

Commander Christopher Michael COLE Royal Navy

Born in London on 3 September 1945 and educated at a south London Secondary School. On leaving school at the age of 15 he worked for a few months in the offices of a Chartered Accountant and then joined the Royal Navy as a Junior Writer at Chatham Naval Base in 1961. As a writer he served at RNAS Portland as 771 and 737 Squadron Writer before being drafted to HMS TERROR during the Indonesian Confrontation. Following 18 months in the Far East he was drafted to HMS MAIDSTONE, based in the Gare Loch. In 1965 he was advanced to Leading Writer. Whilst serving in HMS MAIDSTONE he was selected to take part in the Upper Yardman Supplementary List Officers' scheme but lacking any educational qualifications he was drafted to HMS GANGES for a 9 month intensive educational course to attain the necessary GCEs before joining BRNC Dartmouth as a Short Service (10 years) Supplementary List Cadet. Following training at Dartmouth and the Royal Naval Supply School Chatham where he specialised as a Supply Officer he was appointed to HMS HERMES to complete 6 months Midshipman's Sea Time. However, after three months onboard HERMES he was promoted to Acting/Acting Sub-Lieutenant, awarded 6 months seniority for a first class pass at the Midshipmen's Board, which he did not have to take, and was appointed with one day's notice to HMS ALBION as the Captain's Assistant Secretary, his predecessor's services being "No Longer Required". Despite being a Supply (Logs) specialist, his seagoing service included HM Ships MAIDSTONE, HERMES, ALBION, APOLLO, DEVONSHIRE, PHOEBE AND ARK ROYAL. His shore service was mainly in the secretarial role serving on Cs in C Staff. As the Administration Section Officer on the Staff of CINCNVHOME he was tasked with rehousing British Families serving in Malta when Dom Mintoff took over as Prime Minister in 1971. As Operation Families Move Officer (OPFAMO Malta) he successfully arranged the repatriation and housing of all British Families and was subsequently transferred to the General List. He also had one appointment as Commanding officer of the RN Support Unit in Naples. He served as Secretary/EA to British Admirals Barker, Grenier, and Howard, Dutch Admirals Den Boef, Haver Droezer, and Leertour, Danish Admiral Tu Peterson and Danish General Preben Aagaard. His final two appointments in the RN saw him as the Commander (Logistics and Budget Manager) at HMS RALEIGH followed by the NATO and EU Logistics Desk Officer in the Directorate of Naval Logistics Policy where he was awarded an Admiralty Board Commendation for outstanding services to NATO and the EU. If nothing else, the one thing he would like to be remembered for is the fact that as Commanding Officer of the RN Support Unit in Naples he was responsible along with Captain Michael Barrow and Wing Commander Tony Goddard for founding the International School of Naples (ISN) when the John F Kennedy school collapsed. The ISN continues to this day.

He joined the Exeter Flotilla in 2001 and took over as Chairman in 2006. His time as Chairman covered a number of notable milestones in the history of the Flotilla, including successfully negotiating the Flotilla's continued use of the Mess at Lympstone, representing the Flotilla in Brittany in the city of Rennes on several occasions in conjunction with the Exeter Twinning Association, and fostering the link with the French Naval Reserve organisation, ACORAM. At the end of his tenure as Chairman he engraved the Flotilla's presentation decanter commemorating HMS Defender's commissioning. On standing down as Chairman he took on the role of auditing the Flotilla accounts which he did for eight years.

He married Carol in 1965 and they had two children and three grandchildren.

He is an accomplished painter and a Craftsman of the Guild of Glass Engravers and plays various instruments in a country dance band. He is a lifelong sportsman.

