



Jackspeak: "Dhoby Whip" (Washing Line)

Ships Office

Ahoy Shipmates, and welcome to the Christmas Edition of the Gen Dit!

Yes, believe it or not, we've reached the final Gen Dit of 2025. To mark the occasion, we've launched this bumper festive edition, stuffed fuller than a Christmas turkey and only slightly less likely to induce a nap.

Now, before anyone bellows "Bah humbug!" from the back, let's steady the ship. It is Christmas after all. That magical time of year when neighbours you haven't spoken to since last New Year suddenly appear on the doorstep bearing a plate of something "homemade," which you'll spend 10 minutes deciding whether it's safe to eat.

Then there's the mother-in-law, arriving with a suitcase that suggests she's planning to overwinter with Shackleton. The kids turn up with the rug rats in tow. All of them instantly glued to their phones or tablets, volume permanently set to "afterburner," and not a word out of them unless there's food, Wi-Fi, or money involved.

And of course, forget that one quiet pint you had planned? Your beloved will inevitably announce that tonight is the perfect night to watch a heart-warming Christmas film together. (You know, the one where everyone learns the true meaning of Christmas... except you, because you'll be asleep 12 minutes in.)

This, shipmates, is precisely why this month's newsletter spans 12 pages. A page a day for the 12 Days of Christmas. A perfect strategy for preserving your sanity while the festive chaos rages around you. Consider it a survival manual courtesy of your ever-dependable (and mad) Editor.

So raise a glass and remind yourself that Christmas is, allegedly, about family, fun, goodwill, and pretending you haven't already eaten your body-weight in mince pies. Whatever your own traditions, may the holiday season be peaceful, merry, and, with luck, only moderately chaotic.

Right then. Enough chatter. Enjoy the read, and may the festive odds be ever in your favour.

The Editor



Gen Dit

**Stowmarket RNA
Newsletter**



December 2025

ISSUE No 113



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Stowmarket RNA Branch

Website

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

and we are also on Facebook

Ships Noticeboard

D'ya hear there. Here is the latest news for your delight and digestion. With it being Christmas, Defaulters has been cancelled this month - so make the most of it while you can.

December Branch Meeting

Shipmates and friends, please note that we will not be holding a branch meeting in December. However, for those who wish to come along, we will be holding a DTS on **Saturday 13th December** in HQ2, which everyone is welcome to come along to. The start time for the gathering is as per DTS tradition - 12.00 mid-day.

January 2026 Branch Meeting

In January we will be back to holding our monthly branch meetings on a Tuesday evening. The first one for 2026 will be on **Tuesday 20th January 2026 @ 7.30pm** in the RBL Club, Tavern Street, Stowmarket.

RNA Winter Online Quiz Nights

You should have received a notification of the following, which is being organised by RNA Central Office. If not, here it is again.

As the nights get longer and the days colder, it's easy to feel a bit cut off — especially if you're on your own or missing the usual buzz of branch life.

That's why we're launching the Royal Naval Association Winter Online Quiz Nights— a fun, light-hearted monthly quiz night to bring shipmates and branches together through the darker months.

Whether you're in a branch, curled up at home, or joining from overseas — this is your chance to stay connected, have a laugh, and enjoy a bit of friendly competition. From Land's End to John O'Groats and across the world, everyone's welcome. So, grab your team or go solo, pour a brew, and get stuck in!

The quiz will run online on the third Friday of each month, starting from Friday 21st November and continuing through to March. Start time: 7pm

You can play on your own or as part of a team (maximum 5 people). It's all just for fun — no pressure, just plenty of laughs.

The quiz will be held on Zoom, so you can join from anywhere. The link will be shared on the RNA website and across our social media channels, and you'll also find it below:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/85082417512?pwd=qpaYv8bpPuzhm0ONrVfdBnrvbvYzlh.1>

First ever government female veterans' forum

It is estimated that there are 270,000 female veterans in the UK.

In late November, it was announced that a new forum has been set up to ensure the voices of women veterans are heard on issues such as housing, employment and health. [First ever government female veterans' forum to put ex-military voices at the heart of support - GOV.UK](#)



Shipmates, if you have a spare 10 minutes, how about completing King's College London's survey on exploring the digital needs and competencies of UK veterans.

The survey closed in January 2026.

Take part here: [https://qualtrics.kcl.ac.uk/jfe/form/SV_5w3138xWRgZRzeu...]

Don't Forget

Though we know that it is customary to leave out milk and biscuits for Santa on Christmas Eve, remember that sailors will drink rum, 365 nights of the year.

HMS BLUE BOTTLE - 12 DAYS OF CHRISTMAS

THE SHIP THAT EVERYONE TALKS ABOUT

Some years ago, Christmas duties kept our adopted ship and crew at sea for the festive period. Here's how they celebrated the Twelve Days of Christmas, HMS BLUE BOTTLE style...

Day 1: A Partridge in a Pear Tree. The Captain decided to hold an "Enforced Festivity Parade" on the flight deck. Unfortunately, the "partridge" was the Ops Officer's budgie, 'Percy', and the "pear tree" was a mop handle jammed into a paint tin. Percy escaped mid-anthem, dive-bombed the Navigator, and perched triumphantly on the ship's radar, which promptly stopped working.

Day 2: Two Turtle Doves. The Doc and the Padre organised a "Peace & Love" session in the sickbay, but the Chief Stoker misheard and turned up with two actual turtles painted white. The turtles were entered into an impromptu race down the Burma Way and were still halfway to the galley come New Year's Eve.

Day 3: Three French Hens. The Chief Cook and Soapy Watson tried to serve coq au vin for dinner, but Swampy Marsh only found three ancient frozen chickens labelled "Not for Human Consumption." The Pusser (Father Famine) insisted they be used anyway and were last seen bouncing off the bulkhead when Mini Cooper tried to carve them with a hacksaw.

Day 4: Four Calling Birds. Bunny Warren the Radio Operator tuned the comms set to pick up "birdsong ambiance" from a relaxation channel. Unfortunately, it intercepted a Russian spy ship's frequency, which led to the ships company listening to a bunch of confused Russian sailors arguing about vodka.

Day 5: Five Gold Rings. Wyatt Earp the Stores Accountant issued five brass washers from the spare's locker, spray-painted gold, and presented them as "symbols of naval efficiency." Wayne Kerr wore all five through his ear at once, got stuck in a watertight door, and had to be freed by Chief Elec with a hacksaw.

Day 6: Six Geese a-Laying. Chief Frosty Snow took charge of the decorations, fashioning geese out of pillowcases, rubber gloves, and mop heads. The Buffer hung them proudly from the mess deck ceiling. They slowly deflated overnight, leading the Padre to hold an impromptu service for "the passing of our poultry brethren."

Day 7: Seven Swans a-Swimming. Tugg Wilson and the Club Swinger decided to flood the hangar with seawater to create a "shipboard lagoon" for swans made from fenders and toilet rolls. The Pilot was not amused, and the stokers rigged a pump to drain it – straight into the Captain's cabin.

Day 8: Eight Maids a-Milking. Fanny Cummins and Fred Perry organised a "mock dairy" in the galley using powdered milk, two fire hoses, and four baffled stokers wearing mop heads. The chaos ended when Squid Calamari slipped, launched a bucket skyward, and baptised the Captain in semi-reconstituted milk.

Day 9: Nine Ladies Dancing. The Padre declared a "moral uplift" disco in the Chief's Mess. Gracie Fields on keyboard, Bomber Harris on lights (using the Aldis lamp), and Pony Moore attempting ballet. It was going well until Forty Watt the Marine decided to demonstrate his "interpretive warfare dance," knocking out the Master-at-Arms and two chairs.

Day 10: Ten Lords a-Leaping. The Wardroom, on mass, staged a "gentlemanly" jumping contest over the wardroom table. The First Lieutenant pulled a hamstring on take-off, the Gunnery Officer face-planted into the trifle, and the Ops Officer accidentally fired the confetti cannon in reverse. The table didn't survive, but morale soared.

Day 11: Eleven Pipers Piping. Yorkie Barr and Ben Gunn, the WEMs, rigged up the ship's pipe system to play "Jingle Bells." Instead, it produced an ungodly howl that sounded like a whale in distress. The Doc had to treat half the crew for ringing ears, whilst the Captain described the whole incident as "innovative, if haunting."

Day 12: Twelve Drummers Drumming. On the final day, Bill Sykes, Pony Moore, and Mini Cooper formed a "band" using upturned buckets, mess tins, and Swampy's pots. The noise was so appalling that Chief Stoker shut down the generators in protest. The lights went out, just as the Captain raised a toast. The only illumination came from Forty Watt's glow-stick collection, and a burning pudding Soapy Watson had flambéed with diesel and placed outside the Jimmy's cabin.

By the end of the Twelve Days, BLUE BOTTLE was slightly singed, mostly sticky, and utterly festive. As the Captain wrote in the log: "Morale: inexplicably high. Equipment: largely non-functional. Recommend immediate shore leave and possible exorcism."

MERRY CHRISTMAS FROM THE CREW OF HMS BLUE BOTTLE

HMS BLUE BOTTLE - CHRISTMAS DINNER



HMS BLUE BOTTLE's Christmas dinners are an event so chaotic that naval historians still debate whether they're a meal, a mutiny, or a miracle of survival. Here's a case in point.

The crew had been promised a "traditional naval Christmas dinner," which, as Father Famine (the Pusser) cheerfully reminded everyone, meant whatever was left uneaten since Easter.

In the galley, the Chief Cook, Swampy Marsh, and Soapy Watson were deep in battle. The "turkey" turned out to be a large, frost-bitten lump of meat labelled 'Poultry, Possibly'. Swampy suggested it might be a shite-hawk (seagull). Chief Frosty Snow pointed out it had legs too long for a chicken and too short for a penguin.

"We'll call it Turkey Surprise," declared the Chief Cook grimly, reaching for the flamethrower (technically, the emergency crème brûlée torch). Meanwhile, Wyatt Earp the Stores Accountant counted out potatoes one by one as the Caterer muttered about

"budgetary discipline", whilst Mini Cooper kept stealing them to make "deck hockey pucks," and the Chief Stoker accidentally deep-fried his screwdriver in the chip oil.

With Gracie Fields setting up the sound system for festive music, Bomber Harris strung fairy lights across the hangar using cable ties and sheer optimism. They blinked beautifully for thirty seconds, then tripped the circuit breakers.

The Captain, wearing his best (and only) dress whites, had decreed: "Dinner shall be taken in proper order, officers to port, ship's company to starboard, and [absolutely] no custard fights this year."

The Jimmy produced a seating plan so complicated it required a compass, three highlighters, and divine intervention. Tugg Wilson and Wayne Kerr immediately swapped seats "for tactical reasons." Fanny Cummins and Fred Perry set up a "Ladies' Section" by the bulkhead, guarded by Frosty Snow and Marine Forty Watt, who took the role far too seriously and bayoneted a Christmas pudding.

The Padre was asked to say grace. He stood, raised his mug, and began: "Lord, bless this food – whatever species it may be – and forgive those who cooked it..."

The crew chorused, "Amen!" and the Chief Stoker started sharpening his hacksaw.

The first course was "naval consommé," which the Doc identified as warm water that had previously contained carrots. The second course, the infamous 'Turkey Surprise', was served under heavy steam. Soapy Watson carried it in a fire retardant overalls, followed by Swampy Marsh waving a fire extinguisher just in case. When the Chief Cook finally revealed the bird, there was a long silence.

The Pusser: "It's... grey."

The Doc: "Possibly pre-embalmed."

The Captain: "Carve it anyway, Chief Stoker."

The Chief Stoker, who had already downed half his rum ration, attacked it with gusto. The blade ricocheted off the meat, narrowly missing the Padre's halo of tinsel. Midshipman 'Jack' Horner attempted to help by hitting it with a samson bar, which promptly bent, and Yorkie Barr declared it "enemy grade armour plating" and suggested using the ship's 4.5 gun.

When at last a sliver of "meat" was prised free, Gracie Fields tested it by bouncing it off the bulkhead. To a great cheer, it rebounded and knocked out the Master-at-Arms.

The vegetables were no better. Coal-black on one side and frozen on the other. The sprouts were last seen rolling under the table, pursued by Mini Cooper and Squid Calamari armed with dessert spoons. Soapy Watson's gravy, described as "naval tar with seasoning," had to be ladled out with a paint scraper. And the Chief Elec, ever helpful, tried to reheat the bread sauce using a soldering iron. The sauce caught fire, but morale improved.

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The pièce de resistance was the traditional Christmas pudding, lovingly soaked in rum by Fanny Cummins and “a little diesel” by the Chief Stoker (who thought it would help it burn). Which it did when Soapy Watson lit it, with the flames leaping higher than the for’d funnel.

The Captain, unfazed, raised his glass. “Now that’s festive spirit!”

The Padre attempted to bless the blaze but was beaten back by the heat, whilst Bunny Warren’s attempt to call the Fire Party over the ship’s tannoy, accidentally led to his broadcasting the carol service instead. When the fire was finally out, Mini Cooper cheerfully scraped the remaining pudding into bowls, whilst the Doc advised everyone to eat it quickly “before it re-ignites.”

After dinner, Gracie Fields struck up a carol on the keyboard, slightly out of tune, partly melted, as Bomber Harris provided mood lighting with a flare pistol.

The Captain gave his traditional address: “Shipmates, that was the finest meal I’ve ever survived. To BLUE BOTTLE. May her engines wheeze forever, her pudding never extinguish, and her crew remain gloriously unfit for shore duty!”

The crew roared approval, mugs clinked, and the stokers started a spontaneous conga line that ran the length of the ship, accidentally tripping the aft bilge alarm.

As the night wore on, the fairy lights fizzled out, the last of the gravy was used as antifouling paint, and Chief Frosty Snow began taking bets on who’d get food poisoning first.

By midnight, BLUE BOTTLE drifted quietly under the stars, a smoke trail of victory (and burnt pudding) hanging in the night visible to the horizon.

THE BOXING DAY INCIDENT

It was the morning after the Great Christmas Dinner Catastrophe, and BLUE BOTTLE lay eerily quiet, apart from the faint sound of the Chief Stoker snoring in the bilges and the distinct smell of burnt pudding still wafting from the galley vents.

The Captain emerged from his cabin, eyes bleary but spirits high, clutching a mug that smelled suspiciously like industrial-strength rum. He broadcast to the ship’s company, “D’ya hear there. Captain speaking. In the grand tradition of post-Christmas morale, we shall have... a Talent Show!” to which the collective groan from the crew could be heard in Gibraltar.



The show went as follows:

Act I: The Opening Ceremony: The Padre was volunteered as Master of Ceremonies, largely because he owned the loudest voice and the smallest sense of self-preservation.

“Welcome one and all,” he boomed into the main broadcast that Bunny Warren had adorned with tinsel. “Let us celebrate the talents bestowed upon this fine ship, or at least the ones that haven’t been medically prohibited!”

Gracie Fields struck up a cheerful (if slightly off-key) rendition of “Rule Britannia” on the melted keyboard, and the show began.

Act II: The Performances

1. Mini Cooper’s Magic Show

Mini Cooper, resplendent in a tablecloth cape, announced he would perform “death-defying naval illusions.” He produced the Master-at-Arms watch from a tin of Spam and then “made it disappear” – by throwing it overboard, which was followed by thunderous applause from everyone – except the still concussed Master-at-Arms.

2. The Stokers’ Choir

Led by the Chief Stoker (still slightly smoking from Christmas dinner the previous day), the stokers performed a heart-wrenching version of “We Three Kings.” Unfortunately, their timing was dictated by the rhythm of the port engine misfire, so every third line came with a puff of black smoke and a clunking noise. The Padre called it “haunting”, whilst the Doc called it “carbon monoxide poisoning.”

3. Chief Frosty Snow – Interpretive Dance

Wearing silver overalls and an alarming amount of tinsel, Chief Frosty Snow performed “The Dance of the Defective Torpedo,” accompanied by Bomber Harris on emergency siren. She was halfway through a dramatic spin when Tugg Wilson tripped over a cable, cutting power to the lights.

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The sudden darkness caused Forty Watt to dive for cover, shouting, “Action stations!” When the lights came back on, Chief Frosty was hanging from a pipe, still spinning slowly. She received a standing ovation.

4. Wayne Kerr and Tugg Wilson – “Comedy Duo”

Their act, titled “Life on the Lower Deck,” featured impersonations of the officers. Wayne Kerr did a scarily accurate Captain, complete with rolled-up chart and booming voice: “If it moves, salute it! If it doesn’t, paint it! If it’s on fire, it’s probably the pudding!” The real Captain, sitting in the front row, didn’t seem amused, until Tugg Wilson did an impression of him, which somehow ended with both of them saluting each other until they fell over laughing.

5. Swampy Marsh and Soapy Watson – Culinary Cabaret

The galley team attempted a live cookery demonstration called “Flambé Fantasia.” They began with pudding brandy, moved to cooking oil, and ended with Chief Tiff screaming as the mixing bowl ignited. The fire alarm went off, the sprinklers drenched the audience, and the Doc declared it “the most hygienic event of Christmas.”

6. The WEMs’ Rock Band – “The Static Discharge”

Yorkie Barr and Ben Gunn formed a two-man electric band using jury-rigged instruments made from signal wire and parts of the radar. They performed “Smoke on the Water” (aptly) until the feedback loop overloaded the PA, blew three fuses, and set Bunny Warren’s hair slightly on fire. The Captain was overheard muttering, “That’ll do wonders for our radar cross-section.”

Act III: The Grand Finale

Just when the Padre was ready to declare the evening a triumph of morale over common sense, Midshipman ‘Jack’ Horner took the stage. He announced he would perform a dramatic recitation of “The Rime of the Ancient Mariner.” He got as far as “It is an ancient mariner...” before the Chief Stoker loudly interrupted, “Aye, that’s me, lad, now sit down before you curse the ship!”

To restore order, Gracie Fields struck up a final tune – “Auld Lang Syne.” The whole crew joined in, arms round each other, off-key but heartfelt. Forty Watt fired a flare “for effect,” which briefly illuminated the sea and scared a passing fishing trawler into sending a Mayday.

Epilogue

When the lights finally flickered out and the smoke cleared, the Captain stood up and made his closing remarks: “Gentlemen... and Frosty..., tonight we have witnessed the true meaning of naval talent: absolute chaos, mild combustion, and unparalleled enthusiasm. If this ship ever sinks, at least we’ll go down entertainingly.”

The Padre led a toast: “To BLUE BOTTLE. The only ship where a pudding, a flare, and a sermon can all start fires!”

The crew (in unison), shouted, “Hear, hear!”

The night ended with Chief Stoker singing a love song to the port diesel before being put to bed for his own sake and the ears of everyone else. By morning, BLUE BOTTLE was still afloat, the crew were mostly accounted for, and the Captain’s log read simply: “26 December. Talent show complete. Fire count: three. Morale: disturbingly high. Recommend immediate inspections (and counselling).”

7 reasons why sailors are smarter than those in the army and RAF

1. Sailors navigate storms, tides, and tricky seas. Soldiers get lost marching in a straight line, and the RAF get lost looking down from 30,000 feet.
2. Sailors can fix anything with rope, black tape, and a bit of rum. Soldiers bring plans. The RAF bring manuals.
3. Sailors survive months at sea with nothing but a compass and a sense of humour. Soldiers survive basic training. RAF personnel survive simulator games.
4. Sailors know how to handle tight spaces, tricky knots, and high pressure – soldiers just follow orders. In the RAF, they just push buttons.
5. Sailors can turn a disaster into an adventure. Soldiers turn it into a lecture, and those in the RAF take selfies and call it reconnaissance.
6. Sailors read the stars, the wind, and the waves; soldiers read maps, and in the RAF, they read flight plans. Only sailors can navigate through a blizzard while drinking rum and telling jokes.
7. Sailors can improvise, innovate, and keep calm under chaos. Soldiers try to improvise. In the RAF, they can’t spell improvise let alone understand it.

When the navy saved Christmas

If you find yourself being entrusted with the grandkids (or nephews or nieces) over the Christmas holidays whilst their parents are out on 'Secret Santa Duties', why not pour yourself a rum, get the rug rats to pull up a bollard, and tell them the tale of when the navy saved Christmas.



It was Christmas Eve, and the North Pole was in utter chaos. Father Christmas's sleigh had broken down in the middle of a blizzard, Rudolph was stamping his hooves in frustration, and the elves were running around like candy-crazed deckhands.

First on the scene were the Army. They arrived in full battle dress, marching in formation through the snow. They tried to push the sleigh out of the drift, but every attempt ended with someone tripping over a candy cane, face-planting into a pile of presents, or accidentally launching a snowball at Santa's hat. After an hour of "strategic manoeuvres" and a few frostbitten noses, the Army admitted defeat.

Next came the Air Force, roaring in with jets and drones. They attempted to lift the sleigh with winches and drop presents via parachute. Unfortunately, the reindeer refused to cooperate under jet blast, presents rained down on the elves, and one overzealous pilot ended up tangled in tinsel on a rooftop. Mission: spectacular fail.

Finally, the Navy arrived. Sailors slid down icy gangways, ropes and pulleys at the ready, flasks of rum in their pockets, and that unmistakable glint of mischief in their eyes. "Ho, Ho, Ho! Need a proper crew, Father Christmas?" called the Buffer, winking as he sized up the sleigh.

Father Christmas, frazzled but relieved, nodded. "Aye, lads. Only someone who can handle ropes, knots, and unexpected chaos can save Christmas tonight."

With naval precision (and a little rum-fuelled ingenuity), the sailors lashed the sleigh to their ship's anchor lines. They hoisted the presents, untangled the reindeer, and even managed to give Rudolph peppermint treats to keep him motivated. While the Army was still stuck in snowbanks and the Air Force was untangling elves from parachutes, the Navy was soaring across rooftops, delivering presents, and keeping the blizzard at bay.

By morning, every stocking was filled, every chimney had a present, and Father Christmas gave the sailors a hearty wink. "Without you lads," he chuckled, "the elves would've mutinied, and the army and air force would still be digging in the snow. Sailors really do know how to get things done."

The Navy returned home with frostbitten noses, pockets full of tinsel, and stories that would be sung in sea shanties for years. Meanwhile, the Army was still trying to organise a "formation push," and the Air Force was debating flight paths.

From that year to this, whenever a blizzard has threatened the North Pole, Father Christmas always sends an extra crate of rum to the Navy – and a polite, "thanks, but no thanks" to the Army and Air Force.

Moral of the story: Sailors are smarter, quicker, and much better at improvising under pressure... especially when Christmas is on the line.

Having told them the dit, it's probably a good bet that they'll not only remember you telling them the story, but also very probably that you fell asleep with a smile on your face and smelling of rum!

For Boxing Day



As a sailor, a marine, a soldier and an airman stroll through the barracks, they come across a big heap of brown muck in the middle of the path.

The marine crouches down, scoops some up and says, "Feels like poop."

The soldier grabs a bit, pops it in his mouth and goes, "Yep... tastes like poop."

The airman leans in, takes a sniff and nods. "Definitely smells like poop."

Meanwhile, the sailor just steps neatly around the pile and says, "Good thing none of us stepped in it."

A sailor docks in a tiny town with just one hotel. At the front desk, the manager sighs and says, "I'm afraid we're fully booked."

Desperate, the sailor pleads, "There's got to be something. A room, a cot, even a patch of carpet. I'm not picky."

"Well..." the manager hesitates. "There is a double room with only one occupant. A paratrooper. He might agree to split the room, but I should warn you: he's got a nasty temper, and he snores so loudly that guests in neighbouring rooms have complained. I'm not sure the trouble is worth it."

"I'll take my chances," the exhausted sailor insists.

The next morning, the sailor bounds downstairs for breakfast looking fresh as a daisy. "How'd you sleep?" the manager asks, surprised.

"Best night's sleep I've had in ages." "No issues with the paratrooper? No snoring? No... confrontations?"

"None at all. I quieted him down right away." The manager blinks. "How on earth did you manage that?"

"Well," the sailor says, "when I came in, he was already in bed, snoring like a chainsaw. So I walked over, gently woke him, gave him a kiss on the cheek, and said, 'Goodnight, beautiful.'"

"And?"

"He didn't sleep a wink. Sat up the whole night watching me."

The Chief Stoker was chatting with the MEO one day, boasting that he knew absolutely everyone worth knowing.

"Go on," he said, "name anyone, anyone at all, and I'll prove I know them."

The MEO decided to call his bluff. "Alright, Chief... Donald Trump."

"Easy," the Chief said. "Old golfing mate of mine."

So off they fly to Washington. They ring the door at the White House and, astonishingly, the Chief and MEO are welcomed straight in.

Trump greets the Chief like an old friend, claps him on the back, and invites them both out for a round of golf.

Impressed but suspicious, the MEO mutters that it must have been luck. The Chief simply grins. "Pick someone else then."

"King Charles," says the MEO.

"No problem."

They fly back to the UK and visit Buckingham Palace. In the middle of a tour, Prince Charles himself spots the Chief, beams, and waves them over. Within minutes they're having afternoon tea with him and the Duchess of Cornwall.

Now the MEO is rattled, but he still isn't convinced. As they leave, he says, "Alright, one more. The Pope."

"Ah, the Pope? Known him for years."

Off to Rome they go. They squeeze into the crowds packed into St. Peter's Square. The Chief sizes up the sea of faces and says, "I'll never catch his eye from down here. But I know the Swiss Guards. Give me a minute. I'll pop upstairs and come out on the balcony with him."

He disappears, and half an hour later, sure enough, the Chief steps out onto the balcony right beside the Pope.

But when he comes back down to the square, he's horrified to find the MEO on the ground surrounded by paramedics. The Chief pushes his way through and kneels beside him.

"What happened?" he asks.

The MEO, pale and breathless, croaks, "I was fine... until you and the Pope came out on the balcony... and the tourist next to me asked... 'Who's that bloke standing next to the Chief?'"





The 12 days of Christmas (sung Matelot style)

Sung loudly, off-key, and mostly incorrectly to the tune of 'The Twelve Days of Christmas', with more chaos, more rum, and more court martials than you remember from the original.

On the first day of Christmas, my shipmate gave to me... Fourteen days of Leave.

On the second day of Christmas, my shipmate gave to me...

Two steaming bats, And fourteen days of Leave.

On the third day of Christmas, my shipmate gave to me...

Three tins of beer, Two steaming bats,
And fourteen days of Leave.

On the fourth day of Christmas, my shipmate gave to me...

Four salty shanties, Three tins of beer,
Two steaming bats,
And fourteen days of Leave.

On the fifth day of Christmas, my shipmate gave to me...

FIIIIIVE letters from home! Four salty shanties,
Three tins of beer, Two steaming bats,
And fourteen days of Leave.

On the sixth day of Christmas, my shipmate gave to me...

Six stokers snoring, FIIIIIVE letters from home!
Four salty shanties, Three tins of beer,
Two steaming bats,
And fourteen days of Leave.

On the seventh day of Christmas, my shipmate gave to me...

Seven RO's dancing, Six stokers snoring,
FIIIIIVE letters from home! Four salty shanties,
Three tins of beer, Two steaming bats,
And fourteen days of Leave.

On the eighth day of Christmas, my shipmate gave to me...

Eight dabbers painting, Seven RO's dancing,
Six stokers snoring, FIIIIIVE letters from home!
Four salty shanties, Three tins of beer,
Two steaming bats,
And fourteen days of Leave.

On the ninth day of Christmas, my shipmate gave to me...

Nine WEMs rewiring, Eight dabbers painting,
Seven RO's dancing, Six stokers snoring,
FIIIIIVE letters from home! Four salty shanties,
Three tins of beer, Two steaming bats,
And fourteen days of Leave.

On the tenth day of Christmas, my shipmate gave to me...

Ten mess decks leaking, Nine WEMs rewiring,
Eight dabbers painting, Seven RO's dancing,
Six stokers snoring, FIIIIIVE letters from home!
Four salty shanties, Three tins of beer,
Two steaming bats,
And fourteen days of Leave.

On the eleventh day of Christmas, my shipmate gave to me...

Eleven cooks combusting, Ten mess decks leaking,
Nine WEMs rewiring, Eight dabbers painting,
Seven RO's dancing, Six stokers snoring,
FIIIIIVE letters from home! Four salty shanties,
Three tins of beer, Two steaming bats,
And fourteen days of Leave.

On the twelfth day of Christmas, my shipmate gave to me...

Twelve sailors singing, Eleven cooks combusting,
Ten mess decks leaking, Nine WEMs rewiring,
Eight dabbers painting,
Seven RO's dancing,
Six stokers snoring,
FIIIIIVE letters from home!
Four salty shanties, Three tins of beer,
Two steaming bats,
AND FOURTEEN DAYS OF LEAAAAAVE!



Happy New Year

With this being the last edition of Gen Dit for 2025, it would be wrong if we didn't also tell the tale of BLUE BOTTLE's New Year celebrations following her adventures over Christmas whilst on patrol. After all, Once Navy, Always Navy



After the disasters of Christmas Dinner and the Boxing Day Talent Show, the Captain decided that New Year's Eve demanded a touch of class.

"This year," he proclaimed, "we shall hold a Formal Captain's Ball!" The First Lieutenant immediately regretted volunteering to organise it.

Being the navy is had to have a name, and so the evolution came to be known simply as "Operation Glamour".

The Pusser began issuing formal wear from the ship's ancient stores. The results were... mixed.

The Chief Stoker's tuxedo had sleeves two feet too short. Mini Cooper's jacket was in fact a midshipman's mess dress from 1973. Chief Frosty Snow found herself in a beautifully tailored outfit that was bright pink and labelled 'Sub-Lieutenant's Mess, HMS Dainty.' She wore it with pride and a spanner in her hair.

The Doc issued a standing order: "Any injuries caused by high heels or broken champagne flutes will not be treated after midnight." The Chief Elec and Bomber Harris handled decorations. They rigged the ship's hangar with fairy lights powered directly from the radar supply. The lights pulsed in rhythm with the ship's position updates. Every time they flashed, the compass spun, and the Navigator swore.

Act I: The Grand Entrance

At 1900, the ball began. The Captain, resplendent in full dress uniform and a paper crown from a Christmas cracker, entered to Gracie Fields playing "God Save the King" on his half-melted keyboard. The Padre offered an opening blessing: "Lord, as we approach this new year, grant us wisdom, patience, and – ", with everyone present hearing Wayne Kerr adding [loudly], "- more rum, Padre!"

The blessing was thus shortened.

Act II: Dinner (Round Two)

Determined to redeem himself after Christmas dinner, the Chief Cook unveiled "Operation Culinary Redemption." The main course was roast beef (or something similar), served with Yorkshire puddings roughly the size of life rafts. Soapy Watson had poured the gravy into the ship's decoy launcher by mistake, so Mini Cooper volunteered to retrieve it, resulting in an impromptu "gravy salvo" over the stern.

As for the Padre's glass of punch mysteriously smoking, the Chief Stoker confessed later it contained "just a splash of antifreeze for colour."

Fred Perry and Fanny Cummins handled dessert. Trifle, rum-soaked and entirely flammable. Tugg Wilson tried to flambé it "for drama" and succeeded in setting the Master-at-Arms tux alight. Chief Frosty Snow calmly doused the flames with a fire extinguisher, earning a round of applause from the officers and a chorus of complaints from everyone else.

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Act III: The Dancing

Once the tables had been cleared (and partially extinguished), Gracie Fields struck up a wobbly version of “Auld Lang Syne.” Midshipman Jack Horner attempted a waltz with Chief Frosty Snow, tripped over her toolbelt, and ended up sliding halfway across the wardroom on a patch of spilled gravy. Bomber Harris tried to add “ambience” with smoke from a distress canister. Within seconds, the hangar resembled a battlefield. The Padre was heard declaring, “If this is Heaven, it’s remarkably loud!” The Chief Tiff, having built a dance floor from spare decking panels, saw one corner collapse when Forty Watt attempted a Marine breakdance routine. The Pusser then announced a “Best Dressed” contest. Chief Frosty Snow won by default after the Captain’s crown caught fire and Wayne Kerr’s bow tie exploded (it was powered by a 9V battery).

Act IV: The Countdown

As midnight approached, Bunny Warren manned the radio to tune into the BBC’s countdown broadcast.

He accidentally tuned into a Spanish fishing channel instead, so the crew rang in the New Year to cries of “¡Langostas para todos!” (“Lobsters for everyone!”). The Navigator raised an eyebrow at the faint hum beneath their feet.

“Captain... did anyone notice we’re drifting?” The Captain, mid-toast, squinted out to sea. BLUE BOTTLE had somehow swung her bow toward France. It turned out that apparently, the Chief Elec had wired the radar lights through the autopilot. “Steer 180 degrees!” the Captain roared. “Aye aye, Sir!” cried Mini Cooper, who promptly turned on the coffee machine. The Chief Stoker, misunderstanding entirely, ran to the engine room, restarted the port diesel, and flooded two deck with exhaust fumes.

Act V: Midnight Mayhem

When the clock (or possibly the barometer) struck twelve, the entire ship erupted in cheer.

Forty Watt fired the salute gun, which misfired and launched a champagne bottle through the hangar roof, whilst Bomber Harris fired a flare out the hangar door, which landed on the flightdeck and started a small but festive blaze.

The Captain, unfazed, raised his glass: “Gentlemen – and Frosty – another year survived! May next year bring fewer fires, better food, and no international incidents!” At which point Bunny Warren shouted, “Sir, the French Coast Guard’s on the radio – they say we’re in their fishing lane!”

There was a pause, before the Captain replied, “Tell them we’re conducting... nocturnal buoy inspection.” Bunny: “They’re asking why our buoy is on fire.” Captain: “...Carry on, then.”

Epilogue

By 0200, the flames were out, the engines steady, and the crew asleep wherever they fell – in their pits, under tables, and one (possibly two) inside the paint locker.

The Captain’s Log for 31 December read:

“Ball successful. Minor smoke damage, moderate embarrassment. Ship drifted 2.3 miles toward France.
Recovered all personnel except possibly one pudding.”

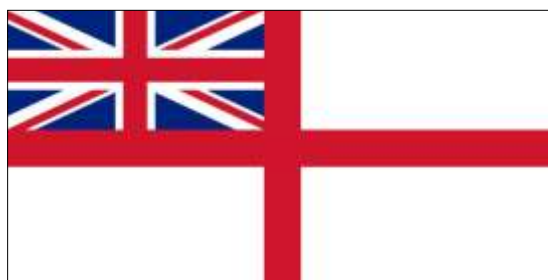
At dawn, the Padre offered a New Year’s blessing over the PA:

“Lord, thank you for sparing this ship once again. Please continue to protect her – for reasons known only to You.”

With that, the engines rumbled into life, BLUE BOTTLE turned homeward, and Chief Frosty Snow muttered the ship’s unofficial motto: “If it’s not broken yet – give us five minutes.”

TO ALL THE SHIPMATES AND FRIENDS OF STOWMARKET RNA

A HAPPY NEW YEAR TO ONE AND ALL



Another dit of 'Life on a Type 14'

Our thanks to S/m Gerry for sending in another dit from the days as the right hand man to Father Famine

We were in Pompey for a leave period and the Skipper was on leave, so the Jimmy, known throughout the lower deck as Fat Wart, ('cos he was!) was revelling being in charge. A stoker who had committed some minor offence, was duly bought up before the Jimmy, who pronounced him guilty and awarded what he deemed to be a suitable punishment for the offence. And not what the offending stoker thought he might get.

Now an explanation of the type 14's layout is required here. The officers heads were across the Burma Way from the wardroom and like all heads on board were fitted with double doors which opened outwards secured by a simple clip at the top. The flushing was directly from the fire main (240 lbs psi) via a reduction valve to a suitable flushing pressure.

A day or so after the assizes, said stoker spotted the Jimmy entering the heads and as he walked past, casually reached up and cranked the reduction valve wide open. Needless to say, the obvious happened.

Having finished his business, Jimmy pressed the flush lever. There was an almighty roar, like an enraged bull elephant, the doors burst open and an enraged, very wet, First Lieutenant covered in his recent deposit emerged at a speed that would have impressed an Olympic judge.

Following an enquiry, which made the Spanish Inquisition look like a bunch of amateurs, nobody saw or heard a thing, even the stewards who had to clean the mess up, were tight lipped.

Meanwhile, a certain stoker didn't have to buy a beer for the rest of that leave period!

Shortly after, all the reduction valves to all heads on board were wired shut at the correct flushing pressure.

Can't think where that idea came from!

And finally ... A sailors time spent in the mob is either one of excuses or progress. Either way, they're still a sailor.

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



10 Christmas Crackers



The Editor accepts no responsibility for the following

Q: What do you call Santa when he stops moving?

A: Santa Pause.

Q: Why did the ornament go to school?

A: It wanted to be a little "brighter"!

Q: How does snowman get around?

A: By riding an "icicle"!

Q: Why did the Christmas tree go to the barber?

A: It needed a little "trim-mas"!

Q: What kind of ball doesn't bounce?

A: A snowball!

Q: Why did the shepherds visit the bakery on Christmas Eve?

A: Because they heard there was a "holy roll" in town!

Q: How do cows greet each other at Christmas?

A: Merry Chris-moo!

Q: What do you call an old snowman?

A: Water!

Q: What's Santa's favourite type of music?

A: Wrap!

Q: Why did the angel bring a pencil to church?

A: To draw some "heavenly lines"!

Future RNA Branch Meeting Dates

Saturday 13th December @ HQ2 from 12.00pm

Tuesday 20th January 2026 @ RBL Club at 7.30pm

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