

Royal Naval Physical Training Branch Association



“We’re here when YOU need us”

“CROSSING THE BAR”
Preparing for our Final Journey

This guide is purely to help either yourself as an RNPTBA member, or your family, who you will leave behind, to prepare for the final journey as you “Cross the Bar”. This can be a challenging period for your family members, especially in grief. Therefore, it is hoped that this guide will assist in easing the pressure during what may be a difficult time. Here are some frequently asked questions

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Where can advice on arranging a funeral be found?

Whether, as a serving member you receive a Service Funeral or as a veteran you receive a Military Funeral, the choice, is generally left up to yourself or your family.

No one is obliged to observe military rites, but, as a serving member the Royal Navy can assist you. If you are a veteran, then there are several organisations that can provide support for you and your family after bereavement.

For those still serving your family's first contact would be with a Visiting Officer who will be able to put you in touch with a Service Funeral Officer. They can then discuss the options should you wish. These can be either a Service Funeral or a Private Funeral.

For veteran's families, many Funeral Directors are now familiar with military rites, especially those in Base Port, or Air Station areas.

Many families may not be aware of the length of service or where indeed their loved one served. The Next of kin may apply for the Service records. [Get a copy of military records of service: Apply for the records of a deceased serviceperson - GOV.UK](#)

However, if you are arranging a private funeral for a serving member or a funeral for a veteran there is advice and guidance available to you through the [Citizens Advice Website](#).

Who pays for the Funeral?

For a serving member the MOD will cover the cost of a full Service Funeral at Public expense with some small exceptions. The funeral is to be conducted in accordance with Kings Regulations, if a serving member or their family elects to have a private funeral, then the MOD will provide a grant towards this. (see [JSP 751 Vol 2](#))

The cost of the funeral of a veteran and the arranging of military rites is normally the responsibility of the family.

Is there any financial help for the funeral of a veteran?

The cost of a funeral or burial can be very high. Although this topic can be stressful, it is important to understand what help you might be able to receive at this time.

If you are on a low income and get certain means-tested benefits, you may be eligible for help with funeral expenses, known as a Funeral expenses Payment.

If the person "Crossing the Bar" was in receipt of a war pension and their death was caused by, or hastened by an injury they incurred while serving, you may be able to make a claim for help with funeral costs through Veterans UK. Further information can be found on the [RBL Website](#).

What representation can be present at the funeral?

Both veterans and serving members of the RNPTBA regardless of membership type can request RNPTBA representation, including parading the RNPTBA Standard, by contacting ctb.rnptba@outlook.com. Unfortunately, the Association is unable to guarantee that RNPTBA members, or a Standard Bearer, will be available at short notice in all cases.

For a Service Funeral there will normally be Royal Navy representation. The amount and in what form should be discussed with your Funeral Officer. For private or veterans' funerals Royal Navy representation may also be requested. However, this is very much dependant on the location of the Funeral and Operational commitments.

If the person "Crossing the Bar" was a member of the Royal British Legion (RBL), family members can request RBL representation. Further information can be found on the [RBL Website](#)



What can be worn or placed in the coffin?

Regardless of the type of funeral, it is very much an individual choice as to what the person "Crossing the Bar" wears or what is placed in the coffin with them. Favourite shirt, scarf etc. Letters, photographs and mementos can also be placed in the coffin. However, this should all be done in consultation with your Funeral Director as some items such as shoes may not be allowed if a Cremation is to take place.



What can be placed on the coffin?

If you are a RNPTBA annual subscription paying member you may wish to have the RNPTBA Coffin Pall draped over your coffin, which the family may keep on completion if they wish. This can be obtained by contacting ctb.rnptba@outlook.com.

However, as a serving member if you elect to have a Service Funeral you will have the Union Flag draped over your coffin as part of this type of Funeral.

All veterans and those serving members who opt for a private funeral are entitled to have the Union Flag draped over their coffin. Other Flags may be draped over the coffin. Flags can be purchased from several outlets on the web.

In cases where the Union Flag or other Flags are draped over the coffin the RNPTBA Pall is still available to annual

subscription paying members families to use as they see fit. For further advice contact ctb.rnptba@outlook.com.

In addition, other items can be placed on the coffin. This could be a Naval Cap of the rank held and for Officers and Warrant Officers a Sword (if owned). Advice for family members of veterans on the type of cap and assistance in purchasing can be obtained by contacting ctb.rnptba@outlook.com.

A family member may wish to carry the deceased Medals; this is always a nice touch; a cushion would be recommended to place the medals on. If family believe the deceased has medals but cannot find them an application maybe made via this link. [Apply for or replace a medal or veterans badge : Apply for a medal - GOV.UK](#)

Family may also wish to put Football Boots, Rugby Boots or other items to depict the individual's sporting prowess on the coffin; this is also acceptable.

Family should always talk to your Funeral Officer/Funeral Director about any items you wish to be placed on the coffin. Also, when they will be placed or if there is room for them to be placed on the coffin particularly if there are flowers. It may be that a side table would be a better option for some items. You should also plan with your Funeral Officer/Funeral Director to retrieve these on completion.

What should Mourners wear?

This is generally personal choice, however, if there is anything specific that you would like mourners to wear then you or your family will need to address this in the funeral notice. For veterans, if you wish Association Members, Service Personnel and other Veterans to wear Medals then again, this needs to be addressed in the funeral notice. For a Service Funeral this will be taken care of by the Funeral Officer in discussion with you or your family.

Does the Funeral have to take place in Church with a Minister to officiate?

No, it is up to the individual or the family where the funeral takes place and who officiates. Funerals do not have to be Religious, however you will need to have someone normally a Celebrant to conduct the proceedings for you.

What music can be played at the Funeral?

All members are entitled to have the Last Post played at their Funeral. This is normally played just prior to the Committal; however, this should be discussed with the Minister/Celebrant and Funeral Officer if appointed.

The PT Branch Hymn is "Jerusalem" this can be played at either a Religious or non-Religious Funeral.

You will normally also need music to enter by and for people to leave by. You may also consider a piece a music for reflection during the Funeral. Again, this should also be discussed with the Minister or Celebrant and Funeral Officer.

Funeral Officers will endeavour to arrange for a Royal Marine Bugler to play the Last Post at a Service Funeral. A Royal Marine Bugler may also be available at public expense but not guaranteed, for those veterans who has completed full pensionable service or been awarded an operational service medal, subject to approval by the Single Service Tasking Authority for the RMBS. The mail address to request a RM Bugler is : NAVYRMBAND-HQBSRMENGCOORD@mod.gov.uk

However, it is acceptable for the Last Post to be on an electronic recording along with any music for the Service.

Piper

If the deceased was of Scottish decent, a Piper may be considered. The Piper may play and march in front of the hearse and may play a Lament at the funeral service. But again, we suggest liaising with the family and the funeral director.

Is it acceptable to take photographs of the Funeral?

During a time of intense grief and shock following a loss, it's not uncommon to forget the events of a funeral or remember them incorrectly. It is also harder now than ever to bring people together and more importantly connect families in these difficult times. Pictures can help us appreciate and reflect and will be looked back upon for generations and help keep the memory of this event alive.

For those still serving, your family's Service Funeral Officer will offer the option of a Service photographer. For veterans there are now a number of civilian photographers who will offer this service at a price.

However, both are very discreet, and the end result is a beautiful memory for future generations.

If a Veteran has a Funeral Plan in place can Military Rites still be added?

Normally a funeral plan will cover the basics of the Funeral depending on the level. This may cover the cost of the coffin any burial/cremation fees including Minister/Celebrant. It may also cover the cost of a hearse and car for family.

Most plans will be aligned to a particular Funeral Director therefore unless stated in the plan that Military Rites are not to be observed then they can be added.

It should be noted that any costs over and above the plan are the liability for the family/estate of the person crossing the bar.

What happens after the Funeral?

Normally straight after the funeral there is either a burial or cremation. A burial can either take place in front of the whole congregation or it can be arranged such that family only are present.

If the Service takes place at the crematorium, it can also be arranged for the immediate family to have a few minutes to say a final goodbye after the congregation have left and before the curtains are drawn around.



If the Service takes place in a church with a cremation afterwards this can be either a private ceremony for the family or can be left for those who wish to attend to do so.

Should the family wish a cremation only, this can also take place with no one other than the Funeral Party present if the family wish.

The crematorium will advise families when the ashes are available for collection.

Where Can Someone Be Buried?

Cemetery/Churchyard

The most commonly known places for burial are cemeteries and churchyards. If you are religious, you can ask to be buried in a churchyard, though bear in mind that some churchyards no longer have room for new burials. Most cemeteries are non-denominational, so anyone can be buried in them if they have a plot.

Service members can have a Military Headstone at Public expense. This should be discussed with the Funeral Officer.

Natural Burial Ground

You can choose to have a natural burial in a woodland or meadow burial ground. Natural burials have risen in popularity over the last few years, with the dual benefit of being better for the environment and being laid to rest in such beautiful places. see the following post: [Best UK Green Burial Sites](#)

Private Land

Many people don't realise that you can choose to be buried in private land, such as your garden or the garden of a loved one. There are a few rules you must follow:

You must have consent from the owner of the land

You must check that there are no restrictive covenants that prohibit burial at the property

The burial cannot take place within certain distances of specific types of water to adhere to the rules of the Environment Agency

There must be a minimum depth between the soil level and the top of the coffin/shroud

Planning permission is not always required, but it's a good idea to contact your local authority just to make them aware

The whereabouts of the grave must be recorded and included in the deeds of the property

It's also a good idea to think of more practical matters - what if the owner wants to sell in the future? A grave in the garden may affect how much they could sell for, and if the house does get sold would family members still be able to visit the grave?

Burial at Sea

Some choose to be buried at sea, though there are only a few places in the UK where you can do this. A burial at sea is the process in which human remains are committed to the sea as a final resting place. A marine licence is required from the Marine Management Organisation (MMO) for a burial at sea in English waters or Northern Irish offshore waters.

For England

There are three designated burials at sea locations, which are:

Off The Needles, Isle of Wight

Between Hastings and Newhaven Off Tynemouth,

North Tyneside

For Wales

Natural Resource Wales for burials at sea in inshore and offshore areas of Welsh waters.

For Northern Ireland

The Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs, for burials at sea in inshore Northern Irish waters.

For Scotland

The Burial, Cremation and Death Certification Team, for burials at sea in Scottish waters.

For more information about Burials at sea please visit [How to arrange a burial at sea in the UK marine area - GOV.UK](#)

Where can Ashes be Scattered?

Many people choose to scatter the ashes of a loved one in a location with a personal meaning or a connection to the person who has died.

You can scatter ashes anywhere in the UK if you have permission from the landowner. This means that, if you own your own home and want to scatter your loved one's ashes across the lawn or as part of a garden feature, you can do so without needing a permit.

There are, however, specific environmental guidelines covering some locations, such as the sea, at a National Park and on a mountainside. To scatter ashes in any public park or green space, you'll need to request permission from the local council. Most local councils and park trusts, such as the National Trust, will allow this, so long as the environmental guidelines are followed.

If you want to scatter the ashes at sea or over a river, you don't usually need to ask for permission – but it's important to follow the [Environment Agency's guidance](#) to help protect the local habitat.

Who do my Family have to inform of my death?

Tell Us Once is a service that lets your family report your death to most government organisations in one go.

You can use Tell Us Once if the person who died was living in England, Scotland or Wales. This includes if the person died while they were abroad temporarily, for example on a holiday or business trip. The death must have been either, registered or reported to a coroner and you have a final or interim death certificate

You cannot use Tell Us Once if the person was, living in Northern Ireland when they died or living abroad permanently when they died.

For further information or to start the service go to the [GOV.UK Tell Once website](#).

What Happens to my Military Pension?

The MOD has recently updated its guidance on GOV.UK on how family can report the death of a member, depending on whether you were receiving a pension at the time or if you were a deferred member. There is now a list which tells them what information should be gathered before reporting a death. Further details can be found at the following [LINK](#)

Leaving a Gift in my Will?

After you've taken care of loved ones, you may wish to leave a gift in your Will and pass on something wonderful to future generations.

The donation can be as small or large as you like. Every gift will make a big difference and will be gratefully received by the members of the Association.

There are three different types of gifts you can leave in your Will:

Pecuniary gifts - a set amount of money

Residuary gifts - a percentage, or the whole, of your estate (what's left after other specified gifts, costs, and tax)

Specific gifts - a specific object, asset or property

If you want to leave a gift but you've already made a Will, that's not a problem – there are a couple of ways you can change it.

Write a new Will - The simplest way to include us is to write a new Will. Once written, any Wills you've made in the past become void. In fact, most Wills will start by reciting that you're writing a Will and that you're revoking previous Wills.

A solicitor or Will writer can help with writing a new will.

Codicils - The other way to leave a gift to us is to write a codicil, which is a document used to make changes to an existing Will.

It's used as a way to make simple amendments like adding a gift to us, changing a gift amount or adding an executor. This is all quite straightforward, but problems can occur if you ever want to cancel the Will in the future.

When you cancel a Will that contains a codicil, the codicil does not get cancelled automatically, so when you write a new Will it can create inconsistencies and legal problems. To avoid this, make sure that any new Will clearly states that you are revoking all Wills and codicils previously made.

A solicitor or Will writer can help with writing a codicil.

If you do wish to leave a monetary gift to the RNPTBA in your will our details are as follows:

Account Name - RN Physical Training and Rec Branch Assoc

Account No - 01971637

Sort Code - 30-96-11

Bank - - Lloyds Bank PLC

Links to other Support

Bereavement Support - [Get help with grief after bereavement or loss - NHS](#)

[What to do when a veteran dies - GOV.UK](#)

[ARNO | The Association of Royal Navy Officers](#)

[Royal Naval Benevolent Trust | Royal Marine & Navy Charity](#)

[The Association of Wrens](#)

You may also have been a member of their ship's associations, so it may be worth your family contacting them as well.

Further Information

If you require any further information, there are lots of websites that can provide information with regards to material in this guide. However, should you still require some advice/guidance or just for your peace of mind, please contact ctb.rnptba@outlook.com.

RNPTBA Membership

In addition to possibly leaving a gift in your will, if you are not already an annual subscription paying member, you may wish to become one.

The Association will only continue to improve if we have even more paying members. This will in turn lead to increased benefits for Members.

"The vision of the RNPTBA is to create a proactive and vibrant Association that all Serving, Retired PTIs & Associate members want to be part of, continuing the legacy of our proud PTI family; our Mission is to mentor and support serving and retired members of our Association through all stages of career and life."

We're here when YOU need us, therefore, we hope that even more members will sign up.

We also hope we can rely on your generosity to make this a thriving, viable & financially sustainable organisation. If you haven't already done so - please pay £15 now and also set up a standing order to be paid on 1st December annually letting the membership Secretary know at rnptba@hotmail.com. Also please include the year in which you qualified so that we have a record on our database.

ALL MEMBERSHIP CATEGORIES ARE £15 PA, and our account details are:

Account Name - RN Physical Training and Rec Branch Assoc

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Sort Code - 30-96-11

Bank - Lloyds Bank PLC

Use SURNAME & INITIAL as the Reference.

