

Michael Evans 1985-. Royal Navy Llanelli

West Wales Veterans' Archive, National Library of Wales
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Description

Michael Evans was born in Morryston Hospital in 1985. He lived in Llanelli for the first six months of his life, and then moved to various locations dependent upon his father's postings in the Royal Navy. After joining a local rugby club that was filled with current and former Naval personnel, he decided to join the Royal Navy, entering Britannia Royal Naval College as a Midshipman to begin training as a Warfare Officer. Michael served in a variety of sea and shore appointments before being medically discharged. After leaving the service, Michael earned a BSc International Relations from the University of Plymouth and then moved to the United States where he now lives with his family.

Michael is also the grandson of Eric Evans, a WW2 Burma campaign veteran of the Royal Air Force, and the son of Commander Edward Evans, Royal Navy (ret'd). Both Eric and Edward's accounts can also be found on the West Wales Veterans' Archive in the National Library's People's Collection Wales.

Early Life

Michael Evans was born on 8.1.1985 in Morryston, Swansea, and lived with his mother and grandparents in Llanelli as his father began his officer training at Britannia Royal Naval College (BRNC) immediately after his birth. Michael and his mother moved to married quarters in Plymouth later that year. Indeed, following his father's many postings in the Navy was a consistent theme throughout his childhood. His younger brother was born in Plymouth, and the family then moved to Scotland and Portugal, before returning to England. Once back in England, Michael attended the local comprehensive school in Saltash, Cornwall. Being a life-long rugby fan, he joined the local rugby club, Saltash RFC, which was a hotspot for servicemen in the local area. This taste of naval banter led him to the Careers Office and several tours of various ships and establishments. After passing the intense three-day Admiralty Interview Board and necessary medical tests, he was cleared to join the Royal Navy.

Basic Military Training

Michael began Officer Training at BRNC on January 4, 2004, four days shy of his nineteenth birthday. This was a year-long course which began with a militarization phase – a bootcamp style program to start the process of turning civilians into effective military personnel. This year also enabled Michael to experience his first time away at sea, completing Initial Sea Training on HMS Campbeltown, an older style Type 22 Frigate. During this period at sea, the ship sailed past the D-Day beaches, up the Caen Canal and under Pegasus Bridge as part of the 60th

commemoration of D-Day. This opportunity was moving in many different ways, mainly as it gave the young officers onboard an opportunity to meet and connect with D-Day veterans.

When back in Dartmouth, Michael began learning the basics of seamanship and navigation – two essential skills for the modern-day Warfare Officer. This training was completed in a simulator and on the River Dart, taking part in a variety of exercises to develop these seafaring skills. Plenty of time was also dedicated to training each officer to become a Divisional Officer, responsible for the professional and social emotional wellbeing of a group of junior ratings. Michael passed out of Dartmouth in mid-December 2004, ready to join the fleet to complete Common Fleet Time – a four-month period embarked on a ship learning about the multitude of roles that are required to ensure the successful operation of a modern-day warship.

Michael spent this time on HMS Chatham – another Type 22 frigate which was mid-deployment when he joined. He was sent to meet the ship in Trincomalee, Sri Lanka. HMS Chatham was re-deployed to the Maldives and Sri Lanka to assist in humanitarian efforts following the Boxing Day tsunami in 2004. This was hard work in demanding conditions, but the rewards gained far outweighed the discomfort of constant mosquito bites and sweltering heat. During this time, Michael was taken by the Commanding Officer to a meeting with members of the Tamil Tigers; he only later realized the significance of this meeting when reading about the group for his degree!

This same trip also took Michael to Mumbai, Oman, Dubai, and the Gulf of Aden as the ship met its diplomatic requirements in the Far and Middle East. Finally, whilst starting the voyage back to Plymouth, the ship was involved in the 90th anniversary of the Gallipoli campaign in Turkey. During this visit, HRH the Prince of Wales joined the ship and sat down with the young officers to discuss life in the Royal Navy. Although Michael had previously met the Queen, this was a smaller, more intimate setting which was enjoyed by all. Upon disembarking, Michael returned to Portsmouth where he took and passed his oral boards which allowed him to begin professional training.

Professional Training

Michael was drafted to HMS Illustrious – the last of the Invincible class aircraft carriers – to complete his Specialist Fleet Time. This six-month intensive period teaches everything each officer needs to know to conduct their duties in a safe and effective manner. As the most junior member of the Navigation team (titled N4), his duties included shadowing the qualified Officer of the Watch, as well as learning the finer arts of navigation. Michael joined Illustrious in Newcastle and then sailed north as the ship began work-up for completion of readiness training/exercise that would enable the ship to carry out operational tours. Illustrious also had Harriers embarked, the predecessor to the current F-35 Lightning II, and was conducting regular flight operations as part of this training. This included ensuring that ship and aircraft were prepared for the various roles the Harrier could perform in active duty.

The ship had just come out of refit and was eventually rededicated at sea – fitting for a ship that was commissioned whilst on transit to the Falklands in 1982. With an extensive period of time alongside, Michael secured a position with the Gibraltar Squadron – a small unit of RN personnel manning two fast patrol boats in Gibraltar. This was an excellent opportunity to further enhance his navigation and ship-handling skills. Upon his return to Illustrious he was tasked with planning the navigational charts for a deployment to Malta; unfortunately, a recurring back injury prevented him from further involvement in this tour, and ultimately led to his discharge from service. Whilst waiting for this process to take place he was assigned to the Commander of HMS Drake's team where he assisted in basic office management and assisted the Commander in running the Officers' cricket team. Michael was formally discharged from the service in late October 2006.

Post Service

Post service, Michael read International Relations at the University of Plymouth and also used plenty of his 'free' time to coach rugby and travel around Europe. In the summers he travelled to the United States to work in summer camps, and upon completion of his degree obtained an 18-month visa and moved to Vermont to work as an outdoor education instructor. During this time, he managed to secure a Green Card and now permanently resides in Beverly, Massachusetts – a town with a strong (U.S) naval background. Michael is married to his wife, Elisabeth, and together they have three adopted children. Michael recently graduated with a Masters' Degree in Education Administration and works at an independent school in Boston. In his spare time, Michael likes to go fishing although with three children he finds that he has to focus on the nighttime tides!