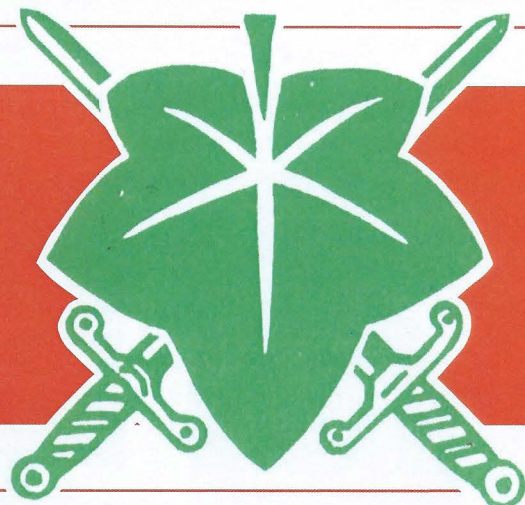


# THE FORMATION SIGN

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## DAD'S COLD WAR NAVY

As the Cold War began heating up in the early 1950s, the British government became concerned that the Soviet Union might use its extensive stock of sea mines to deliver them by air into Europe's sea lanes and major ports. A large part in the planning to meet this new threat was the creation of a volunteer force of men and women who would watch over Britain's numerous ports, bays and inshore channels and report the activities of low-flying aircraft and the objects they might drop, a task which would save the Royal Navy's minesweeping force much effort in finding and defusing potential threats.

### Every Mine Plotted May Mean a Ship Saved

In January 1952 the Prime Minister, Sir Winston Churchill announced the formation of the Royal Navy Minewatching Service (RNMWS), a civilian organisation operated and administered by the Royal Navy which was to man posts ashore and afloat to spot and plot mines as they were dropped and report their position to the local Naval HQ so that shipping could be warned and diverted as necessary.

Initially it was proposed that uniforms would only be issued in time of war and by July 1952 it had been suggested that RNMWS volunteers would wear the blue battle dress blouse and trousers issued to naval aircrew (with WRNS trousers and skirts for women volunteers) and a blue beret. Badges for the berets, shoulder flashes and shoulder straps for officers then being put into production were expected to be available in the next few months. In March 1953 the Admiralty announced that members were to be issued this uniform in peacetime, the blue beret now identified as being of Royal Marine pattern.

Insignia for the new service was at first restricted to a beret badge – 'A silver splash on silver waves over a background of blue enamel, surrounded by a coil of rope in gilt, the whole surmounted by a naval crown in gilt over the letters "R.N.M.W.S." in black on a gilt background, 2 inches in height overall' - and a 'Shoulder flash' with the service's initials. A smaller, 1 inch version of the cap badge was issued as a lapel badge for civilian clothes.

