



'Eye in the Sky' Newsletter December 2025



Welcome to the final 'Eye in the Sky' of 2025. As always, we start by welcoming our new members to the Association.

Richard McElwaine. Richard joined the RN 1976 and was an Air Engineer Pilot on 849 HQ from 86-88. He retired from the RN in 2012

Craig Whitson-Fay. 'Wibbers' joined the RN in 1984, qualified as an ASW aircrewman in 1989, later commissioned as a Sea King AEW observer, and served across the 849 community until 2012. He retired from the Service in 2020.

AnyFace Presidency

As you know, the committee has been working on the leadership transition for some time. We shared our recommendation of **Vice Admiral Steve Moorhouse** with all members earlier this quarter, and unsurprisingly, the proposal received unanimous support. We can confirm that the transition has now taken place.

Message from the outgoing President, Commodore Michael Clapp

Hello members,

After serving as President of the AnyFace Association since its founding in 2020, I have decided that the time has come to step down from this role. It has been an immense privilege to lead our Association through its formative years, and I



am deeply proud of what we have achieved together.

I was particularly proud as 849 Sqn was the first front-line squadron I was appointed to after being ordered to join the Fleet Air Arm - much against my wishes. It opened my eyes to the capability and importance of the branch, which I came to enjoy immensely.

From the very beginning, our mission has been strengthened by the dedication, energy, and spirit of our members. Your commitment has ensured that AnyFace has grown into a vibrant and respected community, and I am grateful for the support you have shown me throughout this journey. One of my most cherished personal highlights was leading the platoon down Whitehall on Remembrance Sunday last year, as we stood together to honour our comrades.

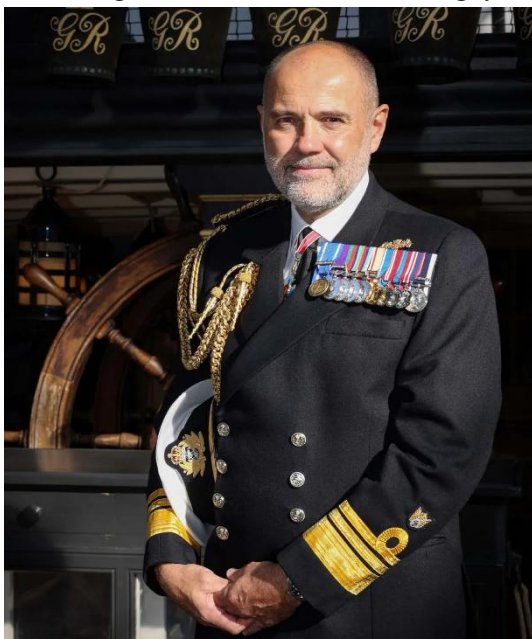
I am delighted to announce that Vice Admiral Steve Moorhouse will be taking over as President. I understand that Admiral Steve brings with him outstanding leadership experience and a deep understanding of our values. I have every confidence that under his guidance, the Association will continue to flourish and reach new heights.

Old age is forcing me to step down as President, but I am honoured to continue serving the Association as Honorary Vice President, alongside Mike Rawlinson. This role will allow me to remain closely connected to our wonderful 849 NAS community.

Primus Video,

Michael Clapp

Message from our incoming president, Vice Admiral Steve Moorhouse



It is a genuine honour to accept the role of President of the AnyFace Association, and I would like to express my heartfelt gratitude to Michael Clapp for his outstanding contribution to the association over the last five years; we are truly indebted to him.

While much of my career has been spent 'dabber-ing' with ships big and small, 849 is where I started my career

and the community holds a particularly special place in my heart. I will always consider myself a 'bagger'!!

I am constantly inspired when I read about or witness your exploits as an association. Your dedication to preserving our shared heritage and supporting one another is second to none, and I am committed to championing these values as we move forward together. I look forward to meeting many of you in the months ahead and to working together to ensure the AnyFace Association continues to flourish as a vibrant, welcoming and highly respected community.

Steve Moorhouse

Chairman's Christmas Message

Dear AnyFace Members,

As we approach the festive season, I wanted to take a moment to reflect on what has been a great year for our AEW community and to thank you all for your continued support and camaraderie.

This year has seen our serving members achieve remarkable success during Op Highmast, with HMS Prince of Wales and 820 NAS completing an impressive eight-month deployment to the Indo-Pacific. From the challenging Red Sea transit to Exercise Talisman Sabre in Australia and the Multi Large Deck Exercise with the US, Japan, and allied nations, our ASaC crews have proven once again that AEW remains absolutely vital to carrier strike operations.

Whether maintaining continuous coverage through contested waterways or integrating with F-35s, the professionalism and dedication



on display has been outstanding. We're delighted they are all home for Christmas.

Closer to home, our Portsmouth reunion in April was a tremendous success, with members enjoying sundowners at the Skybar atop the Spinnaker Tower. The weekend brought together generations of the AEW community, from D-Day room tours at Southwick Park to an unforgettable visit aboard HMS Queen Elizabeth -complete with our nonagenarian members leading the charge up the ladder chains! The mess dinner at HMS Nelson, complete with the Corps of Drums from HMS Collingwood, provided a fitting finale to a memorable weekend.

In November, our members represented us with pride at the Field of Remembrance and Cenotaph Parade, ensuring the AEW community's contribution to naval aviation continues to be recognised and honoured. The turnout for the Fly Navy Federation service at the FAA Memorial was particularly moving.

We've warmly welcomed new members spanning decades of AEW operations - from Gannet veterans to current serving personnel - strengthening the bonds that connect our past, present, and future. Whether it's Dicky Lewis completing the Camino de Santiago or members sharing their experiences from across the globe, your stories continue to inspire and connect us all.

Personally, it has been an honour to take on the Chairman role from Mike Rawlinson who has been an outstanding first Chairman for our association and now our first Honorary Vice President. I'd like to extend my personal thanks to Mike for his energy and enthusiasm in developing our association into what it is today - I will do my best to continue that!

As we head into 2026, planning will begin in earnest for AnyFace 75, with hopes of returning to RNAS Culdrose in 2027.

From all of us on the committee, we wish you and your families a peaceful and joyful Christmas, and we look forward to seeing many of you in the new year.

Andrew Rose

Tales from the Front Line - Carrier Strike Group 2025

The Carrier Strike Group returned to the UK at the end of November, and what a sight it was to witness the aircraft and ships arriving back at their respective bases after such a successful deployment. Many members of our Association were directly involved, and we've been fortunate to receive personal updates throughout from Capt **Colin Magannity**, who was in charge of the Carrier Air Wing and Lt Cdr **Paul Cataffo**, Senior Observer of 820 NAS.

Our final instalment comes from one of our reservists, Lt Cdr **Keiryn Moffit**, who joined the ship in Tokyo.

As a serving reservist, the recent deployment onboard HMS Prince of Wales was nothing short of spectacular. This experience was a combination of trepidation, exhilaration, and significant professional growth. Mobilisation to full-time service was the first hurdle! The notification to rejoin didn't come as a shock, I'd been given a heads up - but still the formal language and potential that I could be mobilised for up to 24 months certainly did! Equally, as the notification came during a flight home from holiday and suffering with some jet lag, the realisation of the impending administration of the MOD didn't hit home for a few days, but then it quickly tempered my reality!

HMS Pegasus (the RNR Air branch) stood out as a beacon of efficiency and great advice - the small team was exceptional, smoothing the transition with professionalism and support. Only having been a 'civvy' since August 2022, it was quickly evident that I had forgotten the simple things and therefore had many idiotic questions. Still some frustrations have occurred. Outdated and irrelevant documentation from Maritime Reserves Headquarters felt like stepping back in time (sending me a 40-page document that was also sent in hardcopy is not moving to the electronic age), a stark contrast to the modern operational tempo of the Fleet and since working in business (where making a profit is the primary objective) an expectation I had now, your time is calculated into the equation.



Keiryn (left) and Lt Cdr Graham Hutton, a fellow reservist and AnyFace member who also deployed.

The journey from West Cornwall to Tokyo was an odyssey in itself - nearly 6,500 miles in 48 hours, a blur of train stations, taxis, a bus, airports and of course some trepidation. Joining the Ship and the Carrier Strike Group Headquarters in Japan brought its own questions. How would the existing team react to a reservist joining? Would I fit in; I was 10-15 years older? These questions gnawed at me as I approached the towering silhouette of the carrier. My assigned reservist role is as an A3 Watchkeeper - essentially the Duty Aviator, but instead of looking after a single Squadron, it covers all Task

Group aviation elements. This was a stark departure from my previous Regular Service roles, as an Air Engineer. Similarly, carrier operations were familiar - I had previously served in HMS Illustrious and HMS Ark Royal. I was also the last DAEO of HMS Ocean- although I think all three combined still doesn't equate to one Queen Elizabeth Class (QEC) Carrier!

In my mind I thought "Flat top aviation is all the same right?" I was wrong, very wrong, this was a different universe - new aircraft types, unfamiliar terms, the gap in generations of the Royal Navy operating aviation at sea on a carrier deck, and of course the looming question: What does the Commander Air Group expect of me?

Inevitably, self-doubt crept in, whispering uncertainties in my head. But about three hours after sailing, just as we reached the Territorial Limit and started to carry out aviation operations, reality struck. A restricted airspace issue emerged; the PWO demanding immediate resolution. Instinct, training and pre-deployment briefings took over, initially making the safe call not to fly and after some hasty calls to the planning team. The problem was solved, and with it, most of my doubts evaporated. If that is what a bad day looks like - I reckon I can cope... As a wise Chief once told me about being at Sea "The days are long but the weeks short".

The operational pre-deployment brief received from the HMS Pegasus Carrier Strike Team (we are small but growing) helped enormously, the description of processes, the battle rhythm, the Force Operations room and roles within, accompanied by some useful tips on life in a QEC Class, how cold it gets, what the other roles delivered in support of the Aviation role, was in a word - exceptional.

Life aboard was punctuated by traditions that anchor us to our heritage. Celebrating Trafalgar and Taranto at mess dinners was a privilege and a poignant reminder of the Royal Navy's past. Amid the laughter and toasts, I reflected on what I had contributed - not just in the execution of the role but to those navigating the early



chapters of their careers. I was able to explain the complexities of NCHQ, MOD and DE&S to those studying for Command Exams and CofC, equally some young officers on holdover wanted to understand the wider life and roles that the Service can offer. It was a real privilege to serve with so many enthusiastic sailors at the start of their careers.

Additionally, and on a personal note, the Wardroom was also like a scene from Charles Dickens 'A Christmas Carol - ghosts of Christmas Past'. It turned out that I had been staff at BRNC for at least half of the junior officers. Thankfully, no one held a grudge!

The deployment itself was a voyage through history and geopolitics. The Far East - long absent from Royal Navy charts - welcomed us back. Tokyo was dazzling with its neon allure; Singapore offered a symphony of cultures; Goa's shores reflected days of empire; Duqm stood as a testament to strategic partnership; Crete and Naples blended Mediterranean charm with geopolitical and operational complexity. Naples tested the patience of a crew used to going alongside - the faff of boat routines and anchoring underscored the unpredictability of life at sea. Gibraltar, my twelfth visit, felt like an old friend before the final homecoming in Portsmouth. As we entered Portsmouth Harbour, I was struck by the huge crowds that had turned out on a cold Sunday in

December; it was very humbling. It was only the second time in my 29 years' service that I had remained onboard until "The Wall".

I previously mentioned the age gap, well one of the Junior Officers asked me "Was it like this last time? You know when you got back from the Falklands...", apart from my obvious response about his lack of "days before the mast", I explained that despite the colour (or absence) of my hair I was only four years old during the Falklands Conflict, rest assured the banter is alive and well in today's Fleet!

Seven multinational exercises added layers of complexity and learning. Fluid communication styles, divergent planning structures - each interaction was a masterclass in adaptability. These moments reinforced a fundamental truth: interoperability is as much about the mindset of the people as the equipment we operate. I do hope that we continue to be involved in future exercises; it is only exposure to these challenges that cements theoretical learning.

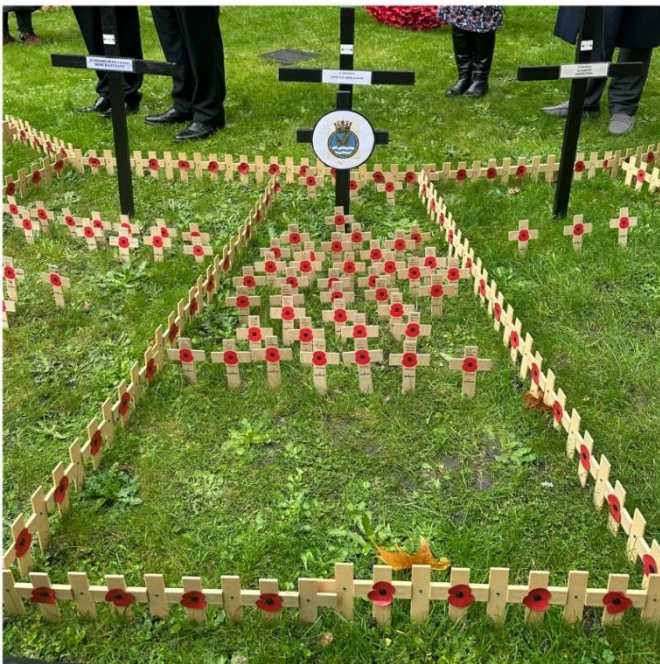
I had only been away for 3 months (and five days), but as the White Ensign fluttered against the backdrop of Portsmouth on our return, I carried more than memories. I remain convinced that reservists are not mere individual augmentees but integral threads in the delivery of modern, efficient naval power. This deployment was not just about places visited or challenges overcome; it was about discovering a purpose in the Maritime Reserves, forging bonds across Units, Forces and Services, and proving that adaptability and experience are the hallmarks of service - be it regular or reserve!



Recent Events

Westminster Abbey Field of Remembrance

As in previous years, the Association was honoured to be present at the opening of the Field of Remembrance by Her Majesty the Queen, patron of the Poppy Factory. This year, Mike Forbes, who flew Skyraider and Gannet during the 50s and 60s, presented our plot to the Queen - she very much enjoyed meeting with him. The occasion was rounded off with a convivial pub lunch along Whitehall, enjoyed by all who attended.



Remembrance Sunday

We were blessed with glorious weather in London this year, and once again the AnyFace marching platoon did us proud as we gathered to honour those who have gone before us. Their presence was a fitting tribute, and I extend heartfelt thanks to our members on parade—David Bartlett, John Brotherton, Tim Brooker, Biff Burton, Simon Chamberlain, Jack Daniels, Floppy Hoper, Bogie Knight, Dave Lambourne, John Saunders, and Peter Waugh—as well as to the families and friends who lent their support from the sidelines.

The service at the FAA Memorial was among the busiest I have attended, a testament to the enduring importance of this occasion. Our Honorary Vice President, Mike Rawlinson, laid the wreath on behalf of the Association, marking a moment of deep respect and remembrance.





Following the service, the lunch at the In and Out was a truly memorable affair, filled with camaraderie, laughter, shared stories, and fine wine. Remembrance Sunday remains one of the most significant days in our annual calendar, and I sincerely hope we continue to uphold this tradition for generations to come.



Admin Director's update

Supporting our members—especially our veterans—is at the heart of what we do. We want to ensure everyone is aware of the resources available to them, whether it's practical assistance, recognition, or simply staying connected to the wider Armed Forces community.

A new initiative, [VALOUR](#), is making it easier for veterans across the UK to access essential care and support. It's well worth a look if you or someone you know could benefit.

As a veteran, you may be eligible for the following schemes:

- [Apply for an HM Armed Forces Veteran Card - GOV.UK](#)
- [Defence Discount Service | Discounts For Military Personnel](#)
- [Veterans Rail Discount | Railcard | National Rail - Veterans Railcard](#)

And of course, there are several outstanding charities offering support to the Armed Forces community:

- [The Royal Navy and Royal Marines Charity](#)
- [Royal Naval Benevolent Trust](#)
- [SSAFA, the Armed Forces charity](#)

And if you're stocking up on FAA memorabilia, don't forget to use the code **ANYFACE15** for 15% off at the [Navy Wings Flight Store](#)

AnyFace Silk Ties

Our exclusive silk ties are still available, priced at £20 each.

[AnyFace Tie Order](#)



Unsung hero of the Falklands War

Highlighting this new book about our very own honorary Vice President. I can guarantee it will be a fascinating read!



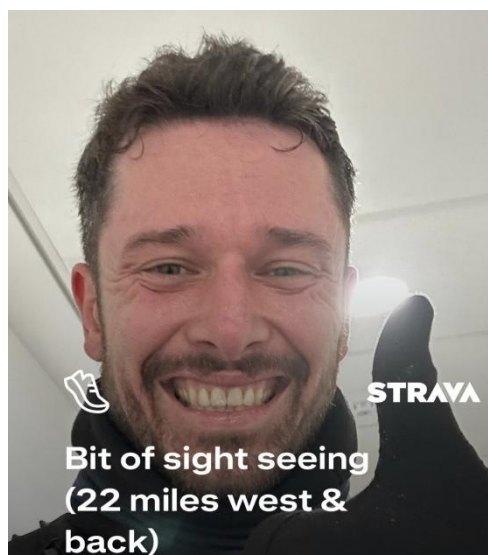


RNRMC Charity Single [Little Red Ambulance](#)

As mentioned in our recent email, if you haven't already, please show your support for **Phil Clark** and *Little Red Ambulance*, who have joined forces with **Chloe Walter** and the **Culdrose Military Wives Choir** to release a beautiful Christmas single in aid of the **Royal Navy Royal Marines Charity (RNRMC)**.

Run Ed Run!

Our committee member **Ed MacIntyre** is running the Pisa Marathon on Sunday, raising funds for 65 Degrees North, a charity whose mission is to offer wounded, injured and sick service personnel and veterans the opportunity to participate in challenging adventure. If you'd like to support Ed you can here. [Ed's Just Giving page](#)



Bravo Zulu, Santa!

And finally, living up to his Father Christmas reputation more with each passing year, our committee member, Lt Cdr **Tank Murray** recently visited children at Treliske Hospital in Truro, accompanied by his helpers from 820 NAS.

A heartfelt thank you to everyone who has contributed to the newsletters this year—your stories and updates are what keep them vibrant. We're always eager for more, and if you're ever unsure whether your news is worth sharing, it absolutely is. What feels ordinary to you is often exactly what others enjoy reading.

Wishing you all a very merry Christmas! Serena