

Thrings meets...

Robert Robson OBE, CEO of the Royal Navy and Royal Marines Charity



CAN WE START BY DISCUSSING YOUR OWN BACKGROUND?

I followed my grandfather and uncle into the Royal Navy in 1981 then in 1987 I changed direction. After 20 enjoyable years in Barclays I was lucky enough to be offered the role of chief executive at the founding of the charity in 2008. So, I was back in my home county of Hampshire, and back with the Navy.

TELL US MORE ABOUT THE RNRMC

We exist to look after anyone who has worn the uniform of the Royal Navy or Royal Marines or former WReNS, and their families. That's around 750,000 people today. So, if you have signed up to serve the Queen (or in the case of many of our older beneficiaries, the King) then you are one of our family "for life". So we support those at sea today on the Navy's unending global duty above and below the waves and those that still can tell the stories from WW2.

HOW DID YOU GET INVOLVED?

I was in the right place at the right time when the charity was formed, and have had the opportunity to build the charity. It has been an extraordinary experience to hear the stories of those who served and the daily work of today's Navy.

HOW DID THINGS WORK BEFORE THE RNRMC WAS ESTABLISHED?

In the mid-2000s the leadership of the Navy took the bold and forward-leaning decision to manage their charitable work through an independent charity. We put about 70 different funds under one umbrella, revised all the ways we support the different funds and made the whole organisation more focused and efficient. The military charity sector is really good at working together and levels of cooperation are very high.

WHO DOES THE CHARITY HELP?

We have a good strapline: "one person joins, the whole family serves". That means we give out grants to improve life at sea and ashore, and we support 31 veterans charities, helping the old and frail, the very young, and just about every issue when life goes wrong. We have also opened flats for families at Navy Mews in Portsmouth so that they can be together and visit relatives serving on ships in a comfortable and homely environment.

IS FUNDRAISING A CHALLENGE?

Fundraising is always a challenge – but it's also an opportunity to get our message to new people, thank those who support us and to share the message of the amazing work of the Royal Navy and Royal Marines around the world every day. Having done a

great job reaching the serving community with our message we now need to tell the retired community about a charity they may not have heard of, but is here for them.

HOW IMPORTANT IS HAMPSHIRE TO YOU?

My grandparents lived in the New Forest, and my wife, Amanda, and I have lived in Hampshire for 21 years. Basing the charity at the home of the Royal Navy in Portsmouth puts us close to those we are here to serve. We are part of a Hampshire community which has embraced us brilliantly.

AND WHAT ABOUT YOUR OWN FUTURE?

I will be handing over my role at the end of July after ten years at the helm. It's been an enormous privilege to work with great people. More adventures lie ahead and it will be fun to watch the charity grow and develop – we have a superb team dedicated to the cause. ♦



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