



ANNUAL REPORT & NOTICES

Chairman's Annual Report for Financial Year 2023/2024

I have much pleasure in presenting my mid-term annual report for the Royal Navy Club of 1765 & 1785 (United 1889).

Overview

The first message this year is a particularly uplifting one. We were recently informed that His Majesty the King will remain our Patron, following a thorough analysis of over one thousand organisations which had enjoyed Royal Patronage during the reign of his late mother, Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II. A member in his own right since 1977, this is exceptionally good news and it is hoped that both His Majesty and HM the Queen will be able to dine with the Club in the not too distant future.

The second message is that, gratifyingly, in the post-Covid world, the past year brought no surprises and proceeded as planned, with a good dinner programme and further development of the AGM format, building on the initial success of 2022. As expected, and without alarm, the membership continues to gently decline at around 5-10 per year, mainly due to "sickly seasons". But with new blood entering all the time from the serving cohort, the Club's future remains undimmed. FY 23/24 accounts passed independent examination without issue once again, with both General and Surplus Funds remaining "going concerns". The small increases in dinner charges and annual subs have helped us meet ever-testing costs and set the finances on a steady course for the next few years: I thank you most sincerely for your acceptance of these. A slight but justifiable revision of previous dinner guest guidance now allows members' guests without any restriction at 2 of our 3 dinners per year: Founders' Day by necessity remains Club guests only to allow the traditional and most significant support of the Admiralty Board.

The final message for this overview concerns the raising of an issue which the Trustees (as legal guardians of our charitable funds) have been wrestling with. This being the natural reduction in Surplus Fund beneficiaries and the concomitant lack of financial efficiency in managing this component of the Club's affairs. This has led to the inevitable proposal to merge with another similar naval charity, thus safeguarding those who qualify but dispensing charitable funds in a cost-effective manner. The Chairman of Trustees has written separately on this matter, the main direction of which is thoroughly supported by the whole Committee – although ultimately it is a matter for the Fund Trustees alone.

Membership and Dinners

As I mentioned above, membership continues to gently, and naturally, decline over time, but remains substantially over 750. The Committee are actively engaged in the process of recruitment, but I would urge you all to remain on the lookout for potential new members and bring them to the Secretary's attention.

After last June's short notice change of venue to HMS BELFAST, and subsequent reduction in numbers due to train strike action (neither factor impacting on the ultimate success or enjoyment of the dinner), the Club turned to the West Country for an excellent Trafalgar night at BRNC under the dinner presidency of the then CO, Captain Sarah Oakley Royal Navy. The 3rd and final dinner in the Financial Year was at the Army & Navy Club, allowing us to present the Club prize to Lt Cdr Helen Taylor and to entertain the Admiralty Board, at which both the Minister of State for Defence in the Lords and our First Sea Lord spoke.

Having recently and spectacularly dined once again onboard the Royal Yacht BRITANNIA in June 2024, our long held aim to dine onboard an aircraft carrier in Portsmouth is now confirmed (as we go to print), with dinner onboard HMS QUEEN ELIZABETH there this coming Trafalgar Night on 17 October 2024. With the excellent help and support of the CO of HMS QUEEN ELIZABETH, Captain Will King Royal Navy, and his XO Cdr Ed Moss-Ward, both Fellow Officers, let us hope that the ship's programme holds. If not we will revert to the long planned shadow booking of the Royal Maritime Club. The Secretary will no doubt keep the membership informed.

Charitable Objects

The Club's charitable status, broadened in 2006 to be gender neutral, is predicated upon *"the relief of distressed widows and widowers, orphan children, siblings and dependants of those who have been Members of the Club but who have ceased to be so by death or resignation"*.

The Club's charitable objects have continued to be met although as mentioned earlier, with only 2 memorialists now it is unsustainable as a charity to spend the same amount on support costs as grants: and with a relatively fixed income this will not change markedly even with more beneficiaries in the future. Although the Chairman of Trustees, whose responsibility it is, has written separately on the subject, I remain confident that the potential merger of the charity side of our club with another like-minded naval charity will have no effect on the delivery of our main Club outcome – that is the fellowship of sea command qualified Royal Navy officers and a good quality dinner programme. Should a merger of charitable funds come about, rest assured that any legal agreement reached in advance will safeguard our current memorialists and encapsulate any future requirements in line with the original intentions of our Founders.

Surplus and General Funds

In short, the annual accounts of both funds were audited at the end of the financial year 2023/24 in April: both funds were declared 'clean'. Each was in surplus, with the General Fund at £2,566 having paid all bills, transferred a sum to the Surplus Fund and subsidised dinners to the tune of £6,614. The Surplus Fund was in surplus at £10,231, with £1,364,453 invested generating £41,405 income over the year.

A very satisfactory annual outcome for both funds

Summary of Key Points

- HM the King to remain our Patron
- Membership remains strong albeit gently declining at around 5-10 per year
- Club remains financially sound and a 'going concern'
- Investigations continue regarding a merger of our charitable fund with another like-minded Naval Charity to maintain maximum financial effectiveness of charity funds
- FY 23/24 dinner programme well executed; our forthcoming dinner programme looks even more satisfying given the plan of dining onboard HMS QUEEN ELIZABETH this 17th October
- This year's AGM at HMS COLLINGWOOD will be a 'hybrid' in-person/VTC event with the hugely additional benefit of those members also belonging to the RNSWOA able to attend the annual dinner there after the AGM.

In Conclusion

At the end of another good year for the Club, I would like to give my warmest thanks to the Committee members, Trustees and, most notably, to the Secretary, who have all ensured our Club remains relevant and our activities well balanced, keeping open minds and adopting well targeted change where necessary. Fellow Officers can rest assured that the Club's governance is sound and in good hands, acknowledging and supporting in addition the challenge being met by the Trustees in delivering cost-effective charity across the naval spectrum. There will be opportunity to express views at this year's AGM on 5 September in HMS COLLINGWOOD to which you are all encouraged to attend – particularly those members of the RNSWOA who will be able to dine there afterwards!

This is your (our) Club and deserves the very best in the spirit of its Founders. I much look forward to seeing you at future dinners and events.

Admiral Sir Philip Jones GCB DL
Chairman
July 2024

NOTICES

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING 2024

This year's AGM will be held in the DRYAD Lounge of the WO & SRs Mess, HMS COLLINGWOOD at 1800 on Thursday 5 September 2024. I shall chair the meeting and there will be drinks and buffet on completion at around 1830. All are encouraged to attend, but if not able to we will be connecting by ZOOM also, following the last 2 years' highly successful events and thus will be able to have attendance both in-person and by VTC. **Please support the event if at all possible and inform the Secretary of your intentions as early as possible.**

I am delighted that this year, by good fortune, the RNSWOA Annual Dinner is taking place in the Wardroom HMS COLLINGWOOD on the same evening and thus members of both organisations are presented with a unique opportunity to attend both events seamlessly.

Attending our AGM in black tie, staying afterward for a short period of fellowship followed by a short walk to pre-dinner drinks should make for a hugely enjoyable evening: even attendance at the RNSWOA dog watch instruction will be possible!

There is much coherence between the two Clubs, since all RN Warfare Officers seek sea command, and all of our members are qualified both as Warfare Officers and in Sea Command. It is much hoped thus that both events will be fully supported.

CLUB DINNERS AHEAD

With fingers firmly crossed it is now confirmed that the next dinner, commemorating the BATTLE OF TRAFALGAR will be on **Thursday 17th October onboard HMS QUEEN ELIZABETH in Portsmouth, with the dinner card plan of the Royal Maritime Club a reliable back-up.** The Dinner President, if onboard, will be the Commanding Officer, Captain Will King Royal Navy, with a suitable speaker yet to be confirmed. There remains plenty of room and members are strongly invited to sign-up, and bring a guest if you wish, for what promises to be a splendid dinner. Naturally, in view of its potential popularity, guests per member will be restricted to one until more is known of the maximum 100 take-up. Pre-dinner drinks will be at 1845.

FOUNDERS' DAY 2025 will be celebrated on **Thursday 6th February 2025 once again in the Army & Navy Club, Pall Mall whilst HQS WELLINGTON remains unavailable.** As is usual, the Admiralty Board will be invited to dine as our guests, with no other guests permitted. The Chairman will preside.

HM THE KING'S BIRTHDAY 2025 will be celebrated, and Royal Navy operations against Japan in the Pacific 1942 - 1945 commemorated, **onboard HMS BELFAST in London, on Friday 6th June 2025 (with Pewterers' Hall as a back-up)**. The Dinner President and their guest speaker will be announced later. As is now a well-established Club custom, this dinner will warmly welcome spouses or partners as members' guests should they so wish. A superb location, it is hoped to repeat past June dinner successes.

THE BATTLE OF TRAFALGAR 2025 will be commemorated on **Thursday, 30th October 2025 in Portsmouth, in the Wardroom HMS NELSON unless a suitable ship is alongside and can take us**. The Dinner President and the Principal Guest will be announced later.

CLUB WEB SITE

The website remains the prime and most useful source of information, including Notices, the Rules and List of Members, the current dinner card and Reports of Accounts. Please visit <http://www.royalnavyclub.org> occasionally, perhaps monthly at least, checking for changes etc.

EMAIL

PLEASE CONTACT THE SECRETARY IF YOU HAVE NOT RECEIVED AN EMAIL FROM HIM IN THE PAST YEAR. This means that he either has no email address for you or one that is out of date

BOOKING AND PAYING FOR DINNER PROCEDURE

In applying for seats at dinner, Members are asked to do so by email or letter, giving the date or venue of the dinner. "Tickets" are not issued to members. For Guest Nights, the title, name and post-nominals of any guests (the usual limit is two per member) should be provided. If you wish the Secretary to send them an invitation card, then please provide him with their address with the appropriate payment. Any seating preferences should be clearly stated, identifying by name if possible those with whom the Member wishes to sit (or not!).

If payment by direct online transfer is desired - the method preferred by the Club - the charge should be sent to Holt's Bank at sort code and account number listed on the printed dinner card mailed to each member. Since this copy of the report is posted on the website, for security reasons those details have been removed from here. It is important to please state surname, initials and month of dinner as the reference. Members are asked to inform the Secretary by email in advance of the intention to pay by this method. Cheques should be made payable to: The Royal Navy Club.

Regrettably, to be fair to all, seats cannot be guaranteed unless payment is received by the notice required, which is given on the Dinner Card (normally fourteen days). Payment on the night is not desirable and is at risk of being lost during a memorable evening! Members desiring a receipt for their dinner charge payment are requested to send an SAE with their payment.

GUIDANCE FOR INVITING GUESTS (as listed on the Website).

The primary principle is to maintain the ethos of the Club and avoid endangering or disturbing the welfare, good feeling, honour or conviviality of Club occasions. No one eligible for membership may normally be a guest except as provided for in Rule I.

The Founders' Day dinner will continue to be for members only.

POSTSCRIPT

The Club Secretary presents his respects, wishes all members well and much looks forward to being of assistance, particularly in taking dinner bookings and doing his best to ensure that club occasions are enjoyed by all. It is your Club.