

Andrew Burns joined the Royal Navy in 1989 as a university cadet and graduated from Durham University, after three fulfilling years at Hatfield College, with a Bachelor of Science degree in geography. It has proved to be a highly appropriate academic discipline for someone who has followed a career at sea. Understanding the maritime environment has equipped Andrew to stand watch on the bridge of a warship. It has also enabled him to grapple with the strategic complexities of delivering effect at sea, and from the sea, to advance the security interests of the United Kingdom and its allies.

Andrew Burns's rank of Vice Admiral and appointments as a Companion of the Order of the Bath and as an Officer of the Order of the British Empire stand testament to the illustrious nature of his career. Dig a bit deeper, and it becomes apparent that he has held, at one time or another, some of the best jobs the navy has to offer. He has commanded the mine countermeasures vessel HMS Berkeley, the frigate HMS Somerset and the assault ship HMS Bulwark. He went on to command United Kingdom Maritime Forces, which made him the Royal Navy's most senior deployable officer. Thereafter, came promotion and appointment as Fleet Commander, a position that he held for four years up until last September. That was, by any standard, a crucial role as it gave him command of all the operational arms of the Royal Navy, namely the Surface Flotilla, Submarine Flotilla, Fleet Air Arm, Royal Marines and Royal Fleet Auxiliary.

Andrew's spell as Fleet Commander coincided with Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine and the need for the United Kingdom to concert with its NATO Allies to deter any threat to the 32 nations that constitute the North Atlantic alliance. As the United Kingdom is a maritime power, it has fallen to the Royal Navy to make a major contribution to that alliance effort. For Andrew, that has meant ensuring that our ships, submarines, aircraft and marines are ready for deployment and that they prepared to deal with the unexpected.

Andrew has all along recognised the centrality of people to the effectiveness of the Royal Navy. As so many admirals have learned over the centuries, it is as important to understand people as it is to master seamanship. That wisdom defines leaders and enables the exercise of command, explaining why Andrew has been so successful. This is the spirit in which he has approached his responsibilities as Gender Advocate for the Royal Navy. It also helps explain the pride he has taken in being President of the Royal Navy Rugby Union and President of the Royal Navy Cricket Association.

For over thirty five years, Andrew has served his nation with skill and courage as a Royal Navy officer in a series of increasingly important roles. Our country is all the safer and more secure as a result.

Chancellor, I present Andrew Burns to receive the degree of Doctor of Science honoris causa.