

FLAG HOIST

The Chatham Naval Officers' Association Newsletter

Dear Members

I wanted to say thank you to all those who worked on and attended the Trafalgar dinner. The general feedback is it was one of the best we have had in recent years with the service and food in the mess very much improved for which I pass credit to Natasha the mess manager. Once all the invoices have come in and paid I intend to publish the accounts to all members relating to the event to show how the ticket price is set and the costs relating to this event that may not be obvious.

I have asked the CO of RSME is we could use his mess next year on Friday 9th Oct and await confirmation, but please pencil in your diary.

The Freedom parade went well and several of our members were present either on parade or representing other organisations.

You may have seen Cmdre Bryant on SE news being interviewed about the event.



We have just two meeting left this year the December one being a social. If you are bringing a guest please advise the Hon Sec at least 10 days in advance with any car details.

Late entries not only cause me an admin nightmare trying to arrange with the guard service it also makes us look unorganised and as you know there's GMT and there's Naval time, Naval time means 5 minutes early.

Lastly, I want to congratulate Dr Martin Watts for his award of the CNOA Meritorious certificate.

Martin not only keeps us up to date and deals with the day to day admin of the CNOA he performs many other task that add real value to organisation including standing at the guard house on Trafalgar nights so we don't have to exit our cars for a speedy entrance.

Yours Aye, Jon



Lt Cdr Jon Vanns RNR

Mulberry Harbours (Overview by Dr M. Watts)

The idea for floating harbours came from several people. Winston Churchill had suggested them as early as 1917. They were designed and needed to keep supply chain going for troops landing in France on D-Day, WW2 Military chiefs became interested in the concept after a disastrous British attack on the German-controlled port of Dieppe, France in 1942. The failed raid showed that the Allies needed a way to get supplies across beaches in the early stages of an invasion.

The Mulberry harbours were two temporary portable harbours developed by the British Admiralty and War Office during the Second World War to facilitate the rapid offloading of cargo onto beaches during the Allied invasion of Normandy in June 1944. They were designed in 1942 then built in under a year in great secrecy; within hours of the Allies creating beachheads after D-Day, sections of the two prefabricated harbours were towed across the English Channel from southern England and placed in position off Omaha Beach [Mulberry "A"] and Gold Beach [Mulberry "B"], along with old ships to be sunk as breakwaters.

The Mulberry Harbour in Arromanches-les-Bains became known as Port Winston, after British wartime leader Winston Churchill, who was closely involved in its conception. A staggering 2.5 million men, 500,000 vehicles and four million tonnes of supplies arrived via Port Winston.

The Mulberry harbours solved the problem of needing deepwater jetties and a harbour to provide the invasion force with the necessary reinforcements and supplies, and were to be used until major French ports could be captured and brought back into use after repair of the



inevitable sabotage by German defenders. Comprising floating but sinkable breakwaters, floating pontoons, piers and floating



roadways, this innovative and technically difficult system was being used for the first time.

The Mulberry B harbour at Gold Beach was used for ten months after D-Day, while over two million men, four million tons of supplies and half a million vehicles were landed before it was fully decommissioned. The partially completed Mulberry A harbour at Omaha Beach was damaged on 19 June by a violent storm that arrived from the northeast before the pontoons were securely anchored. After three days the storm finally abated and damage was found to be so severe that the harbour was abandoned and the Americans resorted to landing men and material over the open beaches.

The Allies failed to accomplish their objectives for the first day, but gained a tenuous foothold that they gradually expanded when they captured the port at Cherbourg on 26 June and the city of Caen on 21 July.

A failed counterattack by German forces in response to Allied advances on 7 August left 50,000 soldiers of the German 7th Army trapped in the Falaise pocket by 19 August. The Allies launched a second invasion from the Mediterranean Sea of southern France [code-named Operation Dragoon] on 15 August, and the Liberation of Paris followed on 25 August. German forces retreated east across the Seine on 30 August 1944, marking the close of Operation Overlord.

The total number of casualties that occurred during Operation Overlord, from June 6 [the date of D-Day] to August 30 [when German forces retreated across the Seine] was over 425,000 Allied and German troops. This figure includes over 209,000 Allied casualties: Nearly 37,000 dead amongst the ground forces.

HMS Venturer

On 27th May the first of the Royal Navy Type 31 frigates, Venturer, was rolled out of her assembly hall.

Conrad Waters was one of the guests invited to watch a memorable event which marked a significant moment in the ship's life and also highlighted the ongoing modernisation of the British shipbuilding sector.

The first of the Royal Navy's new Type 31, Venturer, was rolled out into the daylight from the assembly hall at Babcock International Group's Rosyth shipyard near Edinburgh. In contrast to previous generations of British warships, Venturer's unveiling was not accompanied by the traditional dynamic launch that historically marked the advent of a new ship. Indeed, the last major Royal Navy vessel to have been launched in this way was the Govan shipyard on 11 October 2010, nearly 15 years previously.

While such launches are certainly dramatic, they also come with a number of disadvantages. In addition to being an inherently risky practice – as the recent partial capsizing of the North Korean destroyer Kang Kong during a botched launch process.

NEW WAYS OF WORKING Given these issues, alternative means of transferring a newly built ship from land to water have gained popularity. For many shipyards, particularly in the commercial sector, this can involve constructing ships in a dry dock from which they can then be floated out. An alternative, which has become the dominant method for British surface warship construction, involves the use of a semi-submersible barge. Both the Type 26 City class frigates being built by BAE Systems on the Clyde and the Type 31 Inspiration class frigates under construction by Babcock at Rosyth are being launched by this means.

Under this method, ships are typically built resting on specially designed cradles that are later used to help transport the hull from the construction area to the barge. Once a ship has been loaded and safely secured, the barge is towed to an area of sufficiently deep water for float-off to take place. After the vessel has been lowered into the water and released, it is

towed back to the shipyard to allow final outfitting to commence.

A semi-submersible barge is advantageous for relatively low-volume warship construction. The barge can be used for other assignments between relatively infrequent ship launches, thereby spreading the cost of the investment across multiple projects. For example, the Malin Augustea CDOI barge used to assist Venturer's launch had previously been used to launch the Type 26 frigates Glasgow and Cardiff into the River Clyde.

The use of a barge-based launch is just one example of the extensive modernisation that is speeding completion of the Royal Navy's new frigates. Both major shipbuilders have also invested in new assembly halls – the Janet Harvey Hall at Govan and the Venturer Building at Rosyth – to improve the conditions in which the ships are constructed, large enough to support the simultaneous assembly of two frigates side by side, these cathedral-like structures are intended to improve productivity and efficiency to world class levels.

IMPRESSIVE SPECTACLE *Venturer's* move from the eponymous Venturer Building was carried out on the morning of 27 May, and the short journey out of the ship hall took roughly an hour. The movement was carried out by self-propelled modular transporters [SPMTs], which had been placed under the transportation cradles some time before the move was to take place. The APMTs are designed to allow large land-based Mammoet [the word for 'mammoth'] heavy objects to be transported safely with a very high degree of precision.

Supplied by Netherlands-based Mammoet [the word for 'mammoth' in Dutch], the SPMTs comprise modules with varying numbers of axles ['axle lines'] that can be connected head to tail and side by side to form a mobile platform of the required size. This grid is powered by a number of power pack units that are equipped with an engine and steering controls. Each set of wheels can be steered independently across 360 degrees to perform a wide range of movements that include transverse, carousel and crab like options.

HMS Venturer (cont...)

INTO THE WATER After performance of various checks Venturer's initial roll-out was followed by transportation to Malin Augusta's semi-submersible CDO1 barge later the same day. Moving the ship from the solid hardstanding to the floating barge was a complex process that took around eight hours. The transportation cradles then had to be finally attached to the barge prior to her move from the shipyard to the designated float off location.

The CD01 semi-submersible barge is owned and operated by a joint venture shared between Scottish Malin Group's Malin Abram heavy lift subsidiary and the Italian Shipping Company Augustea.



Originally built in China, it was lengthened and strengthened in Turkiye before commencing its current career. With a deadweight of 21,800 tonnes and an overall length of 137m, CD01 is described as one of the largest barges of her kind currently operating in Europe. She can be submerged to a maximum 11m over her deck, allowing her to float off cargoes with a draught of up to 9.5m by Monday 9 June Venturer was ready to commence the next stage of the launch process. On that day, she departed Rosyth aboard CD01 and passed under the Forth bridges bound for Charles Hammond Berth in the Port of Leith. When tidal conditions were suitable, the barge was slowly ballasted down to allow the frigate to enter the water for the first time. Venturer was released from the barge and then retraced her steps under tow to return to Rosyth on Saturday 14 June 2025.

LOOKING AHEAD Venturer's successful launch was another important step in realising a five ship construction programme that was awarded to Babcock back in November 2019. The frigate is likely to remain in dockyard hands for another year or so to allow the installation and integration of her main weapons and sensors before commencing what is expected to be an extensive series of sea trials. The remaining four of her Type 31 sisters should be completed before 2030 under current plans.

The Type 31 programme forms a major part of a programme of Royal Navy renewal that cannot be completed too soon, given that the number of remaining Type 23 frigates is expected to fall to seven by the end of the year. Other ships of the class are also being built in Indonesia and Poland under transfer of technology agreements, in a sign of the growing importance of the British naval shipbuilding sector.

New Crew Member Has A Soggy Start

Midshipman *Distraction* recently needed to acquire better sea legs, after he was pulled from the oggin by his crew mate Clifford Mickleburgh.

Initially, looking rather sorry for himself, *Distraction* quickly regained his composure and continued his thorough search of the vessel for suitable snacks.



Sea Dagger

At DSEI UK 2025, Leidos unveiled its Sea Dagger, a next-generation Commando Insertion Craft [CIC] concept developed for the Royal Navy.

The Commando Force programme is designed to transform UK amphibious forces into a more agile and lethal capability optimised for persistent forward deployment in a range of combat and non-combat roles. Key to this is a recapitalisation programme intended to bring new equipment and shipping into service in support of littoral strike operations.

As part of this investment plan, the CIC programme is intended to deliver a new high-speed, low-signature craft that can deliver Royal Marine Commando teams and their equipment from ships positioned some distance offshore. The MoD's procurement pipeline document last year indicated a requirement for around 20 CIC craft, with a budget of just over £190 million earmarked to cover design, manufacture, and support.

Top-level CIC requirements previously promulgated by the MoD call for a medium-lift craft that can carry a strike team and a small vehicle to the shore from a stand-off range [circa 150 nautical miles] at high speed [25+ knots] with a low probability of detection. One major design consideration is the ability to transport marines in an environment where they land on shore 'fit to fight'.

Capable of exceeding 40 knots, Sea Dagger is the result of a collaborative development effort between Leidos Naval Architects and military subject matter experts, the Royal Navy, and UKCF. The design builds on more than 30 years of fast-craft expertise and incorporates Leidos technology, including Trusted Mission AI, autonomous systems and integrated weaponry. Operational resilience is central to the concept, with a focus on readiness, availability, maintainability and repairability. The platform is designed to continue delivering its mission under stress, disruption or attack for an enduring presence in contested environments.

Aligned with AUKUS Pillar 2 maritime autonomy objectives and the UK Strategic Defence Review's vision to move to warfighting readiness and increasing lethality, Sea Dagger helps ensure the UKCF can respond quickly with the tools, training and systems needed to face the evolving threats and demands of modern conflict.

Sea Dagger addresses the most pressing challenge faced by specialised units operating in coastal and shallow-water environments around the world. Unlike historical near-shore landing craft, **Sea Dagger** delivers a unique combination of naval architecture and high-technology sensors, weapons and C2 [command-and-control] capabilities shaped by the realities of warfare in modern conflicts.



Artist impression showing two Sea Dagger craft during a commando insertion mission

Trafalgar Dinner



The annual Trafalgar Dinner, organised by the CNOA, took place at RSME on the 10th October.

More than 80 guests enjoyed good music, good company and good food.

All washed down with a glass (or two) of fine port.



CHATHAM NAVAL OFFICERS' ASSOCIATION ANNUAL SUBSCRIPTIONS



Joining Fee and Annual Subscription

With effect from 20th March 2023, new members will be required to pay a joining fee of £30 by cheque or transfer to CNOA at the following bank:

Metro Bank Sort code 23 05 80 Account 50484076

Cost £20 PA payable to Chatham Naval Officers Association

Address if required 2 Calverly Road, Tunbridge Wells Kent TN1 2TB

On receipt of the joining fee new members will receive an Association tie or scarf and lapel badge. The Annual Subscription of £20 applies from the date of joining if this occurs before 1st July, and then will be renewed by Standing Order from the following 1st January.

New members who join after 1st July will be required to submit a Standing order from the following 1st January.

Annual Subscription – Current members

The annual subscription remains at £20 and, with effect from 1 January 2024, the subscription will be payable annually on that date. In the first instance, and to allow members time to alter their current standing order dates, a transition period of 3 months, to 31st March 2024 will be in place, after which an audit and follow up process will be undertaken.

CHATHAM NAVAL OFFICERS' ASSOCIATION ANNUAL STANDING ORDER FORM

Please complete this form and return it to the Hon Treasurer: Lieutenant Jan Dean RNR, 79A Cherry Avenue, Swanley, Kent, BR8 7OU, or, if you prefer, you can scan a copy and email it to cnoauk@gmail.com . You can arrange a standing order electronically via your bank and, for those using traditional banking methods this form can be used to inform your bank of your instructions as below.

I wish to make my annual subscription payments by standing order to the Chatham Naval Officers' Association.

Your Name: _____

Your Address: _____

Post Code: _____

Name of your Bank: _____

Address of your Bank: _____

Your Bank Sort Code: ____/____/____

Your Account Number: _____

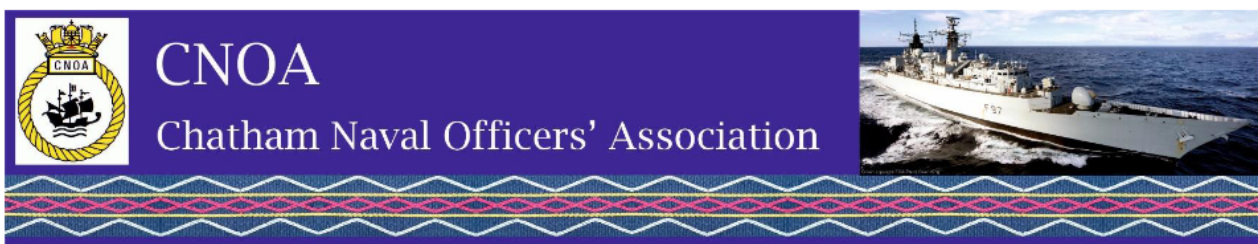
To my bank:

I request you to pay the regular sum of: £20 PA

Metro Bank sort code 23 05 80 account 50484076

Payable to Chatham Naval Officers Association

Address if required 2 Calverly Road, Tunbridge Wells Kent TN1 2TB



If you enjoy the CNOA activities, why not extend an invitation to a like-minded serving or retired officer? Or ask them to look at cnoa.org.uk



APPLICATION FOR MEMBERSHIP

SURNAME		FORENAMES		DATE
HOME ADDRESS Tel. No: E Mail Address:			BUSINESS ADDRESS Tel. No: E Mail Address:	
RANK	TYPE OF COMMISSION	SPECIALISATION / AWARDS & QUALIFICATIONS		
BRIEF CAREER DETAILS				
<p>General Data Protection Regulation: I agree that all the above details may be maintained and kept by the CNOA and RSME for the purposes of membership records and security. I agree / do not agree (delete as applicable) to my details being published in a membership booklet.</p> <p>SIGNED.....</p>				
PRESENT OCCUPATION				
PROPOSER'S NAME	PROPOSER'S SIGNATURE	HOW LONG KNOWN		
SECONDER'S NAME	SECONDER'S SIGNATURE	HOW LONG KNOWN		

HMS Hood - Gone But Not Forgotten



The 'mighty battlecruiser' HMS Hood was launched in 1918, but too late to be of any use in World War I, so instead she went on a World tour, flying the flag around the four corners of the Empire, and in doing so became one of the most beloved ships in the Royal Navy. Everybody knew the name Hood by the time war broke out again in 1939.

Within a year of the start of the 1939-45 conflict, HMS Hood had taken part in the destruction of the French fleet at Oran in 1940, when they refused to surrender their ships to the allies and were in very real danger of having instead to surrender to the incoming German invaders.

No matter where Hood went, she was met with cheers and flag-waving as the huge ship became part of the Home Fleet at Scapa Flow.

The only problem was that Hood was two decades old and starting to show her age. Her thinly armoured decks were just one reason why she was now lagging behind other modern battleships, such as Bismarck, Germany's most powerful.

On 19 May 1941 Bismarck sailed in company with the cruiser Prinz Eugen and, five days later, they were in the Denmark Strait between Greenland and Iceland when Hood and Prince of Wales sighted them and gave chase. Bismarck had been tracked for several days and the two British ships opened fire on the Germans as they tried to break out into the Atlantic.

On board Hood was Vice Admiral Sir Lancelot Holland, the Home Fleet's Second in Command and a veteran of a number of wartime operations.

But as the shells fell around the two British ships, Hood suddenly exploded, being ripped into three sections. Only three survived out of a crew of 1,418 who were on board.



The fallout from the loss of Hood led to Winston Churchill famously ordering 'sink the Bismarck', an order which was carried out just three days later.

The wreck of Hood was located in 2001 by ocean explorer David Mearns.

The last survivor of the sinking, Ted Briggs, made the journey to the site of the battle to pay his respects above the wreck where he had lost so many of his shipmates.

Discover more about HMS Hood by visiting the HMS Hood Association website

<https://www.hmshood.org.uk/>

There are no roses on a sailor's grave,
No lilies on an ocean wave,
The only tribute is the seagulls' sweeps,
And the teardrops that a sweetheart weeps.

CNOA Events Programme

Date	Speaker / Activity	Subject	Comment
10 January	Martin Watts	Gallipoli 1915	Virtual Meeting
14 February	AGM		
14 March	Derek Goodwin	LNG Bunkers, Cold Ironing and Scrubbers	
11 April	Social Evening		
26 April	Easter Lunch	Maidstone Masonic Centre	
9 May	Guy Bartlett	"Eat Your Carrots!" The Story of Radar	
13 June	Mark Gambell	Seamanship	
11 July	Summer Social Evening		
August	No Meeting Summer Leave		
12 September	Mark Bathurst	The History of Paddle Steamer Medway Queen	
10 October	Trafalgar Dinner		
14 November	Peter Gilbert & Barry Bryant	Santa Fe & South Georgia - Hunter and Hunted	
12 December	President's Christmas Social		

The Association of Royal Navy Officers








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100 Day Plan



General Sir Gwyn Jenkins has launched an urgent 100-day drive to tackle systemic submarine maintenance delays.

He has ordered the creation of a new Submarine Maintenance Recovery Plan designed to urgently address issues causing extended patrols for the Vanguard-class and the chronically poor availability of Astute-class boats.

Speaking to officers and civil servants during a 'clear lower deck' at NCHQ in Portsmouth last month, Jenkins said the navy must start "cutting through bureaucracy to get projects and ideas progressing faster" and warned that "unnecessary processes" were undermining combat readiness across the RN, Marines, RFA, and the wider MoD.

He described the next 100 days as a defining test of whether the Service can regain control of its maintenance activity.

There have been several periods in the last few years when the RN has not had a single SSN at sea. Currently, only one of the six boats in commission is operational, and four of them are at very low readiness.

Maintenance backlogs have also forced the four Vanguard-class SSBNs to remain on deterrent patrol for six months or more, almost doubling their intended length, placing additional strain on crews and equipment.

"The nuclear deterrent is my number one priority and that is a whole force effort" Sir Gwyn said.

A core part of his directive focuses on rethinking the £1bn-plus Clyde 2070 infrastructure programme, which is intended to



prepare the base for the Dreadnought-class and replace ageing jetties and equipment to support an expanding submarine fleet into the 2070s.

A new model of delivery intended to give naval officers greater influence over work managed by contractors and the Defence Infrastructure Organisation may be required.

"We need to agree how the Clyde 2070 programme will be owned and how the Navy will play its part in successfully delivering it," Jenkins told staff, signalling frustration with existing oversight arrangements that have led to repeated delays and cost increases.

Sir Gwyn's comments reflect a growing impatience with what he termed "red tape that stops you doing your jobs". He has urged senior officers to shed bureaucratic habits and empower front-line teams, saying the Navy must "focus on the things that matter" and "make the organisation more agile".

The First Sea Lord also underlined that the Service must embrace new technologies more quickly: "We are in an age of great technological change, and our job is to keep up. We want to wield the latest technology in pursuit of our enemies, innovation not just in systems, but in how we work."

Jenkins' decision to place his personal authority behind this initiative reflects a recognition that the situation has become untenable. Whether his '100-Day Challenge' can overcome years of decline and restore the credibility of the UK's submarine enterprise will be a critical early test of his leadership. He will likely find himself up against a government system enabled by civil servants, quangos, unions and lawyers, many of whom are addicted to bureaucracy, inertia, risk aversion and adherence to process over common sense.

Tight budgets and a shortage of qualified people also add to the difficulties.

Either way, Jenkins' efforts and his unwillingness to accept the status quo should be heartily applauded, and we wish him every success.

Waverley Paddle Steamer Visits Rochester



Friday, 26th September saw the world's last sea-going paddle steamer docked at a recently opened Kent wharf.

The Waverley arrived at Limehouse Landing, believed to be the first time it has visited Rochester.

It had travelled from Gravesend to the Medway town in the 50th year since the steamer's restoration, as part of the 80th anniversary of VE Day.

The dock opened to its first vessels in May.

Flag Hoist editor, Guy Bartlett, and his wife, Jill were on board. As you can see from the photo, it was a rather blustery day, but the excitement kept the cold at bay. That, and a very welcome portion of fish and chips, freshly cooked in the onboard galley.

The trip carried on with songs, food, chatter with other passengers, and the steady churn of the paddles.

Two industrious souls had brought their knitting and sat quietly click-clacking away on the deck. Others stood by the rail, watching the changing landscape and listening to the entertaining commentary - provided by Adam Taylor - about the towns and businesses we were passing.

At one point we passed another vessel, the steam tug Challenge. Challenge greeted us with a horn

blast, and the Waverley answered with a long whistle that felt like a greeting between old friends.

At 240 feet long and carrying up to 700 passengers, the Waverley was originally built for the Clyde route from Craigendoran to Arrochar.

The oil-fired steamship replaced an earlier PS Waverley that was lost during the evacuation of Dunkirk in 1940.

After it was withdrawn from active service, it was gifted to the Paddle Steamer Preservation Society for a nominal fee of £1 in 1974.

Learn more about the Waverley by visiting :

<https://waverleyexcursions.co.uk/>



Steam Tug Challenge



Challenge was built as one of a pair by Alexander Hall and Sons of Aberdeen.

She was launched on the 22nd January 1931. On the 2nd March she steamed down to the Thames to join The Elliot Steam Tug Company.

She was built as a sea going tug and was the most powerful steam tug on the Thames at the time.

Challenge's main duties were towing ships and barges of all kinds in and out of the Thames, transporting pilots and carrying out salvage work around the coast of the UK. It would not be uncommon for Challenge to ferry a ships crew, sometimes up to 70 people, to and from shore whilst they waited for the tide to turn.

Challenge also spent a large portion of the 1930s towing barges of bricks from Holland.

On 31st May 1940, at 4am, she headed to Dunkirk beaches towing a lighter of supplies. Challenge arrived in Dunkirk Roads at 12:30pm.

From here Challenge was sent to a beach, but when she arrived they discovered it occupied by Germans. She steamed to another beach, which had British troops and went full ahead and released her lighter and it beached successfully.

A German bomber almost immediately blew it up though. From there Challenge headed to Dunkirk harbour to help with berthing.

Whilst at Dunkirk the destroyer HMS Impulsive sustained damage to its propeller and required Challenge and Crested Cock to turn her around.

At 2:10pm Challenge and Crested Cock were ordered to let go of tow rope.

Challenge and Crested Cock escorted Impulsive to the Dunkirk pier heads.

From here HMS Impulsive made her own way to Dover with Challenge and Crested Cock in company arriving at Dover at 8:00pm.

In 1943 she was involved in the towing of the Maunsell Sea Forts into position in the Thames estuary. These forts helped defend against Luftwaffe attacks.

The following year Challenge was involved in towing Mulberry harbour parts too.



Challenge Towing HMF Knock John

STOP PRESS

Save the date Saturday 31st January 2026
New Year's Lunch at Maidstone Masonic Centre
Application and menu to be sent out soon.