Islands and the Dutch East

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Indies. 1945 saw *Illustrious* in the Pacific as part of Task Force 57, supporting initial operations for the invasion of Okinawa, but a near-miss by a kamikaze caused substantial damage to her hull when the aircraft's bomb exploded in the water close to the carrier, ending her war service as she had emergency repairs in Sydney then sailed for Rosyth, where she was undergoing remedial work when Japan surrendered. Back in service, *Illustrious* was designated the Home Fleet training and trials carrier, and underwent further modernisation in 1948. She was paid off in early 1955 and broken up two years later.

6 April 1958

Light cruiser *HMS Bermuda* arrived in the island of Bermuda on her first visit to the colony from which she took her name. The Fiji-class light cruiser, built by John Brown and Co at Clydebank, was launched in September 1941 and saw service in the Mediterranean (including Operation Torch, the Allied invasion of French North Africa), North Atlantic and Arctic. After a refit in mid-1944 the 8,800-ton cruiser was sent to the Pacific, though she had not joined the front line when the atomic bombs

at Hiroshima and Nagasaki effectively ended the war. However, that was not the end of the fighting for *Bermuda*, as she had to fend off an attack by Japanese aircraft on 6 September while repatriating Allied prisoners of war from the Philippines – it is thought the air crews were either unaware of the end of hostilities of die-hards who refused to accept defeat. Whatever the reason, *Bermuda* was able to fend off the attack without any damage. She remained in the Far East after the war, followed by stints in the South Atlantic and Mediterranean; during the latter she and *HMS Gambia* played an important role in the response to the Ionian earthquake of August 1953 off Zakynthos, which killed between 500-800 people. Refitted in the mid-1950s, the cruiser again served far and wide, including the visit to Bermuda in April 1958, the first of at least three such calls. Decommissioned in 1962, *Bermuda* was scrapped at Briton Ferry in Wales in the summer of 1965.

7 April 1875

Ironclad central battery ship *HMS Alexandra* was launched at Chatham Dockyard on 7 April 1875, clocking up a number of records in her creation and service life. The 9,500 vessel was something of a curiosity which was down to the times in which she was built – technology was moving on apace, but some old habits were dying hard in top Naval circles... Originally intended to be named *HMS Superb*, the ship was the first to be fitted with advanced vertical compound high-pressure steam engines, yet the powers-that-be could not quite shake off the notion that a ship needed sails, so she was also fitted with three rigged masts. Thanks to her engines (and not her sails), at that time *Alexandra* was the fastest battleship in the world. Her main guns were housed in a central armoured box battery, and when launched she had two 11in muzzle-loading guns, ten 10in muzzle-loading rifled guns and six 13cwt breech-loading guns, all below deck – as such she was the last Royal Navy battleship to carry all her main armament below deck, and one of only two ships to mount 11in guns (*HMS Temeraire* being the other). She was the first British ironclad to be launched by royalty – the Princess of Wales, later Queen Alexandra, hence the name change at launch. The religious element of the launch ceremonies were the first since the reformation, and were carried out by the Archbishop of Canterbury. She was commissioned in January 1877 as flagship of the Mediterranean Fleet, and went on to serve as a flagship throughout her entire active service, which was also a first. She had the odd scrape, going aground in the Dardanelles in February 1878 and being towed off by *HMS Sultan*, and she also holed *HMS Achilles* in a collision in the Mediterranean the following year. During

HMS Bermuda entering Grand Harbour, Malta after completion of the Mediterranean Fleet's first Summer Cruise in August 1953. See 6 April. Image from the Imperial War Museum collection (© IWM A 32651)



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the bombardment of Alexandria in 1882 (part of the Anglo-Egyptian War) one of her ship's company, Gnr Israel Harding, won the Victoria Cross for picking up a live enemy 10in shell which had lodged in the deck above a magazine and dropping it (gently!) into a tub of water. In 1891 she became flagship of the Admiral Superintendent of Naval Reserves in Portsmouth, a role she held for ten years, and in 1899 she was involved in development trials for wireless technology; in July that year she picked up a signal from HMS Europa, relayed by HMS Juno, that covered 95 miles, which was at the time a record. The last five years of her life were spent as an engineering training ship, and she was sold in 1908 for scrapping.

8 April 1940

Destroyer HMS Glowworm was lost on 8 April 1940 in a hopeless duel with German heavy cruiser Admiral Hipper – an action that resulted in a Victoria Cross for her commanding officer, Lt Cdr Gerard Roope (**pictured right, Imperial War Museum image © IWM (A 29585)** in part through a recommendation from the German commander. Glowworm (1,900 tons) was launched in the mid-1930s at the Thornycroft yard at Woolston in Southampton and served in the Mediterranean, including patrols during the Spanish Civil War. She was in Alexandria



when war broke out, and the following month transferred to the Western Approaches Command for anti-submarine patrols and convoy escort duties. She continued those tasks in the North Sea from November 1939 when transferred to the 22nd Destroyer Flotilla in Harwich, though she was out of action for more than a month after a Swedish ship collided with her in fog in February 1940. Back with the

HMS Glowworm under way and on fire as she begins her approach to ram the German cruiser Admiral Hipper. See 8 April. Image from the Imperial War Museum collection (© IWM FL 1973)

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1st Destroyer Flotilla at Scapa Flow in late March, Glowworm was assigned to help escort battlecruiser HMS Renown during a period of minelaying operations off Norway. On April 7 she detached to search for a sailor lost overboard, and was returning to the task group the following morning when she discovered German destroyers Z11 and Z18 in thick fog. Glowworm immediately opened fire on the German ships, which were escorting the 18,500-ton Admiral Hipper as part of an invasion force heading for Trondheim in Norway. The Germans withdrew to seek support from Hipper, which caught the British destroyer by surprise and hit her with the fourth salvo from her 8in guns. Glowworm's CO, Lt Cdr Gerard Roope, ordered his ship to make smoke and turned into it, but to no avail as the Germans had radar-directed guns. When Glowworm emerged from the smoke she was battered by Hipper's 8in and 4.1in guns, destroying her bridge, radio room and forward 4.7in gun while seriously damaging her engine room and bringing down her mast (which short-circuited Glowworm's siren, causing her siren to howl throughout the remainder of the action. Roope managed to release five torpedoes at 800 metres range, but all missed as Hipper stayed bows on to minimise the risk of being struck. Glowworm's five remaining torpedoes were also released but again all missed, and as Hipper emerged from Glowworm's smoke the two ships were very close. Roope ordered the ship's damaged helm hard over and managed to ram the cruiser, opening her hull in several places and destroying a torpedo mounting. But the impact broke off Glowworm's bow, and as she drifted away on fire her boilers exploded and she sank rapidly, taking more than 100 of her crew with her. Hipper hove to in a bid to recover a German sailor who had fallen overboard and to pick up British survivors – 40 were taken on board, though half a dozen later died of wounds. Lt Cdr Roope was lost with his ship; having helped rescue his crew he managed to grab a rope at the side of the cruiser but did not have the strength to hang on and fell back into the North Sea, where he drowned. He was awarded the first VC of World War II, in part through recommendation by the CO of Admiral Hipper, Kapitän zur See Helmuth Heye, who sent a message to the Admiralty via the Red Cross praising the gallantry of Roope and his crew. The award was not made to his widow until after the war. Admiral

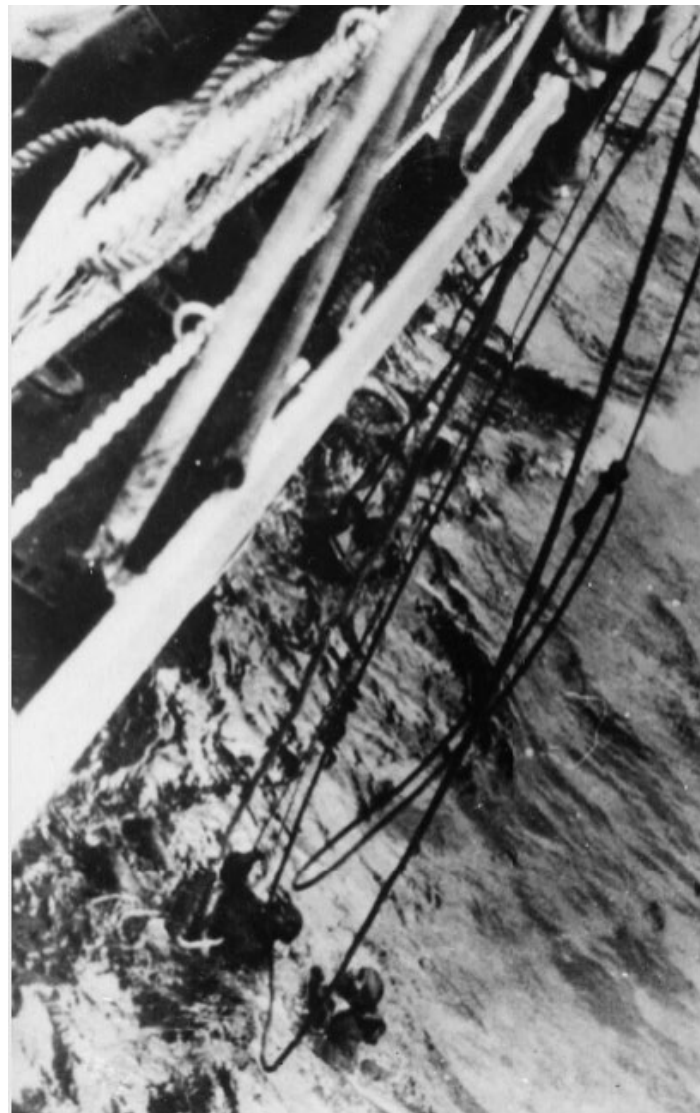
Survivors from HMS Glowworm are taken on board German cruiser Admiral Hipper. See 8 April. Image from the Imperial War Museum collection (© IWM HU 104705)

Hipper was not badly damaged, in the action though she took on hundreds of tons of water, and she carried on with her mission, though Glowworm had managed to send a signal to alert Royal Navy commanders as to the presence of the enemy formation.

9 April 1958

Submarine HMS Turpin arrived in Devonport on 9 April 1958 after the longest submarine tow in Royal Navy history. Launched in the final year of the war, the T-class submarine had been on exercises in the West Indies when both of her main diesel engines were declared inoperative, in effect rendering the boat useless, as without the diesels she could not dive or recharge her batteries. Repairs could not be carried out in the region, so 1,100-ton Bustler-class Fleet tug HMS Samsonia was sent out from Devonport to the Kingston, Jamaica, and took Turpin in tow, covering the 5,200 miles via the Canary Islands in just under 30 days. Turpin was sold to the Israeli Navy in 1965 and renamed Leviathan, eventually being scrapped in 1978. Samsonia, built in 1941-2 as part of a class of eight specifically for wartime ocean towing, rescue and salvage work, continued to serve the

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Fleet tug HMS Samsonia pictured in 1943. See 9 April. Image from the Imperial War Museum collection (© IWM (A 15067))



Fleet until she was sold to a Yugoslav commercial operation in 1974; she was laid up in 1979 and used for spare parts for her sister, ex-Bustler, which the Yugoslavs had also bought. Samsonia was finally broken up in 1987.

10 April 1966

Frigate HMS Berwick intercepted Greek tanker SS Manuella on Easter Sunday in 1966 off Portuguese Mozambique in an early incident during the recently-established Beira Patrol. The patrol was a blockade of oil shipments to Rhodesia – now Zimbabwe – through the port of Beira in Mozambique in support of United Nations economic sanctions against Rhodesia. The British colony had unilaterally declared independence in November 1965, rejecting a planned move to independence that involved guarantees of equality and black majority rule. This attracted UN sanctions, and the British initiated the oil embargo under that UN

resolution (217), with the Beira Patrol being stood up on 1 March 1966, and within days aircraft from HMS Ark Royal were sweeping the skies above the Mozambique Channel, between Mozambique and Madagascar. The patrol at first required the presence of two frigates or destroyers generally operating up to 50 miles from Beira, backed by auxiliary vessels and surveillance aircraft, and these ships would check oil tankers heading for the port, which was the terminus of an oil pipeline to Rhodesia. At first the warships were unable to use force to prevent suspect tankers reaching Beira, but a subsequent UN resolution (221) was passed on 9 April 1966 allowing Royal Navy ships to use force, but only for tankers thought to be bound for Beira, and not any other Mozambique ports. Rothesay-class frigate HMS Berwick was quick to employ the new freedom to act, stopping the Manuella at 0730 GMT on 10 April 1966 some 150 miles from Beira. Her Master claimed he was heading for Durban but would not guarantee she was not going to put into Beira, at which point the Royal Navy boarding party was strengthened and declared they could legitimately use force against an attempt to run the blockade. Manuella, with Berwick in close company, then set course for Durban. The tanker was refused permission to discharge her cargo in Durban, so left South Africa bound for Rotterdam. The Beira Patrol was regarded as an unpopular task with Royal Navy sailors, and the oil embargo was, in any case, ineffective; oil could be passed to Rhodesia through other Mozambique ports or by tankers using the territorial waters of South Africa and Mozambique, where the Royal

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The boarding party from HMS Berwick go aboard the Greek tanker Manuella on an oil interception in the Mozambique Channel, April 1966. See 10 April. Image from the Imperial War Museum collection (© IWM A 35030)

Navy had no jurisdiction The Patrol ended on 25 June 1975, when Mozambique gained its independence from Portugal, by which time almost 50 tankers had been intercepted, with more than 80 per cent of them permitted to continue on their way.

11 April 1997

The White Ensign was hauled down at HMS Tamar on Stonecutters Island in Hong Kong for the final time, 100 years to the day after the troopship HMS Tamar arrived in the colony as receiving ship and headquarters for Naval activity. The Royal Navy first staked a claim on Hong Kong in late January 1841 in support of the opium trade. Early sites were expanded during the Second Opium War in China between 1856 and 1860, and the 3,700-ton troopship Tamar, which had a bit of a propensity to run aground (four times between 1866 and 1876), was hulked off the dockyard on 11 April 1897. She continued in that role until 12 December 1941 when, having been towed out to a buoy as the Japanese closed in on Hong Kong, she was scuttled to prevent her falling into enemy hands. The remains of the old hybrid steam and sailing ship were found in 2014 in the area of the Wan Chai ferry pier. When Hong Kong was liberated from Japanese hands in 1945 HMS Tamar reappeared at the former Wellington Barracks in the Admiralty district, which were replaced by the newly-built Prince of Wales complex in 1978. Shortly before

the British departed Hong Kong in 1997 the naval base was relocated to the northern shore of Stonecutters Island (Ngong Shuen Chau), off Kowloon. Stonecutters was – as the name suggests – originally the site of a quarry and at various times home to the Royal Navy's Radio Interception and Direction-Finding Station, a safe location for the storage and production of explosives, a Royal Navy hovercraft base and, during the Japanese occupation, home to a snake farm providing venom for antidotes. When HMS Tamar closed on 11 April 1997, all British forces operated from the Prince of Wales complex until the final handover to the Chinese on 1 July 1997; the building was subsequently renamed the Chinese People's Liberation Army Forces Hong Kong Building.

12 April 1945

HMS Tapir torpedoed and sank U-486, bound for Bergen, on 12 April 1945 – the last sinking by a British submarine in home waters. U-486 had sunk the troopship Leopoldville five miles off Cherbourg on Christmas Eve 1944 on her first patrol, killing almost 800 US soldiers, and on Boxing Day she sank frigate HMS Capel and badly damaged frigate Affleck. Tapir was only commissioned on 30 December 1944 and after trials and exercises in Scottish waters she left Lerwick on her first war patrol on 5 April 1945. Her first action was to establish her patrol area with sister boat HMS Turpin, which had not been

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The closure ceremony at HMS Tamar on Stonecutters Island in Hong Kong. See 11 April



able to take sights for several days because of fog and was by that stage well out of her own patrol zone to the south of Tapir, around 20 miles out of position. On 12 April at 0730 Tapir's ASDIC operators picked up a sound which they believed was a U-boat snorkelling, so the British submarine was on alert when the German vessel – U-486 – surfaced at around 0750. Within three or four minutes Tapir had fired a spread of eight torpedoes, though two failed to launch. A couple of minutes later one torpedo was seen to strike the U-boat, which blew up; ASDIC operators confirmed the sinking when they detected the sound of the boat breaking up as it sank. Following that patrol, on 6 May 1945, Tapir left Holy Loch bound for Gibraltar on the first leg of a passage to the Far East and Australia to join the British Pacific Fleet. She conducted several days of exercises in Malta en route and called in at Port Said, Aden and Trincomalee before reaching Fremantle, though there is no record of her carrying out any patrols in the region. In June 1948 Tapir was loaned to the Netherlands Navy and commissioned as HNLMS Second the following month, undertaking a trip to the Caribbean in 1949. She recommissioned in the Royal Navy in December 1953, and was scrapped 13 years later at Faslane.

© IWM FL 8657 HMS Tapir under way at Barrow

13 April 1940

A force of 200 Royal Marines was landed by heavy cruiser HMS Suffolk to occupy the Faroe Islands on 13 April 1940 as part of Operation Valentine. The move, triggered by the German occupation of Norway and Denmark, was made to secure the strategically-important archipelago in the North Atlantic, almost equidistant from Scotland, Norway and Iceland. In 1940 the Faroes were an administrative district of Denmark, which was taken by the German on 9 April 1940. Two days later Churchill (as First Lord of the Admiralty) told Parliament that the islands would be occupied by British

forces, shielding them “from all the severities of war” and withdrawing when Denmark was liberated. That same day Suffolk embarked the Royal Marines (‘Faroese Force’ or ‘Force Sandall’, after the officer in command, Lt Col Sandall) and two howitzers at Scapa Flow. Escorted by destroyers HMS Havant and HMS Hesperus, Suffolk was en route to Torshavn by 12 April, and when the destroyers reached the harbour Danish officials held an emergency meeting of the Faroese parliament which rubber-stamped the occupation. Suffolk arrived on 13 April and after formalities (including what the British took to be a formal protest, which was met with assurances that the force would not interfere with the business of the locals) the Faroese Force went ashore and established a garrison. The Royal Marines were replaced by British Army formations from the end of May. The islands were never under serious threat of a German invasion for the remainder of the war, though there were occasional air raids by the Luftwaffe and around 200 Faroese mariners, mainly fishermen, died as a result of bombs or drifting mines. Keeping to their word, the occupation was formally ended in May 1945 when the Germans were defeated in Europe, and British forces had withdrawn by September after what was considered to be, by and large, a necessary but good-natured and well-received operation.

14 April 1942

HMS Upholder was lost in the Mediterranean on or around 14 April 1942 – the exact fate of the boat remains unclear. But what was certain was that Upholder, commanded by Lt Cdr Malcolm Wanklyn, became the most successful Royal Navy submarine of World War II, despite the relative shortness of her career. The U-class submarine, built by Vickers-Armstrong at Barrow-in-Furness, was commissioned on 31 October 1940 and began her wartime career as part of the 10th Submarine Flotilla in Malta, which she joined

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in mid-December. She completed 28 patrols in all, sinking more than 93,000 tons of Axis shipping including submarines. Wanklyn had already been awarded the Victoria Cross (for a daring attack on a heavily-defended convoy in May 1941 in which she sank Italian troopship Conte Rosso, killing almost 1,300 soldiers, on her fourth war patrol), and Upholder went on to sink two further such ships later that year, the 19,500-ton sisters Neptunia and Oceania, killing almost 400 soldiers (though almost 5,500 were saved). On 6 April 1942 she began her 26th Mediterranean war patrol, scheduled to be her last before she returned to the UK for refit – it was indeed her last, but her crew never went home. After dropping two special agents on the North African coast, on 12 April she was ordered to form a patrol line with submarines HMS Thrasher and HMS Urge in the hope of intercepting an Italian convoy, but it is not clear whether she ever received that signal. She was reported overdue on 14 April, and the most likely explanation is that in an attempt to intercept a major westbound Axis convoy heading for Tripoli she struck an Italian mine laid the previous year north of the port. Upholder's loss was not announced by the Admiralty until 22 August 1942, and Their Lordships took the unusual step of paying tribute to the courage and resourcefulness of Wanklyn and his crew. The communiqué observed: "Such was the standard of skill and daring set by Lt Cdr Wanklyn and the officers and men under him that they and their ship became an inspiration not only to their own flotilla, but to the Fleet of which it was a part and to Malta, where for so long HMS Upholder was based. The ship and her company are gone, but the example and inspiration remain."

15 April 1887

The last British officer survivor of the Battle of Trafalgar, Lt Col James Fynmore RM died in Peckham at the age of 93. He outlived the last Royal Naval officer survivor, Admiral of the Fleet

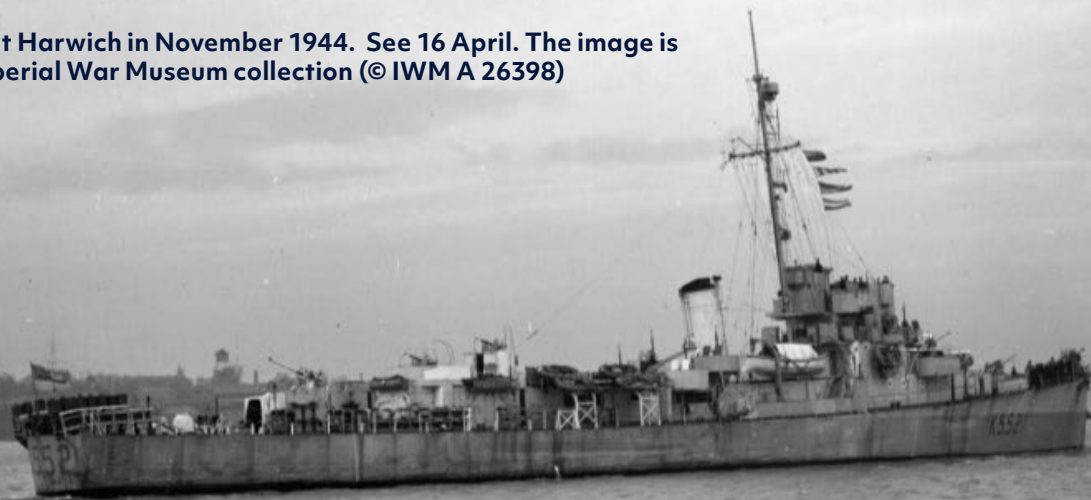
Sir George Sartorius (who was a midshipman in HMS Tonnant) by two years and two days. At Trafalgar Fynmore had been a first-class volunteer in the 64-gun third rate HMS Africa, in which his father was Captain of Royal Marines; Africa had become separated from the main fleet before the battle and her commanding officer had not been given Nelson's plan of attack; when she reached the duelling fleets Africa sailed along the Franco-Spanish line of battle firing broadsides into enemy ships. Fynmore is buried in Camberwell Old Cemetery in London.

16 April 1945

Captain-class frigate HMS Ekins was mined twice on the same evening, 13 miles north west of Ostend, and although she managed to limp home she was written off. The 1,400-ton ship was built as a Buckley-class destroyer-escort at the Bethlehem-Hingham yard in Massachusetts, and on completion in late November 1943 was transferred to the Royal Navy and commissioned as HMS Ekins. She worked up off Maine and around Bermuda before sailing to Belfast for modifications to prepare her for convoy escort duties in the North Atlantic. She switched from the 3rd Escort Group to the 21st Destroyer Flotilla at Sheerness in time to escort an invasion convoy from the Thames to the Normandy beaches on D-Day, undertaking further duties in the area until September 1944 (and sinking German submarine U-212 south of Brighton in tandem with HMS Curzon on 21 July). From Normandy Ekins transferred to the 16th Destroyer Flotilla at Harwich to serve as a Coastal Forces Control Frigate in the fight against German high-speed E-boats. On 16 April 1945 while operating a dozen miles off Ostend in the North Sea Ekins triggered two sea mines. The first flooded her engine rooms and the second created a large hole in her hull close to the ASDIC compartment. She was declared a constructive total loss (CTL) and decommissioned later that

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HMS Ekins at Harwich in November 1944. See 16 April. The image is from the Imperial War Museum collection (© IWM A 26398)



year. Although she was nominally returned to the US Navy in June 1945 she was immediately struck from the American's naval ships register and sold to a Dutch firm for scrapping in 1947.

17 April 1951

HMS Affray, the last British submarine lost at sea, sank in the Channel off Alderney on 17 April 1951 with the loss of 75 lives. Affray was in build in the closing months of the war, being commissioned in November 1945, and when she joined the Fleet the Amphion-class boat was state of the art, having incorporated design features from successful wartime British submarines as well as German innovations gleaned from captured U-boats. She was intended for work in the far East and was thus equipped with effective refrigeration and air-conditioning machinery, she had relatively comfortable accommodation positioned well away from the engine room and had ten torpedo tubes. As part of the British Pacific Fleet she spent several years in the Far East, and made visits to ports in Australia, Singapore, Japan and South Africa, amongst others. In March 1949 she was fitted with a snort mast – a snorkel tube

which could be raised to allow the boat to run her diesels while at periscope depth. Later that year, while on deep dive tests in the Mediterranean it was reported that Affray was subject to heavy leaks and that her diesels leaked oil. In January 1951 Affray transferred to Portsmouth, and two months later was brought out of reserve to begin a programme bringing her up to operational readiness. On 16 April she left Portsmouth on exercise Spring Train, a simulated war patrol; her normal crew of 60 had been reduced to 49, half of which had only joined from other submarine classes in the days before the exercise, but she also had a number of 'passengers' on board – four Royal Marines commandos and a group of junior officers under training with their instructors, bringing the total complement to 75. She was due to drop the commandos on the coast in Cornwall then continue on the exercise for a week before returning to Portsmouth to repair known defects. Later that evening, having sent standard signals confirming position, course and speed, she was seen on the surface and acknowledged by destroyer HMS Consort, but she failed to report in as scheduled the following morning, prompting the 'SUBSMASH' signal to be sent to allied navies and the instigation of a search. Signals went unanswered all day, and a flotilla of more than 20 ships from four nations began to scour an area of over 1,500 square miles – submarine HMS Sirdar even sat on the sea bed for several hours to allow ASDIC sets to gain a picture of what they were searching for. Several vessels, including submarine HMS Ambush, reported hearing tapped signals that indicated Affray's crew was trapped on the sea bed, though a precise fix could not be established. As it was thought the crew only had enough air for a couple of days the intensity of

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The nameplate of HMS Affray on the side of the conning tower of the sunken submarine. See 17 April. The image is from the Imperial War Museum collection (© IWM A 32110)



the search tailed off from 19 April, though as the story continued to feature high on the country's news agenda the Royal Navy continued to scan the sea bed of the Channel. One of the odd aspects of the incident was the revelation that a relative of a submariner not involved with Affray had 'seen' the ghost of a submarine officer, dripping wet, who revealed that the boat had been lost in Hurds Deep, the deepest part of the Channel to the north of the Channel Islands, and that she recognised the ghost as a man who had died in the war. As it happened, that 'prophecy' was true... With the seas along the South Coast littered with wrecks – more than 160 were found during the search, the majority from World War 2 – it was slow progress, and so it wasn't until 14 June that frigate HMS Loch Insh picked up an ASDIC contact almost 90 metres down on the edge of Hurds Deep, outside the original search area. Divers from HMS Reclaim went down in difficult conditions, and an underwater camera picked up the name of the missing submarine. Inspections of the hull revealed no signs of a collision or malfunction, except that the snort mast had been almost completely snapped off – it was later found to have been poorly manufactured, though it should still have functioned adequately. An official Board of Enquiry decided that the snort mast was probably a decisive factor, but other experts disputed the finding, suggesting a battery explosion could have sunk Affray, and that the snort mast broke on the boat hitting the sea bed, flooding the interior, or that the float valve on the mast which prevented water entering the mast could have jammed open, causing Affray to be inundated and too heavy to blow tanks and return to the surface. In these cases a trained, capable crew would have had their hands full, but many of those on board were unfamiliar with the A-class and its operation. One of the 75 men to lose their life in Affray was Sub Lt Tony

Frew, who had been one of the few survivors of the sinking of submarine HMS Truculent just 15 before Affray was lost – the officer had broken his arm in Truculent when he was trapped in the conning tower hatch, which probably saved his life. Another was Sub Lt William Linton, eldest son of the legendary Cdr 'Tubby' Linton VC, who died in the loss of his submarine HMS Turbulent in the Mediterranean in March 1943.

18 April 1905

HMS A13, the first Royal Navy submarine not powered by a patrol engine, was launched by Vickers at Barrow-in-Furness on 18 April 1905. She was one of the first class of submarine designed in Great Britain, and was equipped with a single six-cylinder 500hp Hornsby-Akroyd heavy oil engine, an early forerunner of the diesel engine. Although more economical than a petrol engine, at three tons heavier it meant there was less capacity for fuel on board the 210-ton vessel, thus reducing the range compared to petrol-driven sister submarines. A13, which had a crew of two officers and nine ratings, survived World War 1 and was scrapped in 1920.

19 April 1945

The first flight of the de Havilland Sea Hornet, the Royal Navy's first twin-engined, single-seat fighter, took place on 19 April 1945. The Hornet, from which the Sea Hornet was derived, began life as a private project during World War 2 to take up spare design capacity at de Havilland, and the aim was to produce a long-range fighter for use in the Pacific theatre. The prototype was ready by the end of 1942 and the Ministry of Aircraft Production created a specification based on the project (DH103) which was named the Hornet. Although it looked similar to the de Havilland Mosquito (and was of a similar wooden construction) it was a new design, and from very early on it was also earmarked for use

The de Havilland Sea Hornet. See 19 April. Image from the Imperial War Museum collection (© IWM A 30650)

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from aircraft carriers. The first Hornet flew in July 1944, and the first Sea Hornet F20, powered by Rolls-Royce Merlin engines, took to the air nine months later. The marinised version had folding wings and strengthened fuselage for an arrestor hook, and production models had strengthened landing gear to take the stresses of carrier operations. Legendary Naval test pilot Capt Eric 'Winkle' Brown was a key element in the development of the Sea Hornet, and he was a big fan of the aircraft, which he placed in the top five of the 487 aircraft types he had flown – he said the Sea Hornet was “a winner!”; aerobatics in the plane were “absolute bliss”, it was powerful and fast (up to 475mph) and, in his view, “a truly outstanding warplane”. Despite these accolades, the Hornet/Sea Hornet was short-lived, as it was competing with a new generation of jet aircraft; more than 380 aircraft were built for the RAF and Royal Navy, and their ten-year service life ended in 1956. It is believed there is only one Sea Hornet which is capable of being restored to flying condition, and that is based in New Zealand.

20 April 1940

Flower-class corvette HMS Pansy was launched at Harland and Wolff in Belfast on 20 April 1940. Actually, that's not strictly true – the 940-ton warship was renamed HMS Heartsease before she was launched and went on to have an interesting career during the war and after. Commissioned in June the same year, her early war service was spent escorting convoys in home waters, and on several occasions she was called on to pick up survivors of U-boat sinkings, including 31 Norwegian seamen from a merchantman. Just before Christmas 1940 Heartsease was badly damaged in a collision with Hunt-class destroyer HMS Tetcott. On 3 April 1942 Heartsease was transferred to the US

Navy and renamed USS Courage, ushering in a period of western Atlantic convoy escort duties that stretched from Greenland in the north to Argentina in the south. In January 1945 she moved to a new home base in Iceland. Within weeks of the war ending the ship was returned to the Royal Navy and regained her former name. In July 1946 she was sold to civilian operators and was renamed Roskva. Just over a decade later she was reported to have been used for smuggling operations in support of rebel forces in Indonesia, and in December 1958, now renamed Seabird, the corvette was in Bolaang Bay in Indonesia, carrying a cargo of copra after having dropped off arms and ammunition, when the Indonesian Air Force is believed to have discovered and attacked her, sinking the ship.

21 April 1916

Admiralty Weekly Orders dated 21 April 1911 contained the following item:

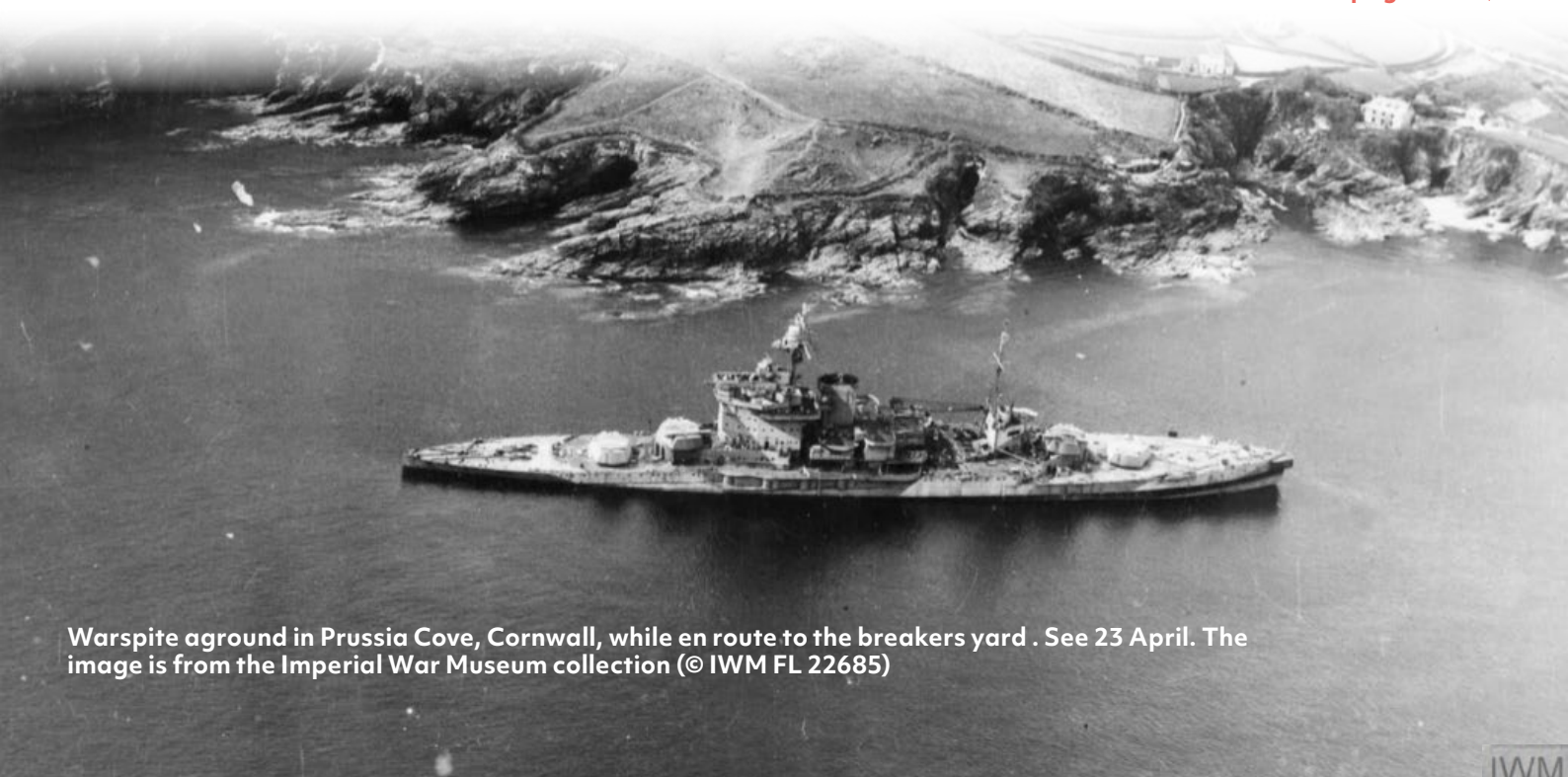
“117. Men wearing Trusses not to act as Helmsmen or Quartermasters

A case having arisen in which a ship's compass was deflected from 3° to 7° by the proximity of a person wearing a truss which had become highly magnetised, it has been decided that no man who has to wear a truss is to take the duty of helmsman or quartermaster.” A truss, for those in any doubt, is a medical device worn to reduce a hernia by applying pressure. The question of how the individual's truss became “highly magnetised” is not addressed by Their Lordships, but no doubt gave rise to some interesting theories...

22 April 1930

The London Naval Treaty was signed at St James's Palace on 22 April 1930. The instrument – officially known as the Treaty for the Limitation and Reduction of Naval Armament – was a

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Warspite aground in Prussia Cove, Cornwall, while en route to the breakers yard . See 23 April. The image is from the Imperial War Museum collection (© IWM FL 22685)

follow-up to the 1922 Washington Naval Treaty (aka the Five-Power Treaty), signed by the British Empire, the United States, France, Italy and Japan in 1922, which limited tonnage for surface warships in a bid to avoid a post-war arms race. The London version dealt with submarine warfare, control of the size of cruisers and destroyers, and also curbed Naval shipbuilding. The standard displacement of submarines was limited to 2,000 tons, although each of the major powers was allowed to retain three boats of up to 2,800 tons (except the French, who were limited to one), while the calibre of submarine guns was limited to 6.1in, ending the big-gun boat experiments of the Royal Navy (the M-class with 12in guns) and the French Surcouf, with 8in guns. Cruisers were recognised as 'heavy' or 'light' and limits were set accordingly; Britain was allowed 15 heavy cruisers (total tonnage 147,000 tons compared with 180,000 tons for the United States' 18 ships) and while there was no limit on the number light cruisers the United Kingdom were permitted 192,000 tons and the USA 143,000 tons. There were also specific regulations around smaller vessels (between 600 and 2,000 tons) and it led to arise in smaller ship classes such as sloops and torpedo boats. The largely ineffective 1930 treaty was followed by the Second Geneva Naval Conference of 1932 and the Second London Naval Treaty of 1936.

23 April 1947

Veteran battleship HMS Warspite went aground in Prussia Cove, Cornwall, on her way to the breakers' yard on 23 April 1947. The ship, one of five pre-Great War Queen Elizabeth-class battleships, was launched in November 1913 and commissioned in March 1915, and served with the Grand Fleet at Jutland in May 1916. The remainder of her war was fairly routine, with much training and exercising, and in the interwar period Warspite often served as a flagship as well as undergoing extensive modernisation. World War 2 was a different kettle of fish; she was involved in numerous campaigns including Norway, the Battle of Crete, operations in the Indian Ocean as part of the Eastern Fleet, the Salerno and Normandy landings and Walcheren Island. This flurry of activity earned Warspite more battle honours than any other individual ship in history – 15 of the 25 honours awarded to ships named Warspite were claimed by the battleship. By the end of the war in Europe she was a tired ship, having been damaged many times over by bombs, shells and more, and although there was a suggestion she could be preserved as a museum ship she was earmarked for scrapping in the summer of 1946. Her 15in and 6in guns were removed in Portsmouth and she was towed out into the Channel on 19 April 1947, bound for Faslane in Scotland via the Irish Sea. But before she had even reached Land's End she was hit by a storm which broke the towing hawser from Naval tug Bustler, forcing a second tug to slip her tow line. Despite the skeleton crew dropping an anchor it failed to hold the battleship, and Warspite was driven onto Mount

Mopus Ledge in Mount's Bay. She refloated briefly on the tide, but finally came to rest in Prussia Cove, from where her passage crew of seven was taken to safety by the Penlee lifeboat. Several attempts were made to refloat her over the following years but to no avail – all that was achieved was some entertainment for crowds on the shoreline and plenty of scrapes and damage for salvage boats and tugs as they attempted to move the stricken ship. By 1955 Warspite had been nudged around 40 metres closer inshore, and at that point it was decided to scrap her where she lay – believed to be the largest salvage operation ever carried out around the British coastline.

24 April 1916

Submarine UB-13 destroyed by the drifter Gleaner of the Sea on 24 April 1916 during the laying of a mine barrage off the Belgian coast. UB-13 was a German Type UB I coastal submarine displacing 140 tons built in 1914-15 which had been allocated to the Flanders Flotilla in April 1915, and had proved an effective weapon of war. Her first victim, the 2,000-ton British steamer Dulcie carrying a cargo of coal to Le Havre from Tyneside, was sunk in June 1915 off Aldeburgh in Suffolk with the loss of one sailor, and the following month she sank three fishing smacks off Great Yarmouth. Four more smacks were lost to UB-13 in March 1916, then early on the 16th of the month she torpedoed the 14,000-ton neutral ocean liner Tubantia 50 miles off the Dutch coast as the passenger ship lay at anchor, fully illuminated – rules in operation at the time precluded attacks on such neutral steamers. Although she sank relatively quickly, three ships answered her distress call and all 80 passengers, bound for Buenos Aires in Argentina, and 294 crew were rescued safely. The incident set off a flurry of claims and counter-claims between the UK and Germany, as Tubantia was the largest neutral vessel sunk in the Great War; the Germans blamed a British mine while the British claimed she was sunk by Axis torpedo, and all the while UB-13 continued to sink ships, including 1,000-ton steamer Alacrity, sunk with the loss of 14 men, and the 275-ton Danish sailing ship Proeven. UB-13's own demise came soon after; she departed Zeebrugge on patrol in the Thames Estuary on the evening of 23 April but never reported back to base, and it is thought she might have set off contact mines on the new explosive anti-submarine nets off the Belgian coast or – more likely – became entangled in the anchor cable of Naval drifter Gleaner of the Sea and was sunk by a combination of a harpoon-style lance bomb and depth charges, killing all 17 submariners. Lowestoft-based Gleaner of the Sea was taken up by the Admiralty for endeavours such as escort duties and mine- or net-laying, and on 24 April 1916 she was part of a flotilla of drifters spreading their nets in an almost-impenetrable barrier off the Belgian coast, catching UB-13 in the trap, but Gleaner of the Sea did not make the end of the war either – she was sunk, with five

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Royal Marines patrol past the damaged fin of the abandoned Argentine submarine Santa Fe. See 25 April. Image from the Imperial War Museum collection (© IWM FKD 978)



other drifters, on 27 October 1916, resulting in the death of more than 40 driftersmen and the loss of veteran C-class destroyer HMS Flirt, sunk with 60 of her crew as she attempted to rescue the shipwrecked mariners.

25 April 1982

Sunday 25 April 1982 saw the first successful step in British efforts to retake its South Atlantic territories after the Argentine invasion of the Falklands earlier in the month. A small group of Royal Navy ships – the Antrim Group – was focused on South Georgia and the Argentine submarine ARA Santa Fe which was known to be heading for Grytviken. Santa Fe, the former wartime US Navy submarine USS Catfish, had arrived in Grytviken from Argentina late on 24 April and unloaded her cargo of supplies and weapons, along with a party of Argentine marines to reinforce the island's small garrison. The laborious process, slowed by the narrowness of the hatches, was completed around two hours before sunrise. The submarine Santa Fe promptly set sail to reach safer, deeper water, but the Westland Wessex of destroyer HMS Antrim, an anti-submarine Mk 3 helicopter, spotted the boat during a pre-dawn surface search. The aircraft, dubbed Humphrey, attacked with two Mk 11 depth charges, damaging Santa Fe submarine and forcing it to reverse course towards

Grytviken. Assuming Santa Fe could not dive, a Westland Lynx helicopter from frigate HMS Brilliant and a Westland Wasp from frigate HMS Plymouth joined the attack; ice patrol ship HMS Endurance's Wasp also attacked around an hour later. The Lynx fired a Mk 46 lightweight torpedo which failed to hit the submarine; the Wasps fired AS-12 anti-ship missiles, and all aircraft strafed the submarine with machine guns, facing return fire with similar arms. Santa Fe limped back to the pier at King Edward Point in Grytviken, where her crew fled ashore, still firing at the helicopters. By this time the British warships were joining the fray. With the crew of the 2,500-ton Santa Fe joining the existing Argentine garrison, British officers estimated that the total enemy force was just under 150, and decided to land whatever forces could be mustered from the Royal Marines and special forces at their disposal. Early on the afternoon of 25 April a naval gunfire observer was flown ashore by a Wasp from Endurance, and he controlled a barrage of more than 230 shells from the 4.5in guns of Antrim and Plymouth, positioned in Cumberland Bay, which peppered Argentine defensive positions. Antrim's Wessex and the two Lynx from Brilliant landed the first British troops ashore near Hestesletten and they made their way through the old whaling station at Grytviken. As they approached Argentine positions at around

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1700, without a shot being fired, the defenders hoisted white flags – they had calculated that their situation, facing naval guns and unopposed air support, was desperate. A small Argentine detachment at Leith Harbour was contacted by radio, but refused – at that point – to surrender. However, South Georgia was effectively back in British hands and Operation Paraquet was a success. Santa Fe was moved from the pier, and settled on the sea bed alongside, but was later towed to a nearby shallow inlet for disposal. She slipped further into deeper water in a storm the following year, but as she still had live torpedoes and was leaking fuel oil and battery acid, she was lifted in 1985, cleaned up and then towed five miles out to sea where she was scuttled.

26 April 1922

OI-class tanker RFA Oleander was launched at Pembroke Dock on 26 April 1922 – the last ship to be built at the yard for the Admiralty. The 10,000-ton ship saw plenty of the world in her early career, sailing to Singapore and Buenos Aires in 1923 by way of example. She also had her fair share of accidents, including a New Year's Eve storm in 1925 when she drifted from her mooring in Swansea, causing slight damage to three other ships, and a more serious incident in February 1927 when she was in collision with the Royal Mail Steamer (RMS) Nebraska in thick fog off Dungeness, holing both ships and causing Oleander to lose much of her cargo of benzoline. 1927 saw voyages to North and Central America and Japan. October 1933 saw her in refit in Devonport, and the discovery of metal nuts loose

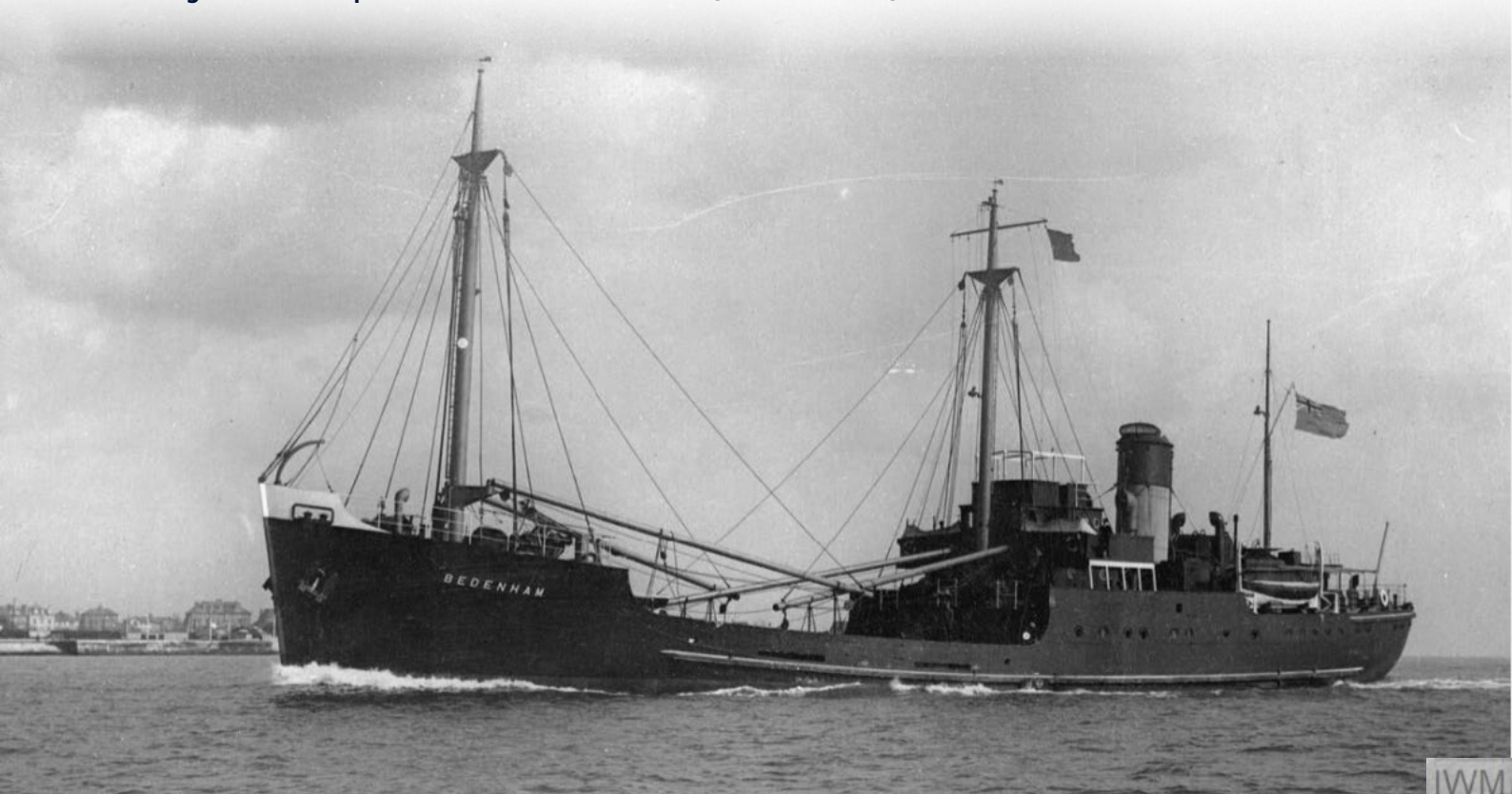
in her machinery – one of a number of cases of suspected sabotage over the years. The 1930s saw Oleander range as far as Australia, India and South Africa, and on the outbreak of war she was attached to various convoys, including those to or from the Caribbean, Halifax in Nova Scotia and Norway. And it was while in Harstad Bay in Norway that the tanker's service career came to an end; on 26 May 1940 she was seriously damaged by a near-miss during a German air raid while in company with aircraft carrier HMS Glorious. Oleander was beached and attempts made to salvage as much of her cargo as possible. The ship could not be recovered, and on 8 June she was declared a total constructive loss; the wreck remained visible for many years afterwards.

27 April 1951

Naval ammunition vessel (NAV) Bedenham exploded at Gun Wharf, Gibraltar, while unloading depth charges on 27 April 1951; the blast killed 13 people, many more were injured and widespread damage was caused. She arrived at the Rock on 24 April, but the unloading of the depth charges only began three days later, and while one was being transferred to a lighter it ignited, setting the lighter on fire. The blaze quickly spread to Bedenham, and the resultant explosion blew the forward section of the ship onto the wharf while the aft end sank at its mooring. The blast killed 13 people, one of whom was George Henderson, a dockyard fire officer, who had remained on the scene to play a fire hose on the fire and whose bravery

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Naval Armament Vessel Bedenham in coastal waters. See 27 April. Image from the Imperial War Museum collection (© IWM FL 1713)





HMS Yarnton in Singapore, March 1974. See 28 April. Image from the Imperial War Museum collection (© IWM HU 130054)

was recognised with the award of a posthumous George Cross. Most of the crew of the *Bedenham* had managed to get clear by the time of the explosion, and those left on board – the captain and the Naval Armament Supply Office – were blown into the harbour and rescued. Numerous buildings sustained damage, including the Anglican and Roman Catholic cathedrals. The wreck of *Bedenham* was towed by the tug *Saucy* from Gibraltar to Tyneside, where it was scrapped.

28 April 1972

HM Ships *Wasperton*, *Wolverton* and *Monkton* arrived at HMS *Tamar* on 28 April 1972 to join the 6th Patrol Craft Squadron in Hong Kong after a 16,500-mile journey from the UK which took them round the continent of Africa. There they joined HM Ships *Yarnton* and *Beachampton* which had arrived from Bahrain the previous September. The flotilla was renamed the Hong Kong Squadron in June the following year, and spent the next decade and more patrolling the waters of the South China Sea and showing the flag in ports around the region, including Japan and South Korea.

29 April 1940

Light cruiser HMS *Glasgow*, accompanied by destroyers *Jackal* and *Javelin*, embarked King Haakon VII of Norway, Crown Prince Olav, Norwegian ministers and 23 tons of

the Norwegian gold reserve at Molde, on the Romsdalfjord, on 29 April 1940 ahead of invading German forces. The episode reads like the plot of a classic war film. *Glasgow* steamed into Molde just as German bombers were leaving, having set much of the town ablaze in an air raid. The King and his party had taken shelter just to the west of the town, and as the aircraft left they were ushered through the streets to board *Glasgow* at a wooden jetty. At the same time tons of gold, which had been hidden in a clothing factory, were carted through the town to the warship and the ingots passed on board in a human chain, all lit by the flames of a nearby wooden church tower which was blazing like a torch. As expected, German aircraft returned to continue their onslaught, at which point the ship rapidly pulled away from the jetty, taking part of it with her as they did not have time to release all the mooring lines. *Glasgow* zigzagged back down the fjord to the open sea, avoiding the bombers, and headed north to Tromsø where her valuable cargoes were unloaded. As the Germans advanced slowly northwards the Royal party, government and gold were on the move again, this time evacuated by heavy cruiser HMS *Devonshire* on 7 June 1940, which took them to the relative safety of the UK.

30 April 1958

The prototype Blackburn NA39 – which became the fabled *Buccaneer* – made its maiden

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flight at RAE Bedford, piloted by Lt Cdr Derek Whitehead, on 30 April 1958. The aircraft was designed for use by the Royal Navy, specifically to counter the threat of new, fast Russian cruisers – the thinking was that a fast, low-flying aircraft would be as capable of posing a threat to the new ships as a new class of warship. Capable of carrying conventional or nuclear weapons, and able to operate from aircraft carriers, the Buccaneer was designed to be able to skim the wave tops at around 600mph, and although the Buccaneer S1, which entered service with 801 Naval Air Squadron in July 1962, was somewhat underpowered, the problem was easily fixed with the S2 version, which saw the de Havilland Gyron Junior power plant replaced by the Rolls-Royce Spey engine; this version had replaced its predecessor by the end of 1966 and allowed the Buccaneer to achieve 670mph at 200ft. The newer version became the first Fleet Air Arm aircraft to make an unrefuelled transatlantic crossing. By the end of the 1960s, despite inter-Service suspicion, the RAF began operating

this very Naval aircraft, which was well-liked by aircrew and ground crew alike for its flying capabilities and sturdiness, and the FAA stepped back from the Buccaneer in early 1979 with the decommissioning of HMS Ark Royal, the last of the large Fleet carriers at that time; Naval aircraft were modified and transferred to the junior Service while a group of new aircraft were built by Hawker Siddeley, which had taken over the Blackburn company. Although a number of Buccaneers were withdrawn from service in the early 1980s because of metal fatigue, 60 aircraft were strengthened and continued to fly for the RAF. The last operational British Buccaneers were withdrawn from front-line service with the disbanding of 208 Sqn RAF in March 1994. Over the course of its service life the two-man aircraft fulfilled a number of roles, including maritime strike (with a nuclear capability that was fortunately never needed, reconnaissance, laser-guided target identification and dive bomber, able to carry bombs, missiles and fuel drop tanks.

A Blackburn Buccaneer aircraft of 800 Squadron from HMS Eagle on patrol over Aden/Khormatisar airfield during the withdrawal of British troops on 29 November 1967. See 30 April. Image from the Imperial War Museum collection (© IWM A 35120)



➤ LONGCAST

2024	
12-14 Apr	Thriving Together weekend away, Brecon Beacons
4 May	Army v Navy rugby, Twickenham
11 May	No 5 Area Quarterly meeting, to be hosted by Stowmarket branch
18 May	No 4 Area meeting to be hosted by Christchurch and District branch
18 May	National Standard Bearers Competition
3-7 Jun	RNA Battlefield Memorial Tour to Normandy
14-16 Jun	RNA National Conference, Cardiff
12 Oct	World Uckers Championships, Royal Maritime Hotel, Portsmouth
Autumn (tbc)	D-Day Memorials Cycle Event in Normandy

Please check the RN Shipmates.co.uk website for a list of further reunions: www.rnshipmates.co.uk



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China Fleet Country Club	Click on the link for lots of different offers for Serving and ex-Serving Royal Navy and Royal Marines

Watch this space for RNA offers on event tickets and lots more to come!

TRI-SERVICES BUSINESS

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Aberdour Golf Club 19th April 2024

07.30 Breakfast rolls, tea, coffee & Networking

09.00 Shotgun start (On course fun along the way)

13.00 Buffet Lunch

14.00 Auction & Raffle

15.00 Presentation

15.30 Thank you

16.00 Finish

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HARRIER - *Out of the Blue*

by Pamela Jean Haines

The Story of the story...

In 2006 Pam was invited to join Coastlands Local History Group, whose mission is to preserve and pass on the culture, history and heritage of Dale, Marloes, St Brides and St Ishmaels, the community of the Dale Peninsula.

Her avid interest in military history was further piqued as she learned more about HMS HARRIER, home to the Royal Naval Aircraft Direction Centre, Radar Training School and Meteorology School, located at Kete, on the cliffs above Dale village in Pembrokeshire. Pam's quest for more information began and, as photographs and memories poured in from those who had served in HARRIER, she realised that there was a fascinating, salty story to be told.

Launched in April 2024, in Dale, "HARRIER - *Out of the Blue*" is an entertaining and informative account of how the Royal Navy came to build this vital military establishment, at pace, towards the end of World War II. Recollections of ex-service personnel and civilians who served and worked in Harrier bring the history to life and help the reader understand what happened on and around this windswept clifftop military camp between 1944 and 1961.

Forward purchase a copy of "HARRIER - *Out of the Blue*" from the Secretary of Coastlands Local History Group, Harriet Bishop on coastlandshistorygroup@gmail.com





ARMED FORCES CRICKET

MEN'S AND WOMEN'S T20

THURSDAY 16 MAY 2024

BUY YOUR TICKETS TODAY

SERVICE PERSONNEL / VETERANS: £10 (WITH PROOF OF ENTITLEMENT)

ADULTS £20 • U16S £5 • OVER 65S £5


Please note Under 14s must be accompanied by an Adult

YOU CAN BUY TICKETS NOW VIA THE LORD'S WEBSITE
ALL TICKETS MUST BE PURCHASED ONLINE

tickets.lords.org

 interservicest20.co.uk

 [@UKAFCricket](https://twitter.com/UKAFCricket)

 facebook.com/InterServicesT20



D-Day 80 RNA Normandy Battlefield Tour - Provisional Programme

Date/Time	Event	Venue	Notes
Mon, 3 June			
1400	Welcome/orientation brief	RNA Central Office	
1500	Deploy to Ferry Terminal		
1630	Ferry departs Portsmouth		Take evening meal on ferry
On arrival	Transfer to accom	Amaye-sur-Orne	
Tue, 4 June			
0900	Depart accom		
	Visits:	Pointe du Hoc Omaha Beach Omaha Cemetery Arromanches (Mulberry Harbour)	Lunch Bayeux
1700	Rtn accom	Amaye-sur-Orne	
Wed, 5 June			
0900	Depart accom		
	Visits:	UK Normandy Memorial Pegasus Bridge Merville Battery	Lunch at Café Gondree or Pegasus Museum
1700	Possible event	Bayeux British Cemetery	RBL sponsored
Dependant on gaining access to above srl	Rtn accom	Amaye-sur-Orne	
Evening	BBQ with RNA France Nord Branch	Amaye-sur-Orne	
Thu, 6 June			
0900	Depart accom		
1100	Canadian Memorial Event	Juno Beach	
1300	Lunch	Caen	
1630	Ferry Caen-Ports		Take evening meal on ferry
2130	Arr Ports		
o/c	Disperse/tfr to accom		

Application Form - Day 80 RNA Normandy Battlefield Tour

Full Name.....

DOB.....

POB.....

Nationality.....

Veh Reg (if applicable)..... (If veh access req'd to HMNB Pompey)

Passport No.....

Issue Date.....

Expiry Date.....

Home address.....

.....

.....

.....

RNA Bank Account details for payment:

Royal Bank of Scotland Holts Farnborough

RNA
16-19-26
20202327

IBAN GB61RBOS16192620202327

For Payment Reference please write: **RNA D-Day 80**

NB. Payment of £225 not req'd until 30 Apr

Any questions, please contact Dave MacAskill: 07596 530499



ROYAL NAVAL ASSOCIATION

WRITE YOUR WILL FOR FREE

www.linktr.ee/rnassociation



The RNA has partnered with Will writers Guardian Angel Network to offer you the chance to write your Will for free either online, over the phone or in person.

It's certainly worth getting your affairs in order. If you cross the bar without a Will, it can make things more difficult legally than they need to be for the loved ones you leave behind.

In return, we ask that you might consider leaving the RNA a gift in your Will so that, through your legacy, we might continue the work of the Association across our Naval community.

**ONCE
NAVY
ALWAYS
NAVY**

THREE SIMPLE STEPS:

1. Answer a few easy questions.
This takes 10 minutes, on average.
2. Will experts review your documents.
To make sure everything is as it should be. This only takes up to 7 working days.
3. Make it official.

Follow this link to get started:

www.linktr.ee/rnassociation

CARDIFF



HOW TO BOOK:

01603 886 740

www.justforgroups.com/royal-naval-association

sales@justforgroups.com

RNA CONFERENCE 2024 CARDIFF

June 14th - 16th June 2024 (Friday - Sunday)



Gala Dinner
Only
£40^{PP}



Area 7 is hosting the annual RNA Conference in Cardiff.

The Welsh capital has undergone a transformation in recent years. Once a busy industrial port, it is now a cosmopolitan city of culture, character and charm.

Just for groups! have secured some bedrooms at a choice of two hotels and the gala dinner (£40 per person) will now be held at the voco St David's Hotel in Cardiff Bay on Saturday 15th June.

Please contact our friendly team on **01603 886740** to book the gala dinner – at a cost of **£40pp**, and/or bed & breakfast accommodation.

Alternatively you can book on our website:

www.justforgroups.com/royal-naval-association



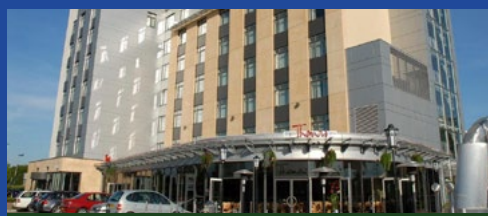
HOLIDAY INN EXPRESS - CARDIFF

The Holiday Inn Express Cardiff Bay is located within Cardiff Bay and Cardiff city centre overlooking Bute East Dock.

All bedrooms are en-suite with complimentary WIFI, air conditioning, iron/ironing board, flat screen TV, direct dial telephone and hairdryer.

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

2 nights £145 per person sharing £249 single occupancy	3 nights only £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.

1 night £115 per person sharing £190 single occupancy	2 nights £199 per person sharing £329 single occupancy
3 nights £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.

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

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

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