



The Chairman's Annual Report 2015

The Finances

Our finances at the end of 2015 were consisted of a bank balance of £55,325 and reserves of £61,004 however £18,060 of this money is restricted funds for Coull Memorial Award, Welfare and Memorial etc. Whilst the capital has increased over the past year the 2015 bank interest earned us just £273. An interest rate of .45%. Figures for recent years are below:

2009 - £200
2010 - £300
2011 - £422
2012 - £525
2013 - £294
2014 - £256
2015 - £273

We continue to be limited, by the Charities Commission, as to where we can deposit funds. This restricts us to very low interest rates which we continually try to improve upon.

It is also worth looking at the income and expenditure over the last 7 years. This information is readily available on the Charity Commission website (England and Wales) <http://www.charity-commission.gov.uk> and the Office for the Scottish Charity Regulator (OSCR) <http://www.oscr.org.uk/>. Figures for 2011, 2012 & 2013 are distorted by the memorial costs and if these receipts and expenses are removed it would show that our income has just exceeded our expenditure every year since 2009.

Year	Income	Expenses
2009	£27121	£23822
2010	£28778	£25807
2011	£38653	£25081
2012	£61461	£40683
2013	£25932	£33789
2014	£31596	£22650
2015	£35917	£20337

Note: The 2013 annual award from the Central Benevolent Fund was received in May 2014 and then two further annual awards were received in 2015.

No Gift Aid claim was made in 2015.

The Constitution

No changes to our Constitution were made in 2015 and the Board of Trustees take great care to ensure the Association meets our constitutional requirements to the letter. We were able to make several welfare payments during the year and we continued to use our own set of guidelines when applications are received.

The Membership

Membership is currently running at 669 members in total, of which 206 are Life Members and 10 are Honorary Members. Life membership is awarded by COMRFA to retiring staff whilst staff taking redundancy packages are given just their first year's membership. It is the Association's position that all staff leaving the Service should only have their first year sponsored by the RFA. As life membership deprives us of future funding and more importantly we want members to value the Association and to want to pay their annual subscription which continues at just £15.

The Trustees.

Trustees stand for a period of 6 years but may serve for a maximum of 9 years although they must be re-elected on a year to year basis.

Chief Officer (SE) Frank Andrews, Chairman, Preston. (Stands down November 2016 after 9 years)

Captain Pat Thompson, Deputy Chairman, Mickleton. (Stands down as Deputy Chairman at 2016 AGM after 8 years as Chairman and Deputy Chairman but continues as a trustee).

CPO (Carp) George Mason, Crombie. (Completes 6 years at AGM 2016)

Captain Robin Lock, Corporate Fundraiser, Southwest. (Completes 6 years at AGM 2017)

Mr Peter Fry, Treasurer, Solent. (Completes 6 years at AGM 2017)

Captain Ray Bennett, Solent. (Completes 6 years at AGM 2018)

Captain (E) Robert Settle, Wirral. (Completes 6 years at AGM 2020)

Mr Ian Thompson, Northwest. (Completes 6 years at AGM 2021)

Mr Patrick Molloy, Scotland (Completes 6 years at AGM 2021)

Also the following are Ex Officio Trustees appointed by COMRFA

Captain (LS) Rupert Drew

CPO Stephen Edney

The Association is always looking for potential candidates to undertake the duties of a trustee. Without trustees the Charity cannot function and members must be prepared to support their Association. Anyone who would like to volunteer their services and who is interested in becoming a trustee please contact the Chairman. We look for members from across the board, across the specialisations, and across the country as it is crucial that the Board is as representative as it is practically possible to make it.

The Branches

Plymouth and South West.

Plymouth and South West hold six meetings a year and additionally three lunches plus a Christmas lunch. They man a stand for Armed Forces Day as well as providing representatives for The Lord Mayor's Choosing. They provide Standards for funerals, civic functions and the Remembrance Service at the Plymouth Pavilions. Usually 25 members attend their bi-monthly meetings. In 2015 they hosted an excellent reunion dinner at the China Fleet Club, Saltash.

Solent

The Solent branch have 7/8 functions a year 4 Committee meetings plus an AGM, and presently have 152 members on their books. The branch have booked the Grand Harbour Hotel for 2016 AGM and Reunion Dinner.

London and the South East

2015 was a good year for the branch with multiple visits and trips around the London area, including a trip to the International Maritime Organisation and also the Imperial War Museum. A proposal was put together to sponsor a Seamanship prize for the London District Sea Cadets. They also attended the MN Day Parade at Tower Hill, and the St. Paul's Seafarers Service. Their Christmas lunch at the Victory Services Club attracted a record number of members.

Midlands

Midlands Branch had a quiet year however their membership is spread over a wide geographical area. They need more support to become a viable branch.

Scottish and Newcastle

Lunch events are held throughout our region and take the form of a sit down Sunday Lunch. They held an event in March at the Riverdale, Bellingham and in June at the Cross keys in Kelso. In September they held two events; one in Calendar and one in Bowburn, Durham and the final event

of 2015 was held just outside Berwick in November. We have been delighted to welcome new members at some of our recent events and have a full programme for 2016.

North West

An embryonic and small cadre who have recently been formed and who are actively chaired by Ian Thompson. They are seeking a new central venue for 2016.

It is important that the work of all Branch Chairmen and their committees are fully recognised and I would like to offer my sincere thanks for the volume of work that is readily undertaken and for the time they so freely give.

Associated Organisations

The Association has links to the RFA Association of Malta, Chairman Anthony Farrugia, and John Caruana of the London Branch provide liaison.

We have an affiliation with Seychelles, Mr Guy Govinden is leader and there are currently 12 Affiliates and a very substantial number of retired RFA Seychellois seamen.

There is a very unofficial "branch" (The Far Flung) in Thailand with John Littlechild and David Palin providing the necessary liaison.

We also have members in: Falkland Islands, USA, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, France, Croatia, Singapore, Oman, Spain, South Africa, Japan, Bahamas and Jersey.

The Management

The Association continues to occupy rooms 212 & 214 in Semaphore Tower, Portsmouth Dockyard. Our offices house the entire collection of RFA artefacts, pictures, battle honours belonging to ships no longer in service and a substantial collection of literature.

The Association continues to have trustees from all areas of UK and our management has become more diverse and widespread. Modern IT has enabled this to be done successfully although a few of us would prefer to spend less time in front of our computers. The trustees continue to meet approximately 3 times a year but all the day to day work continues to be done in private homes. The Chairman is assisted by Dawn Reay who is our Membership Secretary and Bookkeeper. The Deputy Chairman runs the website and manages ceremonial duties. Trustee Peter Fry is our Treasurer and Trustee Robin Lock expertly handles Corporate Fundraising whilst Trustee Ray Bennett is in charge of Welfare.

The Website (www.rfa-association.org.uk)

The website continues to provide news to the membership and had been further enhanced by the late David Gerard, former Plymouth Branch webmaster, who added a photo gallery archive. Peter Lannin now runs the Plymouth website.

Each branch has its own area on in the website to publish whatever is necessary to keep the members informed; likewise each branch has its own area in the HQ photo gallery.

In addition to the website we now operate a Facebook and Twitter page, members should just search the Facebook and Twitter sites to find our entries.

The Members Handbook

The Members' Handbook and Yearbook. The 2015/2016 Yearbook was distributed in February 2015 and the 2016/2017 Handbook was distributed in February 2016.

Despite the fact that we get the Handbook for free it still costs a substantial amount of money to distribute it. This year it cost in the region of £1400, and this figure is likely to rise, as it does every year. We try to mitigate the expense by coupling the mailing with the Reunion and AGM mailings.

Gunline

Gunline used to be our regular third line of communication with our members but there was no issue in 2014 and only one in 2013. We have therefore produced our own hard copy of "Force 4" (We can't use the Gunline title of course) which we posted to all UK members and emailed to all members living abroad in September 2015. It is thought likely that a large proportion of our older members are not on-line and would in any case prefer to read the printed word therefore it is again our intention to produce our own hard copy newsletter which we will post to members in September. Pat continues to write and despatch an on-line newsletter edition of Force 4 which is sent to all on-line members who have declared, and maintain, an up to date email address with us. Clearly postal delivery has the advantage of reaching every member but without Gunline, Force 4 has been an excellent means to keep in touch with the majority of our members and without cost.

The RFAA Emergency Welfare Fund.

The RFAA Emergency welfare fund is now operational and a small number of grants have been made. The ability to offer emergency support to both members and non members, former or serving personnel is a big step forward as it means the Association now has a framework to assess applications. This enables us to meet every single objective in our constitution. A small sub group of trustees assess applications and make recommendations to the full board.

The RFA National Memorial.

Keeping the memorial alive and relevant is not easy and whilst we have given consideration to holding some sort of service/remembrance event at the National Memorial Arboretum in October 2017; its fifth anniversary we are now considering the viability of this given the new Tide boats arrival and their associated dedication services. We continue to work with our patron HRH The Earl of Wessex and any event we schedule would naturally be open to all RFA and RFAA members and anyone who has an RFA connection.

Annual Meeting with the Commodore.

The Formal Annual meeting with the Commodore took place on 10th December 2015 and myself and Deputy Chairman Pat Thompson spent a very useful hour talking to Commodore Duncan Lamb who happens to be an ex shipmate.

The Coull Memorial Award

In 2015 the Coull Memorial Award was presented to the whole ship's company of RFA Argus. Captain David Eagles accepted the award at our Annual Reunion Dinner in May. A framed copy of the award was also presented by our patron, HRH The Earl of Wessex, when Argus berthed in Portsmouth. The award recognised the sterling work carried out by the entire ship's company during the Ebola crisis.

Merchant Navy Medals.

23rd November was a great day for two of our trustees. Both Deputy Chairman Captain Pat Thompson and Captain Robert Settle were both awarded the Merchant Navy Medal at Trinity House, Tower Hill, London. Pat Thompson received his medal for his work managing the RFA Association and Bob Settle for his work with Nautilus International. The awards were presented by Admiral the Right Honourable Lord West of Spithead GCB DSC PC ADC.



Frank Andrews
Chairman
The RFA Association.

17th May, 2016