



At the going down of the sun

Ships Office

Shipmates and Friends,

Welcome to this month's go-to mix of news, dits, and a touch of humour.

As we enter a period of Remembrance, shipmates will be donning their No.1s for parades across the county and beyond or taking a quiet moment at home to honour those who made the ultimate sacrifice. I hope the weather cooperates and everything goes smoothly for those paying their respects.

In the Garden of Remembrance outside Central Office in Portsmouth Dockyard, a poppy cross will be laid to commemorate the shipmates who've crossed the bar since last year's Remembrance. Including those from our branch. Another cross, bearing their names, will also be placed outside Westminster Abbey. It's a fitting tribute to our shipmates, as well as to many others from the Association who have made their final voyage in the past 12 months.

We will remember them, and the countless others who gave their lives in conflicts past and present, from the First World War to today. The photograph at the top of this page, of four sailors graves in France, serves as a reminder that matelots have laid down their lives not just on the seas, but on land and in the air, defending our islands and lands around the globe.

On a lighter note, I'd like to send my best wishes to those shipmates currently listed as P7R (that's the sickbay roster, for the uninitiated). It seems we've hit a bit of a rough patch recently, with several of us needing a visit to sickbay. Maybe we should rename ourselves RNA Sickbay – or even Sicknote instead of Stowmarket RNA!

Whether you've had the 'pleasure' of seeing a scab lifter lately or you're feeling in fine form (or close to it), I hope this months newsletter puts a smile on your face.

The Editor



Gen Dit

Stowmarket RNA
Newsletter



November 2025

ISSUE No 112



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Stowmarket RNA Branch

Website

<https://rumoldboys.wixsite.com/mysite>
and we are also on Facebook

Ships Noticeboard

Despite the queue outside sickbay, shipmates have still been keeping busy.

Branch Curry Night

All shipmates should have received by now comms regarding the branch curry night, which is being held on **Friday 7th November** at the RedFort curry house in Stowmarket.

Organised by S/m Andy, this is proving to be a popular branch social, so if you haven't already let Andy know that you're coming along (and with whom), you need to, and quickly.

Contact Chivs if you want to come along and haven't told Andy. Email: pcpro@rumoldboys-rna.org.uk

Uckers World Championship

S/m Mike B was to be found in Pompey in early October for this years 'Official' World Championship, held at the Maritime Club (the 'Home Club'). Sadly, Mike didn't reach the final but still held his own and didn't let the branch down. It was a cracking day and let's hope that Mike will be joined next year by more of our shipmates.



Area 5 Meeting

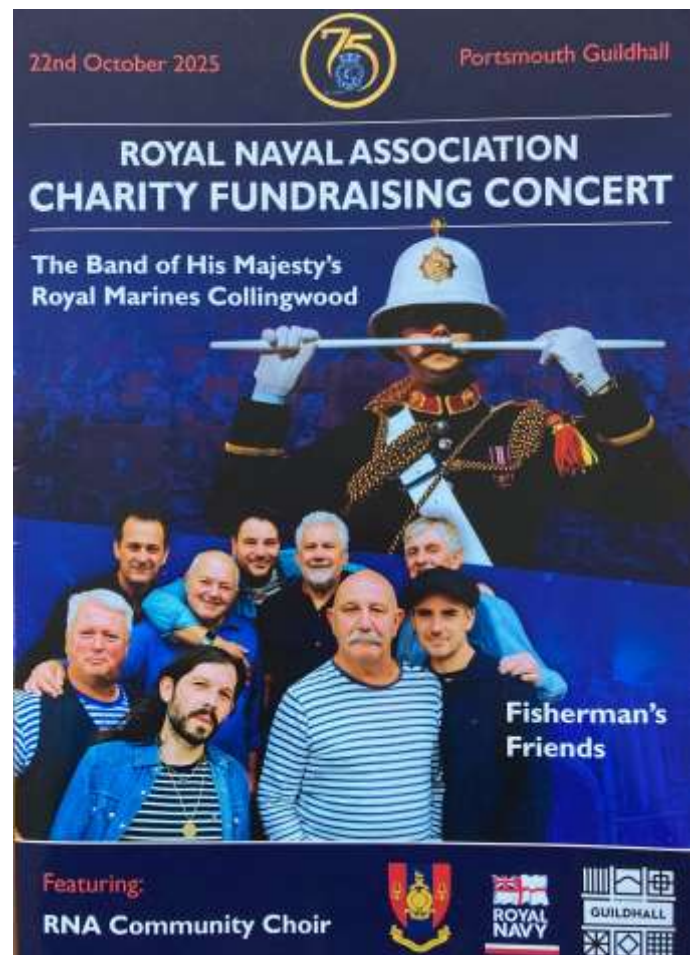
Shipmates, Stowmarket RNA will be hosting the Area 5 meeting, which is being held on **Saturday 15 November** at the Rookery Bowls Club. Starts at 1300. It would be great to see as many as possible attend. Cheers.

RNA Charity Fundraising Concert

S/m Katrine joined 1,500 others at the Guildhall in Pompey for a concert that saw the Fisherman's Friends join The Band of His Majesty's Royal Marines Collingwood (including the Corps of Drums) and the RNA's very own Community Choir, for a fabulous and thoroughly entertaining evening in the presence of the First Sea Lord and many other VIPs.

Everyone joined in the sing-a-longs, which included firm favourites such as 'Sailor Ain't A Sailor', 'Nelson's Blood' and many more. All topped off with the Bandies playing The Battle of Trafalgar, Sunset, Heart of Oak and A Life On The Ocean Wave. It really was a great evening.

Note to Chivs: Doing the Middle Watch in the hotel bar after the concert doesn't mean you can now officially call yourself a watchkeeper. Last man standing (again!)



Stowmarket Poppy Appeal Launch

On the 24th October at the URC, Nick, Colin, Chivs, Gary (with our Branch Standard) and Jason (Chief G.I. for the night), turned out for Stowmarket's official Poppy Appeal launch, which was attended by the town's mayor and other dignitaries.

At the launch, Chivs was (quite unexpectedly) awarded a Certificate of Appreciation by Stowmarket RBL for his support of the Poppy Appeal.

Remembrance



At the going down of the sun
and in the morning
we will remember them



*We shall lay a poppy cross at the town's Memorial Gates
to remember the following from the town*

R J BAKER	02.10.1942	Royal Navy
J W BARRELL	04.03.1915	Royal Navy
A A G HITCHCOCK	29.01.1943	Royal Navy
K J HOWARD	09.03.1944	Royal Navy
L C N JACOB	11.08.1943	Royal Navy
E G JOY	27.03.1943	Royal Navy
P R B JOY	29.06.1940	Royal Navy
D C W MILLER	16.01.1944	Royal Navy
F A SMITH	08.08.1940	Royal Navy
R STEVENS	15.11.1942	Royal Navy
F V WARD	17.09.1914	Royal Marines
H E WARD	11.03.1943	Royal Navy
C C WHITEHEAD	02.11.1941	Royal Navy
J WILDEN	23.01.1944	Royal Navy
J R S WOOD	03.08.1944	Royal Navy
T C WOODWARD	02.03.1918	Royal Navy

In Waters Deep

*In ocean wastes no poppies blow,
No crosses stand in ordered row,
Their young hearts sleep... beneath the wave...
The spirited, the good, the brave,
But stars a constant vigil keep,
For them who lie beneath the deep.*

*'Tis true you cannot kneel in prayer
On certain spot and think. "He's there."
But you can to the ocean go...
See whitecaps marching row on row;
Know one for him will always ride...
In and out... with every tide.*

*And when you span of life is passed,
He'll meet you at the "Captain's Mast."
And they who mourn on distant shore
For sailors who'll come home no more,
Can dry their tears and pray for these
Who rest beneath the heaving seas...*

*For stars that shine and winds that blow
And whitecaps marching row on row.
And they can never lonely be
For when they lived... they chose the sea.*

Remembrance Sunday

Sunday 9th November

For those who wish to parade from Red Gables and march through the town to St Peter's and St Mary's Church, the muster time at Red Gables is 0840, to then march off at 0900. Note that the branch standard will not be in this part of the parade, but will be at the church service, which starts at 0930. On completion of the church service, the parade will re-form in the town square. This year, all standards will form up as one platoon from the town square and march up to and then through the town's Memorial Gates. Those who wish to march from the town square to the Recreation Ground for the Act of Remembrance, will do so as one group. The Act of Remembrance and Wreath Laying will commence at the Memorial Gates at 1055. The parade will be dismissed at 1120.

Armistice Day

Tuesday 11th November

A two-minute silence will be observed at the town's Memorial Gates at 1100. Muster at 1045. The branch standard will be on parade.

Menin Gate

A special mention to S/m Jason (our friendly pongo), who took part in a service at the Menin Gate on Saturday 25th October, at which he read Kohima. Jason also visited local war cemeteries to pay his respects at the graves of those who gave their lives during the First World War, which included sailors from the Royal Naval Division who fought on the Western Front. An immensely proud occasion for Jason and we thank him for sharing with us the photograph on the front page of this month's newsletter. BZ shipmate.

HMS BLUE BOTTLE

THE SHIP THAT EVERYONE TALKS ABOUT

This month a tale that will remind many of us playing war games with sailors from across the pond

With HMS PRINCE OF WALES busy sampling noodles in the Far East and HMS QUEEN ELIZABETH wobbling between Pompey and Jock-land like a shopping trolley with a flat wheel, last month the Admiralty found itself tragically short of warships for NATO's big North Atlantic bash: Exercise ATLANTIC BOLD '25.

Enter our very own HMS BLUE BOTTLE – a proud, slightly rusty veteran of minor skirmishes, major cockups, and the occasional deep-fryer fire. Her crew was keen, her systems were... mostly labelled, and her reputation? Best described as “eccentric.”

As she majestically (i.e., slightly off-course) sailed into the exercise zone, the crew stood to, squinting at the imposing silhouettes of USS Thunderpants, USS Freedom Bacon, and USS Unquestionable Firepower. “Cor,” muttered AB ‘Pony’ Moore, eyeing the vast carrier deck. “You could park BLUE BOTTLE on that and still have room for a Lidl and a laser tag arena.” The captain, now in his crispiest uniform and mood, addressed the crew: “Right, people. Let’s show our American cousins how the Royal Navy does it: with heart, heroism, and equipment that really should be in a museum.”

Day One: Acronyms and Accidents: The Americans welcomed BLUE BOTTLE warmly – if slightly warily. “Welcome!” came a thick Southern drawl over comms. “You’re assigned to Screening Formation Foxtrot, Bravo-Four-Actual.” The Navigator confidently replied, “Copy that. We’ll follow the big grey one and try not to hit anything moving.” Keen to integrate, the First Lieutenant ordered that all internal communications now be conducted in ‘Tactical American.’ This lasted exactly 17 minutes until Writer ‘Gracie’ Fields announced from his Action Station at the Forward Section Base, a “Code Delta Bravo in trap 2 of the Forward Heads as a result of last night’s curry.”

Day Two: Airpower, British Style: As part of the exercise, each vessel was to demonstrate air operations. The Americans launched F-18s in perfect synchrony. BLUE BOTTLE countered by launching Leading Airman ‘Bomber’ Harris in a fluorescent drone suit, tied to a helium balloon, armed with a GoPro and a flare gun. “He’s budget stealth,” explained the Gunnery Officer. “Low visibility. Literally.” Unfortunately, a nearby US destroyer mistook Bomber for a rogue spy probe. He responded the only way he knew how – by mooning them from 12,000 feet. A diplomatic incident was narrowly avoided, thanks to a strong headwind and the captain’s impressive apology cake.

Day Three: Logistics and Lunch Tragedy: A cross-deck transfer was attempted using the ship’s antique Jackstay rig (last used when Charles still had hair). It worked... sort of. Steward ‘Brigham’ Young was launched across 50 feet of open sea and directly into a net of US Navy oranges. He survived. The oranges did not. Meanwhile, Cook ‘Swampy’ Marsh sought to “bridge culinary gaps” by sending over classic British naval rations. Curried eggs in a bag, chicken tikka in concrete gravy, and his proud creation – Naval Flapjack Mk.III (now classified as a blunt weapon under NATO regulations). Three Americans were hospitalised. One renounced food altogether and called out for his mother.

Day Four: War Games and Inflatable Warfare: Tasked with “aggressor duties” and encouraged to use “asymmetric tactics,” PO ‘Tugg’ Wilson took things a little too literally. The offensive included: Two mannequins in sailor uniforms duct-taped to paddleboards, six inflatable sheep (painted grey for “tactical realism”), and a loudspeaker blaring The Great Escape theme. The Americans, thoroughly confused, halted their advance. USS Thunderpants sent a message: “We don’t know what your tactic is. But it’s working. Our morale is shattered. We surrender.”

Final Night: Diplomacy in D Minor: To cap things off, a formal multinational dinner was held aboard Thunderpants. BLUE BOTTLE’s delegation consisting of the captain in full No.1s, Chief ‘Frosty’ Snow wielding a tray of sausage rolls and thinly veiled disdain (plus a “Kiss the Cook” apron, just in case), and Marine ‘Forty’ Watt in a tartan tuxedo he insisted was regulation Highland naval attire. Midshipman ‘Jack’ Horner delivered a culturally insensitive lecture on “Spotted Dick” to a room of bewildered Americans. A conga line broke out. Someone attempted to pole dance on the anchor chain. As for Stoker ‘Fanny’ Cummins, he closed the night with a karaoke rendition of I Will Survive – while standing in a mop bucket and wrapped in Union Jack bunting.

The Aftermath: As BLUE BOTTLE limped back toward home port (with a suspicious new rattle and a missing lifeboat), a final signal arrived from the US Navy Flag Officer, which read, “To HMS BLUE BOTTLE: Thank you for your participation. You brought ingenuity, surprise, and a level of chaos that no simulation could replicate. NATO needs this energy. Please never change. But... seriously. No more airborne personnel.”

The crew cheered and the ship headed to the nearest port for a well-earned bit of R&R.

The Tiff

All Tiffs (short for artificer) will tell you that having undertaken a lengthy apprenticeship, they are a very highly qualified engineer. Everyone else simply views them as a mystical, secretive creature, trained in a dark art that keeps the engines running, the bunk lights on, the gyro, radar and sonar spinning, and from time to time, when needed, things to go 'woosh' and then 'bang'. Now, the thing is this. You should never let them fix too much at once - and for very good reason. It upset a ships natural delicate balance of dysfunction. Here is such an example of that happening.



It was a Tuesday, a day like any other on one of Her Majesty's Grey Funnel Line, which is to say, the ship was happily making steam, with the majority of the crew at breakfast, whilst in the galley, one of the cooks was busy trying to keep up a steady supply of snorkers. All seemed well enough. Until it happened.

07:58: An event so rare and mythical, it is spoken of quietly and is a part of naval folklore. The Tiffs got up.

Not one, not two – all of them. There they were, in clean, neatly pressed overalls, with toolboxes, and... purpose.

The first sign of trouble came when the Chief Tiff strode into the MCR without yawning. This triggered an automatic alert on the bridge, where the Captain dropped his teacup and whispered, "Oh, God." Panic immediately set in among the crew.

The Buffer assumed this was a prelude to war and had the dabbers disappear onto the upper deck at triple speed. The Pusser put up a "Closed" sign at the stores office. The PO Writer wrote his last will and testament. The Chief Cook locked himself in the galley, muttering, "If they fix the oven, I'll have to cook something proper." The Doc called an emergency wellness meeting to "monitor the psychological fallout of sudden mechanical competence." The Gunnery Officer barricaded himself in the cable locker. The navigator plotted a course for a safe harbour, and the helo pilot asked if this meant the engines would go fast enough on the Lynx to finally take off. As for the Padre, he crossed himself and held an impromptu prayer circle in the hangar, reciting Psalm 23. "Yea, though I walk through the valley of competent artificers, I shall fear no engineering." Meanwhile, chaos reigned in engineering.

Down in the bowels of the ship, the Tiffs got to work. Spanners turned. Valves hissed. At one point, a light came on and a mythical moment occurred when one of the Tiffs opened a service panel and said, "Well, there's yer problem."

Everyone froze. The panel was marked "DO NOT OPEN UNDER PAIN OF DEATH OR STEAM", with a sticker stating that the last time was during the Queen's Silver Jubilee in 1977. Inside, they found, a working flux compensator, a mummified rat holding a ship's biscuit, and a note that read, "If you're reading this, you're already too late." The Chief Stoker went white and tried to intervene, but was foiled when he was lured away by a suspicious smell of spilled diesel and a whisper that one of the Tiffs had moved his spanner.

With terrifying efficiency, the Tiffs began fixing everything. This created an imbalance in the ship's natural chaos-to-function ratio. This led to one of the boilers running silently, causing the MEO to assume it had been stolen, and the water becoming so good, that one shower ejected a junior rating into the next compartment. Then the radar flickered into life, leading to panic in the Ops Room as plots appeared on screens that had been blank for weeks. The Captain was so concerned, he considered sending a signal to fleet HQ that simply read, 'We're Doomed!'

But like all unnatural phenomena, it couldn't last. At 11:59, a Tiff said the words that shattered reality. "We've done it all. There's nothing left to fix." A terrible silence fell throughout the ship, and moments later, the lights dimmed, a pipe burst in the heads, spraying three decks with suspiciously warm water, the gyro compass spun itself into a coma, and the No1 dhobi wallah was seen running around ship shouting, "Forget laundry, no more fluckin steam."

The Tiffs looked around. Nodded once, and as one, returned to their pits. Order was finally restored. The MEO and WEO's report of that day simply read, "The Tiffs worked. The ship rejected it." Having read the report, the Captain immediately ordered that in the case of Tiffs doing work in the future, the following was to happen:

1. Evacuate nearby compartments
2. Alert all shipping
3. Offer counselling to the Chief Stoker
4. Conduct a prayer meeting in the dining hall
5. Standby to pipe "Hands to Emergency Stations"

This months dit

Our thanks to S/m Gerry for sending in his dit from the days as a naval caterer (Father Famine's right hand bod)

Life on a type 14

For those who are too young or would bribe drafty to only send you to big ships, type 14's were designed and built in the early 50's, when we were still trying to recover economically after WW2. They were single screw vessels of only 1400 tons with a crew of 140 and were thus the size of a wartime corvette. Accommodation was all bunks by the early 70's but had no dining rooms and food was collected individually and carried to your mess for consumption. A rather interesting journey for the stokers and lamp tramps who had the two after messes and had to negotiate a trip along the upper deck, in any sort of sea to get to their messes. Needless to say discipline was a little more relaxed than on a big ship.

One Friday PM having arrived back in Pompey for the w/e and being primed to leg it, to my horror I found no bread or milk and suddenly realised that the signalman had missed me off the logreq. So I spent the next hour or so pleading with the nice ladies at the bakery and dairy that it really was worth them sending lorries out on a Friday afternoon with 5 gallons of milk and 20 loaves and would they be absolute angels and take orders for Saturday and Monday before we sailed. All the time watching every-one else leg it for the w/e.

Having finally sorted it out, by this time, one bad tempered POCA finally got to the mess for a quick change, only to find the Yeoman sitting there as duty PO. Having vented my wrath about his signalman missing me off the logreq and muttering he now owed me a couple of pints, I duly went off for the w/e.

The following week, the Yeoman was on the bridge and said to his signalman, "Go and do the logreq - and don't miss The Great Starvo off. You did last week and it cost me a couple of pints!" At which point the Skipper asked, "Yeoman, who is the Great Starvo?" To which the Yeoman replied "The caterer, Sir" The Skipper said "I

rather like that", duly reached for the tannoy mic, and his familiar voice, boomed through the whole ship, "Great Starvo - Bridge."

A few minutes later, having ascended to the lofty heights, I stuck my head over the hatch combing and said, "You called, Sir?" To which the Old Man exclaimed "Yeoman - it works!"

You've got to smile

Known for always looking at himself in the mirror, when a sailor told his mates that he was meeting up with a girl that evening, and told them her name, one of the lads piped up, "I've heard she's the lass who has mirrors above her bed." Always wanting to look himself in the mirror, he took a bottle of windolene with him.

One of the stokers, long married, was accused by his Divisional Officer of being sarcastic. When pulled up for not having contacted his wife in weeks, the DME0 asked him, "What would your wife say if I called her?" Stokes answered, "Probably, hello."

Imagine the disappointment on the young bootnecks face, when on entering the mess, he was asked to remove his boots, only to discover the mess didn't have a bouncy castle. (It was common curtesy to remove your footwear when entering a messdeck).

Many a sailor will recall when even a heavy sigh was considered backchat by a Chief.

When it comes to taking PT tests, soldiers will tell you that they do theirs in full battle kit, and before breakfast. Bootnecks will tell you they'll yomp 20 kilometres carrying 60lbs of kit before breakfast, and then do a PT test for a bit of fun afterwards. Sailors will tell you that getting around the ship in a storm at sea is a PT test like no other. In the RAF, ringing up reception to ask that the fridge in the room be stocked up is tiring enough.

And finally ... When a matelot is quiet, it means that they are generally in deep thought. When the Master-at-Arms is quiet, it means that the matelot in deep thought, is in fact, in deep shit.

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



And we'll see what we can do.

Future RNA Branch Meeting Dates

Tuesday 18th November @ RBL Club at 7.30pm

Tuesday 16th December @ RBL Club at 7.30pm

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