



Jackspeak: "Housewife" (Sewing Kit)

Ships Office

Shipmates and friends, the New Year arrives with the usual mix of optimism, questionable resolutions, and the firm belief that this would be the year we finally pace ourselves on a run ashore. A belief that will probably be disproved by most before the third week of January.

Following a festive stand-easy, during which many of the ship's company bravely battled turkey, overflowing fridges, and family members asking, "so what did you actually do in the Navy?". January will see the branch slowly but surely regenerate. Attendance at the January branch meeting will prove who are still running on harbour routine, whilst others will no doubt tell us that they are conducting an extended defect rectification period.

Despite the post-Christmas fog, spirits, I hope, will remain high. Dits flowing freely, improving in quality and length with each wet, and sea stories once again subjected to forensic scrutiny by those who were "definitely there" and those who were "in another ship but heard about it". As ever, the truth lay somewhere below the waterline.

Planning for the year ahead is now well underway, with diaries filling up faster than the bar at last orders.

As we cast an eye over the horizon towards 2026, one thing is certain: none of us knows exactly what lies ahead. If our time in uniform taught us anything, it's that the programme will change, the forecast will be wrong, and whatever happens, it will probably happen just before stand-easy. That said, if there's one thing sailors are good at, it's being ready, even when we're not entirely sure what for.

The coming year will undoubtedly bring its fair share of challenges, opportunities, and the odd "stand by" moment that turns into an all-day evolution. Whether it's parades, reunions, commemorations, or simply maintaining the bonds that tie us together, we'll face it the same way we always have. With good humour, steady resolve, and a willingness to muck in. And we will do so knowing we won't be facing it alone.

The strength of our branch lies in our shipmates. The shared experience, the mutual support, and the ability to find laughter even when the sea state is less than kind. We've weathered worse, adapted faster, and still found time for a 'wet' and a dit along the way.

(Continued over the page...)

Gen Dit

**Stowmarket RNA
Newsletter**



January 2026

ISSUE No 114



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Stowmarket RNA Branch

Website

<https://rumoldboys.wixsite.com/mysite>

and we are also on Facebook

Ship's Office (continued)

So, as we step forward into the year ahead, we do so with eyes open, shoulders squared, and a quiet confidence born of experience. We may not know what's over the next horizon, but we're ready to adjust course, trim the sails, and crack on regardless.

As always, new faces are welcome, old faces are celebrated, and anyone who still owes a round is politely reminded that the mess has a long memory.

Here's to a steady start to the year, fair winds for the months ahead and 2026 - whatever it brings.

Stand by... and stand easy when able.

The Editor

Have a Happy and Safe New Year

Ships Noticeboard

2026 is our 10th anniversary year

2026 is an important milestone for the branch: our 10th anniversary, having been commissioned back in June 2016. Yes, we're officially double-digits old.

In our very first annual activity report, we boldly declared: "Plant an acorn, grow an oak tree." While that acorn may not yet have turned into something you could build a ship from, it's certainly grown into a sturdy sapling, and we are every bit as strong as an oak tree where it matters. What was said about us 10 years ago remains just as accurate today: "Stowmarket RNA are a wonderful mix of ceremony and chaos that people have come to expect."

That description raised a smile from the original "gang of seven" when they first heard it, and we very much hope it still does the same for today's shipmates – if not a knowing nod and a quiet chuckle.

How exactly we'll mark our anniversary is still to be decided, but no doubt it will involve something suitably fitting for shipmates, friends, and guests alike that confirms, once again, that our branch remains one that we can all be proud of (and possibly slightly baffled by).

One thing we should be especially proud of is that our shipmates have always kept the gangway open, welcoming both familiar faces and newcomers alike to share in our unique sense of humour and the genuine enjoyment we find in each other's company.

If you have a suggestion (or two... or three) on how we might celebrate our anniversary, then let us know. That will be Chivs or Deeps you should collar – preferably at a moment when they're sober!

Remembering Bosnia

On Sunday 14th December, S/m Gary Dade paraded with our Branch Standard at the town's Memorial Gates, alongside S/m Jason Sewell and others from the RBL, RAFA and OCA, to mark the 30th anniversary of the ending of the Bosnian conflict and pay tribute to those of the British Armed Forces who died between 1992-1995. The conflict is one that many, including shipmates, took part in.

January Branch Meeting

Shipmates, please note that the date and time for our first branch meeting of 2026 is:

Tuesday 20th June @ 1930 (7.30pm for WAFU's)

at Stowmarket RBL Club

Here's looking forward to seeing you

Committee Meeting



The first official business of the year will be a meeting of the branch committee, which will be on Tuesday 6th January. By then – hopefully having recovered from the New Year festivities – the committee will be discussing a range of branch matters, including setting a date for our AGM.

The committee is always happy to consider topics raised by shipmates, so if there's something you'd like to raise, get off your chest, or suggest – such as an idea for an event – please get in touch with Deeps.

HMS BLUE BOTTLE

This month, we revisit a day indelibly written into the history of our affiliated ship, centred on one remarkable member of the crew, and ...

THE DAY CHIEF 'FROSTY' SNOW SAVED THE SHIP

It was a Tuesday. Of course, it was a Tuesday. Disaster always strikes on a Tuesday, just after the tea's gone cold and before anyone's emotionally prepared.

BLUE BOTTLE had been steaming through the Western Approaches when the situation deteriorated rapidly. Not because of enemy action, nor pirates, nor even a drunken comms failure from Radio Op 'Bunny' Warren (though that didn't help). No, this was a mechanical, meteorological, and morale-based catastrophe. A perfect storm. Literally and figuratively.

It started with an unexpected Force 10 squall. The Navigator blamed "an outdated forecast." Others blamed the Buffer, who'd said, "Looks like a lovely day for a bit of deck scrubbing, lads," ten minutes earlier.

The sea rose. The ship groaned. The deck tilted like a pissed snooker table. The Chief Stoker was found clutching the pipes, whispering to the boiler. The Gunnery Officer slid down a ladder like a penguin on a slip-n-slide.

Above it all stood Chief 'Frosty' Snow, arms crossed, eyeing the storm like she might wrestle it into submission.

Then there was a sudden THUMP-CLANG-WHEEZE from down below, and the entire ship lurched.

Main engines out. Power dead. Communications patchy. Morale nonexistent. The Captain looked like someone had just cancelled his gin order.

"Right," said Frosty, "everyone who's not actively crying, with me."

In the span of thirty terrifying minutes, Frosty did the following:

Led a team of Tiffs, Stokers, and one very confused Leading Airman into the depths of the engine room, where she personally bypassed three fried circuits, one jammed coolant pump, and what turned out to be a packet of prawn cocktail crisps lodged in the intake valve (thanks, 'Mini' Cooper).

Yelled at the Chief Elec so hard a broken generator started working out of fear.

Climbed up to the bridge in gale-force winds to personally reset the gyrocompass using a spanner, a shoelace, and a well-placed threat.

Overrode the Captain's safety lockdown to allow the Stokers to vent the auxiliary tanks, declaring, "I'll take full responsibility. And anyone who argues can join the dolphins."

Meanwhile, the officers were holding an emergency discussion (translation: panicking politely over digestive biscuits). The Doc was trying to revive the Ops Officer using smelling salts and what he claimed was "medicinal port." "What do we do, Captain?" asked the First Lieutenant. "We wait... and pray Frosty sorts it out," he replied grimly.

And she did.

Power surged back. The engines roared to life like angry lions being poked with a broom handle. The ship righted itself. The storm still raged, but BLUE BOTTLE now roared straight through it, guided by a woman who once ironed her kit during a fire drill just to "prove a point."

The crew cheered. The Captain saluted her. The Buffer burst into tears. And Chief Snow just muttered, "Right. Now who's spilt tea in the Burma Way?"

In the aftermath the Captain recommended Frosty for a commendation. The crew built a small shrine out of spare bulkheads, cable ties, and laminated daily orders. The Pusser printed T-shirts reading: "What would Frosty do?"

Ask anyone on BLUE BOTTLE what happened that day, and they'll say:

"The sea tried to kill us. The engines gave up. Command structure dissolved into wet biscuits. But Frosty? Frosty stood tall, glared at Poseidon, and made the bloody ship work. She didn't just save BLUE BOTTLE. She became it.

*Others in the fleet look in awe at what happened that day.
The crew see it as just another day in the life of our favourite ship.*

The Jack Dusty



Life at sea runs on three things: fuel, food, and forms. The Jack Dusty's of the Stores Department control all three.

This is why everyone is afraid of them.

It begins, as it often does, with the Captain noticing something is missing. Not urgently missing. Just missing enough to be mentioned. "Why are we low on that?" the Captain asks, casually, as if the ship isn't in the middle of the ocean.

The question travels to the Supply Officer, who immediately understands that this is no longer a question. It is now a

PROBLEM, and problems must be handled with confidence, paperwork, and absolutely no admission of fault. The Supply Officer checks the computer. The computer says the item is onboard. The computer is never wrong. Therefore, the ship must be wrong. This is written down.

The Chief Jack Dusty is informed next. The Chief has been through this before. Many times. He knows the item exists somewhere, because it always does. Just not where the paperwork says it should be, and not in a quantity that reflects reality. He will then sigh, pour a coffee strong enough to strip paint, and begin the sacred ritual of blaming usage.

The PO Jack Dusty is then tasked with "looking into it," which means searching every locker, cupboard, and mysterious space where things go to retire. He generally finds three of the items, all broken, none logged, and one that might be a different item entirely. He reports back: "Stock is limited." This is Jack Dusty language for 'we are absolutely stuffed'.

The Leading Jack Dusty is then dispatched to investigate further. He checks the storeroom, the overflow locker, and the place where things were temporarily stored five months ago and then forgotten forever. He will always find a box clearly labelled with something else entirely. Inside this box though is what they're looking for. Unfortunately, it's expired, the wrong size, or reserved for an audit that everyone knows is coming but no one believes in.

It is then that the 'baby' Jack Dusty's are sent to count everything. Again. Venturing into storerooms deep in the bowels of the ship, they count items that don't exist, items that exist but shouldn't, and items that appear to be multiplying when no one is looking. They ask questions like, "Why do we have twelve of these?" and "Why do we have none of those?"

They are told not to worry about it and to just write down what they have found. What they have found is chaos, and as the day goes on, pressure builds. Operations want answers. Engineering wants parts. The Galley wants food. Everyone wants it now and assumes the Stores Department is hiding it out of spite.

Every Jack Dusty insists everything was ordered correctly, and everything was delivered. And most importantly. If it can't be found, it isn't their fault.

Eventually, a miracle occurs.

Someone finds the missing item in a locker that was "temporarily used" during the last refit. It has been there so long it has become part of the ship. No one admits to putting it there.

The order is given to update the system. The computer is satisfied.

- The Captain is informed the issue has been resolved.
- The Supply Officer reports effective management.
- The Chief Jack Dusty nods grimly.
- The PO Jack Dusty pours the Chief another coffee.
- The Leading Jack Dusty files the paperwork.
- The 'baby' Jack Dusty's carry the boxes and wonder how any of this works at all.

By evening, the ship is running smoothly again.

No one thanks the Jack Dusty. No one ever does. But everyone eats. Everything operates. And when the next thing goes missing tomorrow, everyone knows exactly who to blame. Because at sea, the Jack Dusty is responsible for everything. Especially the things no one told them about.

10 reasons why ...

the wife's mother told her daughter
not to marry a sailor

1. **"He'll be gone for six months and home for six hours."** - And in that time, he'll eat everything, drink your dad's whisky, and fall asleep in front of the telly.
2. **"You can't build a future with someone who lives in a bunk the size of a coffin."** - And thinks that's luxury accommodation.
3. **"You'll have to learn a whole new language."** - One made up of shouting, acronyms, and colourful metaphors involving barnacles.
4. **"He irons better than you."** - And folds his socks with military precision. It's unsettling.
5. **"You'll never win an argument - he's been trained to follow orders without question."** - Just... not yours.
6. **"He's always going to compare you to the ship."** - And the ship never nags, never gets cold feet, and always responds to a good polish.
7. **"Your wedding will be delayed because he's deployed."** - And when he comes back, he'll want to get married in uniform – mostly so he doesn't have to buy a suit.
8. **"He calls every night out a 'run ashore' and treats it like a NATO operation."** - Complete with codewords, contingency plans, and a tactical withdrawal from something called 'the big eats van'.
9. **"You'll have to live with the fact he once got a tattoo... in a port he can't pronounce."** - And it says something that's either deep and meaningful... or wildly inappropriate in Mandarin.
10. **"He thinks romance is a clean pair of overalls and an extra helping of dessert."** - And frankly, I'm not wrong.

the sailor married the
daughter anyway

1. **She didn't flinch when he said he'd be gone for six months.** In fact, she looked... suspiciously relieved.
2. **She knows what DHOBIE, scran, and a tot are – and uses them correctly.** That's wifey material. That, or she dated a Royal Marine once. He didn't ask.
3. **She lets him pretend he's still in charge.** Even though they both know he must ask permission to step ashore or when coming back inside the house.
4. **She doesn't bat an eye when he comes home covered in oil, missing a boot, and reeking of diesel.** She simply hands him a beer and opens a window. That's love.
5. **She once shouted, "STAND BY!" when dinner was ready.** He knew he wanted to marry her on the spot.
6. **She knows his leave dates better than his Chief.** And somehow still schedules everything he doesn't want to do on those days.
7. **She once called his entire mess "a bunch of sea-dodging throbbors" and lived to tell the tale.** He's never been prouder.
8. **She says he has "a charming sense of discipline."** Which is polite code for "you're annoying, but at least you put the toilet seat down."
9. **She lets him keep the bar mat from that pub in Gibraltar.** Even though it still smells like lager and regret.
10. **Because after every run ashore, every deployment, every dodgy mess dinner and 0300 engine room call-out...** She's still there. Laughing. Shaking her head. And holding the spare keys because he's lost his - again!

Jack and the Squaddie

Jack and a Squaddie are sitting next to each other on the train. The Squaddie leans over to Jack and asks if he wants to play a fun game. Jack just wants to sleep, so he politely declines, turns away and tries to sleep.

The Squaddie persists and explains that it is a really easy game. He says: "I ask the question and if you don't know the answer, you pay me £5. Then you ask me a question, and if I don't know the answer I'll pay you £5."

Again, Jack politely declines and tries to sleep. The Squaddie, now somewhat agitated, says: "OK, if you don't know the answer, you pay me £5, and if I don't know the answer, I'll pay you £50!" Now that gets Jack's attention, so he agrees to the game. The Squaddie asks the first question. "What's the distance from the earth to the moon?" Jack doesn't say a word but reaches for his wallet and hands the Squaddie £5.

Now it's Jack's turn. "What goes up a hill with three legs and comes down with four?" The Squaddie looks at Jack with a puzzled expression, takes out his laptop, looks through all the references, asks others in the carriage, phones a friend etc....., and after about an hour, he wakes Jack and hands him £50.

Jack politely takes the £50, turns away and tries to return to sleep. The Squaddie, a little miffed, asks: "Well, what's the answer to the question?" Without a word, Jack reaches into his wallet, hands the Squaddie £5, turns away and returns to sleep.

Defaulters

When members of the ship's crew attend a formal muster and parade for hearing of charges of indiscipline, either before the First Lieutenant, or if a charge merited a more 'sterner' form of punishment, the 'Old Man' (Captain).



Many have taken two steps forward, standing to attention and then given the order, "Off Cap". This would then be followed by the sailor formally hearing the charge against them being read out, before being given the opportunity to explain how the indiscipline they were charged with had come about.

Some visits to defaulters gained legendary status – for the sailor, because of the explanation they gave, and in some cases, the punishment. Here's such an occasion.

'Bungy' Williams had always been known aboard the ship for two things: an uncanny ability to get into trouble, and an equally uncanny ability to explain said trouble with wildly creative stories.

This time, Bungy was arrested ashore after what the local authorities delicately called "a series of unfortunate incidents involving a pub, a goat, and a very confused street performer.

Now, here he was in front of the First Lieutenant, who was trying very hard to look stern but failing because of

Bungy's sheepish, and to be honest, baby-faced, puppy dog look about him.

The Jimmy cleared his throat. "Williams, care to explain why you were found in possession of a street performer's tutu, a dozen custard pies, and... no trousers?"

Bungy stood tall, rubbed the back of his neck, and said, "Well, sir... it started with the goat. I swear, it was trying to sell me a map."

The Jimmy raised an eyebrow. "The goat sold you a map?"

"Yes, sir! It was a very convincing goat. Then the street performer challenged me to a dance-off to earn my trousers back. I won... but only after agreeing to participate in a pie fight. The pies... they were everywhere, sir."

The Jimmy pinched the bridge of his nose. "And the tutu?"

"The tutu," Bungy said, "was a peace offering to the local mime troupe. They threatened to trap me in an invisible box otherwise."

A long pause. The Jimmy sighed. "Williams, your punishment will be exactly as follows: You will clean the entire ship's deck, while wearing the tutu, and recite Queen's Regulations ... in mime."

Bungy's eyes lit up. "Sir. Does this mean I get to keep the tutu?"

The Master-at-Arms nearly had a heart attack as he shouted, "ON CAP! Right turn. Quick march. LEFT, RIGHT, LEFT, RIGHT!"

The Jimmy stared at the Joss and muttered, "Thank God Williams was wearing his trousers and not the tutu."

Note: Regarding the punishment given, the Editor recalls an incident (Naples circa 1980's) involving a First Lieutenant who sentenced a sailor to three attempts at tightrope-walking the aft spring. The sailor had tried to sneak back on board the same way rather than use the gangway while drunk, which led to his having to be rescued when he fell in. The punishment was carried out in full view of the ship's company (and many others), with loud cheers erupting each time the sailor failed.

And finally ... Remember, if you ask a sailor, "What did you do over the weekend?", don't be surprised if they respond with, "Why? What have you heard?"

We are always pleased to receive a dit, news or an item that will be of interest to our readers.

Just send the Editor an email to

pcpro@rumoldboys-rna.org.uk



Future RNA Branch Meeting Dates

Tuesday 20th January 2026 @ RBL Club at 7.30pm

Tuesday 17th February 2026 @ RBL Club at 7.30pm

**Stowmarket RNA, c/o Royal British Legion,
8 Tavern Street, Stowmarket IP14 1PH**