

Captain Rob Anders

Royal Fleet Auxiliary captain who helped to bring aid to the Bahamas after Hurricane Dorian

CAPTAIN ROB ANDERS, who has died of a brain tumour aged 49, rose from deckhand to second-in-command of the Royal Fleet Auxiliary.

In September 2019 Anders was in command of *RFA Mounts Bay*, a landing ship dock, which was operating in the West Indies. When Hurricane Dorian struck the Bahamas, winds of 185mph whipped through the islands, causing the worst natural disaster in living memory. Thousands were left hungry, thirsty and without shelter. *Mounts Bay* delivered water, food, medical supplies, prefabricated buildings, and hygiene kits in the six-day Operation Barytone.

While Anders directed his own crew, which included personnel of the RFA, Royal Navy and Royal Marines, commando-trained Royal Engineers and Royal Logistic Corps, he and his ship also became the focus for operations by the Royal Bahamas Defence Force, the Bahamian National Emergency and Management Agency, the US Coastguard, and a range of non-governmental organisations.

Anders readily embraced the challenge, allocating the limited communications and prioritising the needs of the Bahamians and of his own people. Using *Mounts Bay's* helicopter and boats, he directly succoured the communities on Great and Little Abaco islands, which were worst affected, including clearing some 50 miles of blocked roads to bring aid to nine isolated communities.

Anders set an example which encouraged everyone to achieve their best. Modestly, he recorded how pleased he was to "use our people and equipment to send water and food ashore to provide aid to the Bahamian people. We hope that our presence in the area in the immediate aftermath of Hurricane Dorian will provide some peace of mind and reassurance to all those affected."

He was appointed OBE.

Robert George Anders was born at Warrington, Cheshire, on September

29 1971 and educated at William Beamont High School there. Aged 17, he joined offshore safety experts Boston Putford's youth training scheme as a deckhand and his first seagoing years were spent in coasters and trans-Pacific container vessels.

Anders qualified as an officer of the watch in 1993 and joined the Royal Fleet Auxiliary, the fleet of civilian-crewed ships operated by the Ministry of Defence, as a third officer in 1996.

Over the next 10 years he served in a wide variety of ships of both the Royal Fleet Auxiliary and Royal Navy, on deployments to the Mediterranean, the Gulf and the South Atlantic.

In 2002, when Anders qualified as a Master Mariner, his potential was fully recognised by the Royal Navy, who selected him to qualify as a principal warfare officer. He gained further experience in the destroyer *Glasgow* before joining the frigate *Northumberland* on Operation Active Endeavour, a Nato patrol in the Mediterranean intended to deter and defend against terrorist activity.

Subsequently, in the frigate *Campbeltown*, he attended the D-Day 60th anniversary commemoration.

By now Anders's card was marked for senior appointments, and after completing the staff course in 2005, and qualifying as a damage control instructor, he became Staff Warfare Officer (RFA), responsible for delivering warfare training to RFA vessels. On promotion to chief officer, he served as second in command of several RFAs.

While at the Defence Academy in Shrivenham, Oxfordshire, in 2011, he achieved an MA in Defence Studies, before appointment to Navy Command Headquarters as a desk officer. Next, he enjoyed a year's sabbatical working on a semi-submersible drilling rig in the North Sea.

Promoted to captain in 2016, Anders enjoyed short spells in command of the tankers *Wave Ruler* and *Wave Knight*, the landing ships *Lyme Bay* and *Cardigan Bay* and the replenishment

ship *Fort Victoria*, before taking over *Mounts Bay* during her three-year deployment in the West Indies.

In 2019 Anders led the RFA contingent at the Festival of Remembrance, reading the epitaph in the presence of the Queen, before becoming deputy assistant chief of staff afloat support, effectively the second-in-command of his service.

Anders took a no-nonsense approach to his duties and gained a reputation for cutting to the heart of any matter in an unflappable way with the occasional touch of dry humour. Above all, he is remembered for his personal courage and for his kindness.

Military history was a lifetime interest alongside the Warrington Wolves rugby league side, and he was a member of the executive board of Royal Navy Rugby League.

Diagnosed with a brain tumour in mid-December, Anders died on the morning before he was due to undergo surgery. He married Phillipa Reive in 2003; she survives him with their daughter and son.

Captain Rob Anders, born September 29 1971, died December 22 2020



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supplies, hygiene kits and prefab buildings – and cleared some 50 miles of blocked roads

