



ROYAL NAVAL PATROL SERVICE ASSOCIATION

NEWSLETTER No. 88 Spring 2020

POSTAL ADDRESS and HEADQUARTERS

Royal Naval Patrol Service Association
Naval Museum, Sparrows Nest,
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We find ourselves in very strange and worrying times that none of us thought we would ever see. A pandemic has swept across the world taking many thousands in its path and plunged the world into uncertainty, fear and heartache and if that was not enough we now have a culture of protests and violence resulting in the desecration, damage and removal of monuments and memorials and an attempt to re-write history, but the past helps us to understand the present and helps us prepare for the future.

IMPORTANT PLEASE READ

45th Annual Reunion - 2020

In view of the COVID-19 situation that exists at this time the committee have had to make some serious decisions apart from the natural decision to temporarily close the museum from March until such times as it is safe to re-open. Our main concern has been the viability of holding the reunion in October. As the hospitality sector will be one of the last to fully open up which would mean the café and restaurant in the park and local guest houses etc. with the added factor that a lot of our older attendees may be reluctant and still not feel confident in travelling and being with a crowd which would mean we would be playing to a smaller audience. There were really only 3 choices, 1, to go ahead as planned, 2, to cancel altogether or 3, to hold a much scaled down version. After a lot of deliberation we have come up with the following - That we still have the service on the Saturday morning, scaled down a bit, with the silence and wreath laying, but with no band, guard or march past afterwards. The area at the memorial will give space for social distancing and will give those who do turn up the opportunity to remember, which, after all, is the important part of the occasion.

After the service people will be free to make up their own minds if they want to come down to the Sparrows Nest and the museum (which we will open) but at the same time be mindful of the social distancing protocol.

As mentioned, with the hospitality sector likely to be one of the last areas to have restrictions lifted we have decided NOT to entertain the idea of a buffet after the service as in previous years although the café may, at that time, have something available for individual purchase.

We fully realise that this is very disappointing for a lot of you who regularly attend but feel that it is the responsible thing to do. We also appreciate that we are in a "dammed if we do and dammed if we don't" situation but hope people will be on our side.

Regarding the AGM on the Friday, I contacted the Charity Commission about how we stand if we delay or cancel the AGM and their reply is as follows – "The Commission understands your concerns in this regard and during this period we will be taking as flexible and pragmatic approach as possible. If you feel that in the best interests of your charity and to follow the governments public health guidance it is necessary to cancel or postpone your charity's AGM (or any other key meeting) that will be fine. You should record the decision you have made to show good governance". With this in mind, we have decided to cancel the AGM. If, on the day of the service, the weather is favourable and there is something vitally important to discuss we may hold a small meeting in the open perhaps on the bandstand but this is only a thought as of course there will be non members in the vicinity.

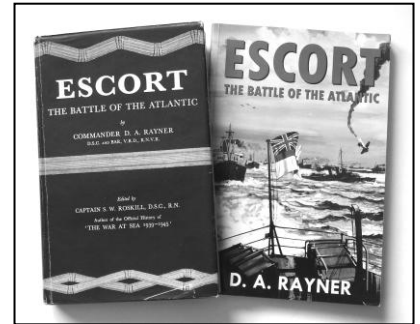
I trust everyone will back our decisions, ones we have had to make ahead of time so as to be able to inform our membership. If you do decide to attend we will, of course, be very pleased to see you but we will understand if you decide to stay away. 2021 will not be far away and so we can look forward to getting back to the sort of reunion we are used to.

From Mike Sims

You probably already know that I am a bookseller at Lowestoft specialising in naval and military history. The worldwide Covid19 pandemic has played havoc with postal deliveries to many parts of the world and in mid March I made the decision to take my book stock offline. I had been getting messages from customers telling me that their book(s) had not arrived and on further enquiries on the Royal Mail website found that deliveries to many parts of the world were suspended.

It seems that a lot of parcels to the countries affected in the early stages of the pandemic are sitting in warehouses. With many flights being stopped it was obvious that deliveries were going to take some time to resume and then get rid of the backlog. Rather than continue selling and risk disappointing customers I decided to take my stock offline until something near normal was achieved and try to reduce my backlog of uncatalogued books.

Amongst quite a number of waiting WW2 paperbacks I had a copy of D. A. Rayner's 'Escort - The Battle of the Atlantic'. This is quite a well known title in hardback, about which the editor, the renowned naval historian Captain S. W. Roskill (the writer of the four volume definitive history of the Royal Navy in WW2 for Her Majesty's Stationery Office), said that it had been 'a privilege to be asked to edit'. He described the author as 'serving continuously for more than five years in command of escort vessels', graduating from a trawler to a corvette, a small destroyer, larger destroyers, a group of destroyers and then command of a group of modern escort vessels giving him unquestioned authority on his subject.



I had had hardback copies of Escort through my hands previously and so it saved a lot of work when cataloguing further copies. With non-fiction books I always try and summarise the contents so that any potential purchaser, who may not know the book, will have an idea of what he or she is buying and I had a ready made description from previous copies. The odd thing about this paperback edition of the book was that it had been published by Thunderchild Publishing of Huntsville, Alabama, a publisher I had not heard of before and a quick Google of that name revealed that they specialise in reprints of science fiction.

In checking through the publication details of the book I came across the disclaimer on the verso of the title 'that the book is a work of fiction and all characters and events contained therein are products of the author's imagination'. I would imagine that someone got their wrist slapped for that because Escort is certainly not a work of fiction! The remainder of the book is fine, however and the original text is reproduced but sadly not all the original illustrations.

One thing that I was reminded about on flicking through it was that the author was amongst those who set up Sparrows Nest and the RNPS base at Lowestoft in 1939. He had joined RNVR in 1925 but by 1939 he was a Lieut. Cdr. and was posted to the Nest to take over as Unit Commander in an anti-submarine trawler. On arrival in Lowestoft four days before war was declared he found that the Nest as a base did not yet exist although there lorry loads of stores that had been sent up from Chatham. The handful of officers and ratings that had arrived set to arranging for the reception of the mobilised reserves.

The numerous trawlers requisitioned were undergoing strengthening and arming for war service. With the shortage of officers at the Nest Rayner found himself in the role of drafting officer, allocating crews to the trawlers as the yards let him know that they were ready for sea. For himself Rayner wanted an anti-submarine role and when some of the larger trawlers came available he kept an eye out for something suitable. When HMS Loch Tulla at Liverpool came up he forthwith drafted a Devon trawler skipper in command with himself as Unit Commander together with a crew. So started his career as an escort commander in which role he served for over five years. 'Talk about being in the right place at the right time!'

"Lockdown" museum refurbishments

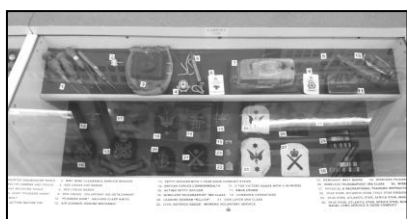
With those of us who regularly attend the museum on a weekly basis being classed as "at risk" (with the exception of my wife, Bonnie) the decision was made to shut the museum and office. Bonnie and I decided that being at home alone and being at the museum alone was not much different and so we took the decision to carry on going down to the museum and locking ourselves in so nobody else could get near us. This enabled us to carry on with the administrative work such as post, emails etc and also to catch up on some on-going museum up grades. Most of our display cabinets have a lot of small items in them but with no description. We have tended to fall into the trap of knowing what the items are but forgetting that "Joe Public" has not got the faintest idea. With this in mind we set about putting description cards by the items

and in other display cases numbering each item and displaying a list of descriptions. While doing this work it also gave us the opportunity to change some of the displays so that regular visitors will see the difference.

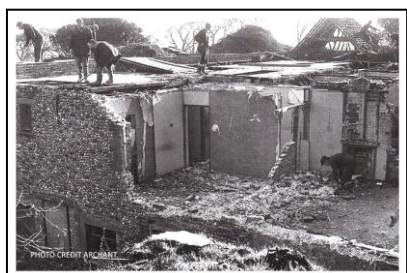
Either side of our upstairs fire escape were 2 stained glass windows which over the years had suffered from weather, deterioration and vandalism and so these were removed and boarded up not long before the "lockdown" and taken away by a stained Glass restorer. Mid-way through our enforced shutdown the restorers carpenter contacted us to see if we were happy for him to come down and re fit the glass but in light boxes rather than go back and be subject to more damage. These have now been installed in the same original position but inside and not subject to outside interference. We had long wondered about the age and origin of the windows, whether they were from WW2 era or post 1976 when the Association took over the site. The restorer along with some glass experts dated the glass to the 1920s and the materials, used to fix them as being near to that period as well. So now we are sure these were put in during the days when the RNPS were in residence during the war as the then the fire escape would have been a doorway into the main large original building (which was demolished in 1963).

Our wheelhouse and bridge display has been updated with some more figures and now comprises of the Commanding officer a Lt RNR, his first Lieutenant a Lt RNVR, a CPO, an AB Signaller, a Leading medic and a Cox'n on the wheel. To the left is a Leading Wireless operator sitting at his radio and to the right is a RNPS veteran looking at them and remembering what he used to do.

We hope you will all find the changes interesting, but for those who cannot get to the museum here are some pictures.



Our existing and new display units with item descriptions



The old building being demolished and the stained glass windows before and after restoration



The Bridge party with the Wireless Operator and our Veteran



Bert Purches, Petty Officer, RNPS. 1940-46 LT/KX 160972

This is a diary of Bert's time in the Patrol Service - (submitted by his Sons Jeremy & Martin Purches)

25 September 1940 Air raid on BAC. Our shelter suffered bomb blast. Finished up white with cement dust. Emerged to find bodies of shelter victims next to us, also cars in car park ablaze. So rode home on my bike! Went on ARP duty, watched enemy aircraft shot down by Polish Spitfires, landed in Manor Park Hospital. (27 Sept. 1940)



B Purches

30 September 1940 Sirens went, and mother woke me, got my bike to ride to fire station, outside Speedwell Chapel land mine landed, blowing it up, and me and my bike cleared a 4ft wire mesh fence and finished up in a cabbage patch. Had to push bike to the station, front wheel buckled. During the night got called out to British Road Services in Feeder Road, really blazing, and the more water we sprayed, the bigger the fire got. We were pouring water on dried apple and this expanded into a huge ball of fire.

4 November 1942 Left home to join HMS Raleigh training base at Plymouth. Train journey dreadful, train packed with servicemen, had to stand all the way in a thick fog of tobacco smoke.

1 January 1943 Sent to Portsmouth – HMS Victory – for transfer to RNPS at Grimsby.

15 January 1943 Started engineering course at Grimsby Nautical College. After course joined HMS Europa at Lowestoft for more instruction into engine room procedures.

4 April 1943 Joined HMS Irwell at Wallasey Dock, Liverpool, and sent to join Motor Minesweeper No.185. First day on board a dockyard worker stole my cigarette case presented to me by Rolls Royce. Went to sea first time 5 April.

6 June 1943 Left Liverpool for Foreign Service, fitted out at Portsmouth, and sailed to Mediterranean via Gibraltar. Swept mines up to 3 July from Gibraltar.

3 July 1943 Joined new base at HMS St. Angelo, Malta, prior to invasion of Sicily. Swept mines on the approaches.

9 July 1943 Pitch black sky, and heavy seas. 2 o'clock in the morning, on the way to landing beaches at Cape Pasero. The infantry landing craft, like us, all over the place in the heavy seas – poor soldiers must be suffering. Convoy all over the place trying to keep position. Troop ships, battleship Warspite, monitor Roberts, and tank landing ships all following us as we cleared mines to make the approach to the beaches a little safer.

Just before daylight we were just off the beach landing area when we had an aircraft alarm, but sadly these were gliders full of American assault troops, that had been released too soon and were crashing into the sea around the landing ships. Poor souls had no chance.

On top of this, as we swept the beach approaches we came under enemy shell fire. Didn't like this. Warspite and the monitor Roberts came in and replied with their 15-inch guns, the shells sailing just over us as we swept the beaches, having to sail through clouds of yellow choking cordite from the guns.

Returning along the beaches the landing craft started arriving and some hit by shell fire and caught fire – not a pretty sight.

10 July 1943 During the night a big troop ship was hit by a bomb, burning furiously, and troops having to jump screaming into the sea, which was also on fire. We had to just watch as, being wooden, and our life-boat also, we couldn't go into the flames, although there wasn't much you could do for them.

We anchored off Augusta, and sent the small boat ashore for any fresh food they could find! They filled the boat with tomatoes, grapes and melons, all for two packets of cigs, from the farmer. Back on board we heard a loud explosion, on the shore one of the soldiers had triggered a booby trap, and we saw him shoot up through the aircraft hangar roof and landed out in the sea. After the landing approaches were cleared, we moved up to Catania, after the Germans retreated to Messina. The first day we docked we were attacked by a fighter bomber but no damage to us. I fired a full pan of Lewis gun .303 at him, and although as he flew over I hit him for about 10 seconds but would have had more luck with doughnuts! No effect at all. During the night the volcano Vesuvius erupted, and we awoke to find the ship covered in a fine black ash, which took all day to clean up. A few days later the Germans left Messina and crossed the Straits to Reggio in Italy. We now had to sweep the Messina Straits, for landings near Reggio. From now on the fighting was further inland, so we were fairly safe, and sweeping up the coast for about 18 months, in all the ports from Reggio to Venice. Also from Brindisi we took ammunition to Tito's partisans in Split and Vis, but nearly had it on the way back when our American allies, who once again missed their target in Yugoslavia,



MMS 185 at Ancona

offloaded their bombs around us, but caused no damage. Moved up to Bari, and whilst there four American Liberty Ships arrived and anchored alongside each other in the middle of the harbour. Much appreciated by the German fighter who arrived and dropped his bombs on them! Not very pleasant as one of the ships was carrying mustard gas that floated around the harbour! Fortunately the wind dispersed it pretty quickly. Next day sailed further up the coast, and in the morning mist suddenly saw the mast tops of battleships and cruisers. As the mist cleared we saw a fleet of these, and destroyers, being the Italian fleet surrendering. As no one had seen fit to warn us, you can imagine the queue for our one and only toilet! We carried on, and after an explosion I fell down the engine room hatch and split the palm of my hand. On top of this I developed Malaria and Sand Fly Fever. Spent several weeks in Sick Bay in Ancona, when recovered was sent to convalesce in Rome!

On returning to Ancona, our flotilla accepted the surrender of several German E-boats! Later whilst minesweeping close in shore, we were shelled off Rimini by German Tiger tanks, but did us no damage. Soon after this my relief arrived. I was promoted to Petty Officer Engineer, and sent home on the Dumbarton Castle to Southampton and home leave! Only home for a month and my first leave for two years, when I was called back and sent to join BYMS 2173 at Ostende, Belgium. Spent several months sweeping along the French coast and clearing mines from Calais, Boulogne and Dunkirk and Le Havre. Eventually returned to Dover and demob in December 1946. Four long years, mostly at sea.

Kitchener's Memorial Holiday Centre, Lowestoft

For those of you who have stayed here before you will notice a lot of changes at your next visit. The new manager has made a lot of improvements and for those of you who have not stayed before you will be impressed. 6 of the 10 bedrooms have a view like this overlooking the sea. Kitchener's is a unique Suffolk charity overlooking the sea in south Lowestoft, offering hotel style holiday accommodation to British and Commonwealth ex-armed service men and woman; British ex-merchant service men and women; and recently to British ex-emergency service men and women, and their spouses or partners, widows and widowers. Kitchener's is open from April through to the end of October. Week long half board stays, short breaks and bed and breakfast options are available.



The management are also applying for a licence to have a members bar at the premises and the dining hall has had a makeover as well.

All areas of the centre have been addressed in the refurbishment much of which has been done during the "lockdown" A crowdfunding project through the Aviva Group has enabled the disabled toilet to be re worked. The whole toilet refurbishment project has been split into three phases: phase 1 is for the accessible toilet for less physically able guests, phase 2 will be a more comfortable ladies toilet and phase three will be better screening and refurbishment of the urinals.

The Aviva Crowdfunding project which our association has been involved and other contributions have raised enough to be able to start and complete phase 1 while we try and raise sufficient extra funds for phases 2 and 3. The builders started yesterday, 22nd June, and I attach photos of before the work started and as at 10.30am this morning. When complete it will be a unisex accessible toilet.

To contact the centre, their details are – The Manager, Lord Kitchener Memorial Holiday Centre, 10 Kirkley Cliff, Lowestoft, Suffolk NR33 0BY Tel: 01502 573564, 07557 048885 or 07787 383332 Email: enquiries@kitchenerslowestoft.co.uk

Association Facebook page

If you search on Facebook under Royal Naval Patrol Service, you will see about 3 different sites, you need to look at the one that has the picture of our badge as seen here. This is now the most active and almost official Facebook site for the RN Patrol Service. A lot of people have posted on it and have since found out a lot about their relatives that were in the RNPS. The site web address is as follows <https://www.facebook.com/groups/133715066730668/>

The administrators of the site are Association members.



Divers and Mine Warfare Memorial unveiled in Portsmouth

This is the magnificent new monument to all those sailors who hunt – and dispose of – mines. Rising out of the water at the spiritual home of Royal Navy mine warfare and diving, formerly HMS Vernon, the statue remembers all those who have attempted to keep the sea lanes open and clear mines by sweeping, by hunting and by plunging into the depths to render them harmless.

Serving Royal Navy Divers joined veteran divers and mine warfare practitioners for the unveiling of the statue at Canalside in Portsmouth's Gunwharf Quays shopping, leisure and housing complex by Naval Base Commander Commodore Jeremy Bailey.

The cost of the memorial was raised by donations of which our association was pleased to be associated with given our direct connection with mine warfare.

For nearly 75 years until 1996, the site was dedicated to training clearance divers and the home of the Royal Navy's world-leading mine warfare specialisation. Despite the long, proud history of HMS Vernon, there was no memorial on the site to mark its naval history and, in particular, recognise the men who trained and served there.



The unveiling was supposed to take place on the 25th March this year and to be a grand affair with hundreds of invited guests and dignitaries but like so many events this year it was thwarted by the Coronavirus pandemic and so a very small and distanced party witnessed the unveiling which will be celebrated at a later date with a re-run of the planned large ceremony.

Reunion memories

As you will have read at the start of the newsletter, things are a lot different this year and so we are showing some pictures of past reunions for those unable to attend this year. On the day our thoughts will be with you all.



We will raise a glass to all those unable to attend



Subscriptions – PLEASE NOTE

Subscriptions become due on the **1st January each year** for all classes of membership.

From our records we see that some of you who are receiving this newsletter have not paid any subscriptions for a number of years, this is both served members and members (formerly Associate members) Could you please check your membership books to see what the last date is that has been entered.

The current subscription rate is **£8 for Served Members** (formerly known as Members) and **£10 for Members** (formerly known as Associate Members) and could you also please make sure you send in your membership book and SAE with your subscription so that your renewal can be accurately recorded and accounted for.

Wreaths

If anyone would like one of our coloured association wreath centres to go on a wreath we can supply them already laminated to fit in a standard Royal British Legion "Type C" wreath. These are different from the plain, hand drawn, black & white one supplied by the Royal British Legion Poppy Factory. For more details contact Leo on 01502 584555 or 07975623651.

Wreath laying service

With the help of the Commonwealth War Graves Commission (and others) it is now possible to arrange for Poppy Wreaths to be placed on graves in most overseas countries.

Please make requests for laying at least eight weeks in advance.

Contact The Poppy Appeal, Royal British Legion Village, Aylesford, Kent ME20 7NX Tel: 01622 717172

Curator

If you are sending anything to the Museum can you please make sure you state if it is on **loan** or a **gift** as it helps with the cataloguing and any future claims to ownership and with photographs please give descriptions and/or names where possible.

Europa base staff

We were contacted recently by the family of an ex Europa Wren and they sent us 2 rather interesting photographs for the staff. Most photographs we have seen of the Drafting Office staff etc. have been posed shots taken outside in regimented rows but these 2, one of the Drafting Office staff and the other of the Censors Office staff are taken inside in the offices.



The Censors Office staff



The Drafting Office staff

Obituary for Spring 2020

S/M J Cousens	Lowestoft	Suffolk	S/M V G Merry	Egham	Surrey
S/M J Archer	Wigston	Leicestershire	S/M B J Norman	Castleford	West Yorkshire
S/M T Gamble	Huntingdon	Cambridgeshire	S/M C Palmer	Chirworth	Surrey
S/M J J Hartfree	Havant	Hampshire	S/M L H South	Clenchwarton	Norfolk
S/M C Hay	Edgebaston	West Midlands	S/M L C Whitbread	Hoverton	Norfolk
S/M V C Knight	Ware	Hertfordshire	S/M Mrs M Black	Oulton Broad	Suffolk
S/M B Purches	Bristol	Avon	S/M A G Clark	Redbourn	Hertfordshire

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

New slops item

We have a small supply of key rings for sale which have a picture of our logo on one side and photograph of either our memorial or our museum in the park. These are only £1.00 each

Web site

Don't forget to keep checking the web site connected to our Association which is: www.rnpsa.co.uk Keep the odds and ends coming, they all make interesting reading. If you have any items for inclusion in the next Newsletter or comments on this one, please send them to me at, Leo Whisstock, 133 Corton Road, Lowestoft, Suffolk NR32 4PR. Tel. 01502 584555 or you can email them to me at hq@rnpsa.co.uk

Welfare

Our National Welfare Officer is there to try and help you, she cannot perform miracles but will do her best to address any concerns which are kept confidential. Bonnie's contact details are - Mrs Bonnie Whisstock, 133 Corton Road, Lowestoft, Suffolk NR32 4PR. Tel. 01502 584555 or bonniewhisstock@outlook.com

Blind Veterans UK, formerly St Dunstons, are the national charity providing free, lifelong support for ex-Service personnel with sight loss and their families. This service is available to anyone who has served in the Armed Forces, not just WW2. A friend who lives locally in Suffolk was put in touch with them and he was amazed how much help and advice they were able to give him. Their contact details are – Blind Veterans UK, 12-14 Harcourt Street, London W1H 4HD

Tel; 0800 389 7979, email; information@blindveterans.org.uk or web site www.noonealone.org.uk

The next item that may be of interest is from **Veterans UK** and concerns claiming for illness, injury or disease. This covers serving and ex-service personnel (including reservists) injured or disabled during service in HM Armed Forces. It also extends to cover Home Guard, Nursing and auxiliary services, Civil Defence (CDV), civilians disabled due to enemy action in the 39-45 war, merchant seaman and members of the naval auxiliary services or coastguard. There are regional offices but their head office is at – Veterans UK, Tomlinson House, Norcross, Thornton-Cleveleys FY5 3WP Tel; 0808 1914 2 18 email; veterans-uk@mod.uk or website <http://www.gov.uk/veterans-uk>

It must be remembered that there are a lot of different agencies out there that can help with problems of all sorts. There is no need to suffer alone, if Bonnie is unable to help directly from our association she can tap into the network of charities that cover the service and ex-service community – there is no shame in asking for help.

Yours Aye, **The Duty Watch**

Cut ✂ or copy -----

Slops items for sale from HQ (Spring 2020)

Item / Title	£	Qty	£	Item / Title	£	Qty	£
Lg. Blazer Badge, Gold wire	12.00			Publications			
Lg. Blazer Badge, Woven	6.50			RNPS Memorial Post Card	0.10		
Small Beret / Blazer Badge, Gold wire	9.00			Sparrows Nest Post Card	0.20		
Small Jumper / Beret Badge, Woven	4.00			Christmas cards - original	0.50		
Association Crested Tie	12.00			Christmas cards – clean sweep	0.50		
Museum pen	1.00			HMS Europa Booklet	2.00		
Museum pen	2.00			Dawn Always Breaks (book) Reduced	1.00		
Lapel Badge, Blue enamel	5.00			Churchill's Pirates Pt.2 (book) reduced	1.00		
White Ensign Lapel Badge	3.50			Red Diamonds (book)	3.00		
RNPS Poppy badge	8.00			Blue Mariners CD	4.00		
White Ensign Car Sticker	0.50			The Story of the RNPS, 2 CD set	6.00		
RNPSA Car sticker, coloured	2.50						
RNPSA Bookmark	1.50						
RNPSA Jubilee Mug	3.00						
RNPSA Colouring Poster	0.30			Total	£		
Photo Key Ring	1.00			P & P Small items	1.25		
				P & P Large / Heavy items	2.50		
				Total Submitted	£		

Name _____

Membership No. _____

Address _____

_____ Post Code _____ Tel. No. _____

Royal Naval Patrol Service Association, Naval Museum, Sparrows Nest, Lowestoft, Suffolk NR32 1XG