



# ANNUAL REPORT & NOTICES

## Chairman's Annual Report for Financial Year 2024/2025

As I prepare to hand over the chairmanship of this auspicious Club to Vice Admiral Peter Hudson at the end of October, I have much pleasure in presenting my third and “Haul-Down” annual report for the Royal Navy Club of 1765 & 1785 (United 1889).

### Overview

Looking back over the past year, in particular, and the three years of my time in office more generally, I reflect first on the huge privilege it is to have His Majesty the King as our Patron, confirmed last year following a thorough review of Royal Patronages. A member in his own right since 1977, we continue to hope that His Majesty, together perhaps also with Her Majesty the Queen, who has just renewed her strong bonds as Sponsor with HMS ASTUTE, will be able to dine with the Club in the not too distant future.

Since the main “activity” of our Club is indeed to dine together, I also reflect on a good dinner programme in the last year, the highlight of which was undoubtedly the splendid dinner held onboard HMS QUEEN ELIZABETH, to commemorate Trafalgar Night, last October. It was a huge success, much enjoyed by all 110 diners and with the Commanding Officer, Fellow Officer Captain Will King, presiding. Attendance also benefited from the slight but justifiable revision of previous dinner guest guidance which now allows members’ guests without any restriction at two of our three dinners per year. Founders’ Day by necessity remains Club guests only to allow the traditional and most significant support of the Admiralty Board.

Without cause for undue alarm, and as it has for many years, membership continues to gently decline at around 10 per year, mainly due to “sickly seasons” and a reducing Fleet. This can easily be countered, and indeed maybe even halted, by new blood entering from the serving cohort as well as those already retired. Indeed the Committee are working on an initiative to persuade the many who are eligible and have yet to “see the light”, such that the Club’s future can remain firm. I ask all members, serving and retired, to encourage friends who are eligible for membership (see Rule 1 on the website) to contact the Secretary. My final reflection is one of satisfaction, and grateful thanks to our Secretary, that the FY 24/25 accounts passed independent examination, once again without issue, with both General and Surplus Funds remaining “going concerns”.

If I may reinforce a subtle, largely unspoken, role of this Club, whose *raison d’être* is to connect those qualified to command at sea in the Royal Navy, it is one of “mentoring.” Again, the Committee have been deliberating on this topic. It is worth stressing that this can so often be achieved in the most straightforward and informal way by younger serving Fellow Officers sitting alongside at dinner those more experienced in sea command. Beyond that it can be achieved, right up to and including a stronger yet still informal connection, outside of the chain of command; giving real help to those navigating particularly thorny issues associated with sea command. There are very few, if any, challenges that have not yet been encountered in some way, and a private word from those more experienced “older hands” can often be instrumental to a satisfactory solution.

The annual mailshot, of which this report is part, has now become unduly expensive. In the pursuit of financial prudence, and since the vast majority of members have internet and email access, this summer will be the final full distribution by post. It is to be hoped that this will be understood and accepted. Those very few without internet will continue to receive a paper copy, as will those who specifically notify the Secretary.

A final point for this overview is to remind you of the forthcoming merger of our charitable fund with that of the RNOC, for all the good reasons explained over the past couple of years. A verbal update will be given at the forthcoming AGM but, in short, all is proceeding to plan with (at the time of writing) a transfer agreement being drafted by our lawyers. The Chairman of Trustees wrote an open letter to you all last year on this matter, and this is now posted prominently on the website. Suffice to say that although ultimately it is a matter for the Fund Trustees alone, extra care will need to be exercised with the Club's general fund finances as we go forward, having lost then Surplus Fund sharing costs, but this will be a natural extension of good house-keeping and no need for general concern.

## Membership and Dinners

As I mentioned above, membership continues to gently, and naturally, decline over time, but remains around 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.

As mentioned above, after last June's spectacular dinner onboard the Royal Yacht BRITANNIA in Leith, the Club achieved a longstanding wish to dine onboard a carrier, and a superb evening was enjoyed onboard HMS QUEEN ELIZABETH in Portsmouth for Trafalgar Night. The 3rd and final dinner in the Financial Year was held for the first time at the Victory Services Club in London, and a really good venue it proved to be. Although unable to present the Club prize to the worthy winner due to his operational commitments, we did entertain the Admiralty Board and our First Sea Lord spoke: sadly, despite much encouragement, no Defence Minister was available. You will have seen from the recently published Dinner Programme for 2025/26, that after Trafalgar Night 2025 in the excellent surrounds of the Wardroom HMS NELSON, we will return to the Victory Services Club for Founders' Day in February 2026 and then to the West Country for a June dinner in BRNC Dartmouth.

## Charitable Objects

The Club's charitable status, broadened in 2006 to be gender neutral, is predicated upon its charitable objects i.e. **“the relief of distressed widows and widowers, orphan children, siblings and dependents of those who have been Members of the Club but who have ceased to be so by death or resignation”**. 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. The Chairman of Trustees, whose responsibility it is, wrote separately on the subject to you last year and 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. With the planned merger of charitable funds, 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 2024/25 in April: both funds were declared 'clean'. Each was in surplus, with the General Fund at £5,082 having paid all bills, transferred a sum to the Surplus Fund and subsidised dinners to the tune of £6,535. The Surplus Fund was in surplus at £2,086, having paid merger legal fees to date, with £1,370,490 invested generating £42,986 income over the year .

**A very satisfactory annual outcome for both funds.**

## Summary of Key Points

- Membership remains strong albeit gently declining at around 10 per year
- Club remains financially sound and a 'going concern'
- Plans for the merger of our charitable fund with the RNOC proceed satisfactorily to maintain maximum financial effectiveness of charity funds
- FY 24/25 dinner programme was very special and well executed, with HMS QUEEN

ELIZABETH and HMS BELFAST featuring; our forthcoming dinner programme looks good.

- AGM 2024 at HMS COLLINGWOOD continued the successful formula of a 'hybrid' in-person/VTC event with the additional benefit of those members also belonging to the RNSWOA being able to attend their annual dinner after the AGM.
- In view of rising costs, and the prevalence now of Members' internet and email access, this year will be the final annual mailings by post. From 2026 onwards, these will be emailed to members and posted on the website. Members without internet will continue to receive by post, and those who particularly wish to should notify the Secretary accordingly.

### In Conclusion

At the end of another excellent year for the Club, my final as Chairman, I would like once again to give my warmest thanks to the Committee members and Trustees, 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. On all these issues I remain immensely grateful for the hard work, good judgement, sound organizational skills and great spirit of our Secretary. Thank you, Brian. There will be opportunity to express views at this year's AGM 4 September in HMS COLLINGWOOD, which you are all encouraged to attend; this year with the added attraction of a key speaker on a fascinating and highly topical subject.

This is your (our) Club and deserves the very best in the spirit of its Founders. I much look forward to handing on a well- run and relevant Club, and to seeing you at future dinners and events.

Admiral Sir Philip Jones GCB DL  
Chairman  
July 2025

## NOTICES

### ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING 2025

This year's AGM will be held in the Wardroom, HMS COLLINGWOOD at 1800 on Thursday 4 September 2025. I shall chair the meeting, and we will be joined by our guest speaker Lt Cdr Matt Johnson who was AAWO in HMS DIAMOND during her recent air defence action in the Red Sea. Drinks and a buffet will be available on completion at around 1830. All are encouraged to attend, but if not able to we will be connecting by MS TEAMS also, following the last 3 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.**

### CLUB DINNERS AHEAD

The next dinner, commemorating the BATTLE OF TRAFALGAR will be on **Thursday 30th October in the Wardroom HMS NELSON, Portsmouth.** The Dinner President and suitable speaker are yet to be confirmed. There remains plenty of room and members are strongly invited to sign-up, and bring guests if you wish, for what promises to be a splendid dinner. When applying for seats, please include dates and places of birth of all diners which are required by the gate security team. Pre-dinner drinks will be at 1845.

FOUNDERS' DAY 2026 will be celebrated on **Tuesday 3rd February 2026 in the Victory Services Club, London, once again, following our last excellent dinner there.** Overnight Club accommodation will be available: a block of rooms has been reserved and the Secretary will advise.

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 2026 will be celebrated, and the Battle of Jutland commemorated, in BRNC Dartmouth, **on Friday 5th June 2026**. The Dinner President and their guest speaker will be announced later. As is now a well-established Club custom, this dinner will welcome spouses or partners along with other members' guests should they so wish. A location warmly known to all, it is hoped to repeat past June dinner successes there.

THE BATTLE OF TRAFALGAR 2026 will be commemorated on **Thursday, 22nd October 2026 in the Royal Maritime Club, Queen Street, Portsmouth 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 1.  
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. As the Chairman writes above: it is your (our) Club.