

# Clocking up the miles to help Service leavers

## Cadets get 3D view of new ships

THE Royal Naval Association's Shipmates and Oppos scheme is already making a difference to Naval Service leavers, with more than 1,000 signing up in its first full year.

In fact, since the scheme was set up in 2016, more than 1,400 service leavers people have registered, at no cost – that is more than 55 per cent of all RN ratings and 30 per cent of RM other ranks leaving the Service.

So why have they registered, you may ask?

Shipmates and Oppos is described as “providing an arm around the shoulder” of Service leavers, contacting them annually for the first five years of their time in ‘Civvy’ Street.

Most people find transition easy, but you might be surprised about some of the issues that can be easily solved by the Shipmates & Oppos team, fluent in ‘Jack Speak’.

The team are well-placed to signpost you to the most appropriate charities or agencies that can provide guidance and assist you through the plethora of issues that Service leavers face.

It's now been just over a year since the launch of Shipmates and Oppos, the support programme for leavers of the Royal Navy and Royal Marines, and thanks to the enthusiasm and co-operation of the staff within the Naval Service Unit Personnel Offices/Release

Offices, details of willing Service leavers have been registered with the programme.

Supported by Greenwich Hospital Trust and administered by the RNA, the project team, consisting of Andy Christie and Chrissie Hughes, travelled many miles by road, air and sea (that'll be the Torpoint Ferry...) visiting all RN and RM establishments twice in 2017.

The object of such visits is:

- ✔ To promote the programme as widely as possible;
- ✔ To put a face to a name; and
- ✔ To restock with updated marketing material.

The data collected from Release Offices has been used to produce an Impact Report which details how the project is performing.

The report is forwarded to all the project partners, including the Royal Navy, Greenwich Hospital, the Royal Marines Association, ARNO and White Ensign Association, along with all Commanding Officers.

If you would like a copy please email the project team at [chrissie@royalnavalassoc.com](mailto:chrissie@royalnavalassoc.com)

Looking to the future, the project team would like to significantly increase the number of registrations, particularly at the main bases.

The duo are also planning more road trips to Abbey Wood, the Military Corrective Training Camp Colchester, RAF Marham and other units where



● RN Air Station Culdrose Unit Personnel Office staff; back row, from left: LWtr L Peet, POWtr L Westhead, Wtr J Suter, CPOWtr H Baxter; front row: Wtr T Balsdon, Wtr K Clark, Wtr M Whitehead

RN/RM personnel are serving but have not yet received the S&O presentation – if anyone is interested in a visit from the team, please call 023 9272 0782.

The Royal Fleet Auxiliary is also coming on board, resulting in a new partnership with the Royal Fleet Auxiliary Association – the S&O team now have the challenge of becoming acquainted with charitable avenues open to ex-RFA personnel.

Every willing participant has been sent an invitation to receive

a year's free membership to one or all the partner associations, including the RMA, RNA, White Ensign Association and Association of Royal Naval Officers.

This programme is free for every Service leaver up to five years after discharge, and complements resettlement provision in the Career Transition Partnership and has been welcomed by RFEA as meeting an unmet need.

Most Service leavers

experience a smooth transition to civilian life, but some struggle, and the challenge can prove more difficult than anticipated.

A call to the S&O team is the first step to solving an issue that has the potential to grow, and early intervention can prevent downstream escalation of the problem.

This signposting service, accessed by a phone call or email to Administrator Chrissie Hughes, allows individuals to seek the help they need with the confidence that like-minded ex-Service folk are at the end of the phone and will be able to help them find the support they need through partners, Naval sector charities, Veterans UK or statutory provision.

Part of the programme is an annual wellbeing phone call or email – a good chance for the recipient to highlight any areas of concern or to ‘opt out’ of the programme if they no longer wish to participate.

As a former CPO – one of the first to join the scheme – wrote: “Thanks for getting in touch, it's always nice to have contact from someone connected to the RN.”

“I do miss service life very much and although I'm settled in a civilian job, it's not quite the same. Thanks again for the email.”

For further information please follow the link to the S&O website – <http://shipmatesandoppos.org.uk> – or call Chrissie or Andy on 02392 720782.

OFFICER Cadets and staff at Britannia Royal Naval College have been given a glimpse of the Royal Navy's next generation frigate.

A 3D simulator of the new Type 26 frigate allowed cadets and staff to explore the ship, which will ultimately replace the specialist submarine-hunting Type 23 frigates currently in service.

An initial order has been placed for the first three of eight new global combat ships.

OC Jessica Laing, a budding Warfare Officer, said: “It was very interesting to get an insight into the new frigates and see the ships that I could potentially be working on when I complete my training.”

“The 3D graphics were excellent and enabled me to get a real-life representation of what to expect.”

The new ships are among a number of vessels on order for the Royal Navy, which includes another new batch of frigates, the Type 31e.

Lt David Clark, one of the Divisional Training Officers at BRNC, said: “With a new generation of ships comes a new generation of Naval officers.”

“It's great for them to see the capabilities that these platforms will deliver and how technology can be used to improve the design phase of Defence procurement and acquisition.”

The Type 26 frigates will protect the nation's nuclear deterrent and the Royal Navy's new aircraft carriers, the first of which, HMS Queen Elizabeth, was commissioned last month.

The frigates' flexible design will allow their capabilities to be adapted throughout their lifespan to counter future threats.

They will be 60ft longer and displace 2,000 tonnes more than their predecessors, will be equipped with bow and towed array sonar, Sea Ceptor air defence missiles and a 5in main gun.

Cdr Andy Kellett, Navy Command HQ Type 26 Requirements Manager, said: “The first two names have been announced as HMS Glasgow and HMS Belfast.”

“Steel was cut on HMS Glasgow in July 2017 by the Secretary of State and full production is under way; they are expected to enter service in the 2020s.”

“The 3D simulator represents the live design and is part of the digital transformation of Naval shipbuilding that the National Shipbuilding Strategy envisaged.”

“It is also a fantastic tool to show the wider Naval community exactly what the ship will look like when it is built, years ahead of delivery.”

# ‘Give them dignity’

A MAJOR piece of art depicting more than 72,000 Servicemen killed in Britain's bloodiest battle will form a focal point as the nation commemorates 100 years since the end of World War 1.

The Shrouds of the Somme project will bring home the sheer scale of human sacrifice in a battle that came to epitomise the bloodshed of the 1914-18 war – the Somme.

The project also gives members of the public the opportunity to take part as a plea goes out for relatives of the dead to participate.

Organisers of Shrouds of the Somme have asked people to search their family archives for pictures and details of those who died during the battle and are commemorated on the largest Commonwealth war memorial in the world – the Commonwealth War Graves Commission's Thiepval Memorial to the Missing of the Somme in France.

Somerset artist Rob Heard has had the painstaking task of making 72,396 hand-stitched shrouds, each wrapped around a 12-inch figure – one for each of the Servicemen killed in the Somme with no known grave.

It is estimated around 4,000 members of the Royal Naval Division – sailor-soldiers who were not allocated to a ship – were killed or injured in the Somme.

Artist Rob said: “As I go through the process of putting the figure within the shroud, I cross a name off.”

“It's vitally important that each is associated with a name, otherwise the individual gets lost in the numbers.”

The project has teamed up with the Commonwealth War Graves Commission (CWGC), which built and cares for the

memorial to the 72,000 missing of the Somme – men who died during the battle and who have no known grave.

The CWGC has made available the records of those commemorated on the memorial and created a permanent digital archive to store the public's contributions.

Members of the public will be able to upload their own photographs and stories of these men to the digital archive via the Shrouds of the Somme website.

Throughout this year Shrouds of the Somme will play a central role as the commemorations of the 100th anniversary go nationwide and culminate on Armistice Day on 11 November. As the anniversary approaches, each shroud will be laid out at the Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park in London and displayed in what will be an unprecedented piece of public commemorative art.

The scale of the sacrifices will be laid bare as the small figures fill more than 5,000 square metres, on show for members of the public to pay their respects.

Speaking at the official launch, Project chairman Cdre Jake Moores, the former Commander of the Devonport Flotilla, appealed for members of the public to get involved.

He said: “Remembering those thousands who fell as individual men is crucial to honouring their sacrifice – but so little is known about so many of them.”

“We are calling out to the nation. Asking them to send us photos and stories of these remarkable men – these fathers, husbands, brothers.”

“Tell us who they were, where they were from, what they did – make them real, give them dignity.”

“Bringing the individual to the forefront of these unimaginable numbers will help the nation to truly understand the scale of the loss of those who gave their all.”

The installation will also act as a rallying point for public donations to military charities still supporting the veterans of today, such as SSAFA, the Armed Forces charity.

Shrouds of the Somme figures can be purchased and will be available after the final exhibition in November. They can be pre-ordered from [shroudsofthesomme.com/shop](http://shroudsofthesomme.com/shop)

Rob Heard used to build timber playgrounds for children – he was renowned for his trademark pirate ships – but following a car accident in 2013, where he injured his

arm so badly that he was unable to continue with such work, Rob came up with the idea for the shrouds, having been inspired by British soldiers returning injured from Iraq and Afghanistan.

His aim was to try to physically represent the vast numbers of those killed on the battlefields of World War 1.

The 19,240 Shrouds of the Somme – at that stage each figurine represented a Serviceman of the British Empire who died on the first day of the Battle of the Somme, July 1 1916 – were displayed in Exeter and Bristol in 2016 and led him directly to the much larger project of bringing 72,396 shrouds to London.

● [www.shroudsofthesomme.com](http://www.shroudsofthesomme.com)



● Shrouds of the Somme artist Rob Heard

## Handing on remembrance to younger generations

A SERVICE whistle last used by a young officer on the Somme a century ago has now heralded the launch of the Commonwealth War Graves Foundation (CWGF) – a new charity created to keep the memory of fallen Servicemen and women alive.

The Foundation is the brainchild of the Commonwealth War Graves Commission (CWGC), responsible for the preservation and care of records, graves and memorials to 1.7 million men and women who died during the two world wars.

The Commission, which celebrated its centenary last year, cares for war graves and memorials at 23,000 locations in more than 150 countries and territories.

Now, 100 years on, the Foundation is taking action to empower young people to carry the legacy forward for another century.

The Hon Ros Kelly, chairperson of the new Foundation, said: “A century after the First World War, and 75 years since the Second, we need to answer a difficult question – how can we expect a

younger generation to remember those they could never have known?”

“The answer was to create a new charity, the Commonwealth War Graves Foundation, whose mission it is to tell the stories of those who died, and help keep their memories alive.”

CWGC Vice Chairman Sir Tim Laurence – who as a rear admiral was Assistant Chief of the Defence Staff – added: “For all of us who enjoy the benefits of a free, open and just society, there is one who has died trying to defend those freedoms.”

“They may have been heroes, boy soldiers, or battlefield nurses; each one has a tale to tell.”

“The Commonwealth War Graves Foundation will help communities collect, spread and honour the stories of the men and women the CWGC commemorates and ensure that we remember those who gave their today for all our tomorrows.”

The Foundation will take the work of the Commission to a much wider audience by offering hands-on opportunities to get involved in various projects – including a new internship.

## Headmaster is rewarded

THE former Headmaster of the British Section, SHAPE (Supreme HQ Allied Powers Europe) International School, in Belgium has been recognised for his work with young people.

Rowley Bucknill has recently been promoted and left the Ministry of Defence school, part of MOD's Directorate Children and Young People.

He will now take on the role of Assistant Head MOD Schools (Inspection and Advice), a challenge to which he said he is very much looking forward.

A number of celebrations were held in the school to celebrate and reflect on Mr Bucknill's seven years of service, including an assembly and a staff meal, as well as an evening reception organised by the UK National Military Representative (NMR).