GUNLINE

ROYAL FLEET AUXILIARY

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Farewell Sir Knight

It is with much sadness that this issue covers the final goodbye of the last Knight of the Realm, RFA SIR BEDIVERE. During her forty year service she has played a pivotal role in both war zones and in humanitarian missions. As time stands still for no man the same can be said for ships and while we say farewell SIR BEDIVERE this issues also focus on the work of RFA LYME BAY one of the class of vessels which replaced the Arthurian Knights. Tristan da Cunha, the world's most isolated community, needs repairs to be carried out on its harbour, as well as medical stores. RFA LYME BAY, the newest of our landing ships, has been tasked to support the population of Tristan da Cunha and to repair the harbour. **See page 5**

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From the Commodore...

I rather hope you will recall that my previous article centred on trust and why this is fundamental to our day to day business. Just in case you have forgotten, I was musing as to where mistrust might stem from and some of the reasons for the perpetuation of misconception and how our culture and attitudes are intertwined. I indicated that without trust, anyone of us will find meaningful communication impossible. Although I have not researched it or looked it up in a management book, I suspect there is a direct relationship between the amount of trust and the ease of communication. Of course I recognise that trust must be shared by both parties, if it is to be worthy of the name, and I also recognise that it must be earned by both parties. So, if we assume at least some degree of trust borne of professional respect, then we can begin to communicate sensibly.

I'm sure we can recall the conclusions reached at the end of conferences, seminars, focus groups, meetings or other gatherings, whether afloat or ashore, where we all see the need for "improved communications" and so I thought I would ask you to ponder what this really means. If you look up the word "communication" in your dictionary, it will define the act of communicating; the imparting or exchange of information, ideas or feelings. It can be something communicated such as a message, letter, or telephone call and includes several other applications of the word that I do not need repeat here as the key elements I want to highlight are "exchange", "information", "ideas", "feelings" and "message".

Let's start with "information", because so many of us are quick to point out that there is never enough information or sometimes we say there is just too much information. Of course, both statements are true because we and the world are like that. As humans we are naturally curious and will actively seek answers to our many questions, but sometimes we cannot satisfy our curiosity because the information is not accessible, it is obscured, or it is not in a form that we can understand. At other times we may shut our minds because of the danger of overload – try searching the internet for the word "communication" and see how many possible answers or hits you get! So this tells me that if I want to convey a piece of information to you, as an individual or as a group (and remember there are many different groups within the whole) then I must tailor that information to the needs of the recipient. It is also worth thinking about what we mean by the word "information" because it is knowledge acquired through experience or study and may be specific to events or situations, as well as general. Just stop and think about that for a minute and you will appreciate what a challenge simply managing information is and that is before we do anything with it!

The next element I want to ponder is "exchange" because it embodies the idea of information or knowledge, flowing in more than one direction. It implies that each and every one of us has something valuable to contribute and I would be the last person to dispute that. Now, the way we exchange knowledge and information varies enormously: we can wear particular clothes or change the expression on our face; we can extend our hand, or raise a fist; we can talk softly or shout loudly and convey aggression or alarm; we can draw a picture or write something down using a pen or a computer; we might hoist a flag or flash a light; whatever method we choose to convey our information it has to be appropriate to the circumstances and it has to be able to be understood by the recipient. It is clear that communication requires careful thought, by both sender and receiver, for without a common "language" (a shared frame of reference) the communication will either fail or perhaps worse still, be misinterpreted. So we must work hard to reduce the risk of sending what we think is the right signal for it to be received as the wrong signal. Unfortunately, the sender may only become aware of a problem after the event, so to make sure that our signal has been received and understood we seek acknowledgement – this becomes the point of exchange when satisfactory communication has finally occurred. Imagine yourself shouting a warning to another person who is unaware of some danger that threatens. If they take action and avoid an unpleasant event then you can be satisfied that your communication was in some way successful. If however, the other person fails to respond and comes to a sticky end, was it because they did not hear?, was it because they heard but did not understand? , was it because they heard and understood but did not trust you? Or maybe they just could not believe the message was aimed at them!

Using this same analogy, we can see that "feelings" can and do influence the way the information is received and subsequently acted upon. A piece of important information passed without making it stand out from all the other information is just another piece of background noise and it becomes part of the "too much information" problem. Emphasis, enthusiasm, urgency, distinctiveness, attracting attention before delivery are all devices used to ensure that the signal is at least seen or heard by the intended recipient. So if we put plenty of feeling into important information then our chances of success are improved greatly.

If I now turn to the rather more abstract form of information known as "ideas" I start to think about thoughts, concepts and visions. I think about signs and symbols as being a form of shorthand for the information that we wish to convey to each other as individuals and perhaps a much wider audience. Our shared vision of "A World Leader in Versatile, Valued and Integrated Afloat Support" summarises so much information that it took 5 of these articles to convey that to you. I have used a triangle with a few extra lines and shapes, to illustrate our environment, our cultural influences and our developmental path for the future; I hope this simple device has proven a powerful tool in conveying information and meaning. What I have tried to do by using words and symbols is to convey a powerful "message" in a form that is appropriate to the audience for which it is intended. There are other symbols we use that serve their purpose well in some respects but not in others and I include in this our rank/rate nomenclature and badges. Not all of them are bad by any means, but I keep asking myself if they are relevant to today's needs – perhaps you might like to think on this and bear in mind that they should serve as a form of shorthand that can be understood and recognised by as many others as possible in the close and wider environment in which we work.

This leads me finally to the symbol of a Queen's Colour. It is my firm conviction that, after 103 years of unstinting support to the Royal Navy and other forces of the Crown, the Royal Fleet Auxiliary Service is fully deserving of the recognition that this honour will bring. You and your predecessors have made a huge contribution and many have given their lives in so doing. There can be no better symbol of this proud history than that of a Queen's Colour bearing our badge, something that shows our loyalty and pride and equally importantly, something that others can see and acknowledge. These are powerful messages, conveyed and addressed to everybody with sincerity and feeling. I am looking forward to July 2008 with great anticipation.

Stay happy and above all stay safe.

Commodore Bob

Prince's Farewell For F

The last of a class of landing ships, that played a major role in the Falklands War as well as both Gulf conflicts, Royal Fleet Auxiliary Sir Bedivere returned from a year-long mission in the Middle East to bow out of service on 18th February 2008.

His Royal Highness Prince Edward, the Earl of Wessex, was there to meet Sir Bedivere on the ship's final arrival at the Sea Mounting Centre at Marchwood in Southampton Water. In his capacity as Commodore-in-Chief of the Royal Fleet Auxiliary, the Prince joined the head of the RFA, Commodore Bob Thornton, on board the vessel almost a year to the day since her departure to the Gulf on her last operational mission.

Families of the ship's company embarked on Sir Bedivere for the vessel's final entry into Marchwood under Captain David Buck RFA, her last Commanding Officer. Captain Buck said:

"Sir Bedivere has served the RFA and her country with distinction in a number of hotspots over the years. I feel hugely privileged to bring the last ship of her class home after such a high-profile, final deployment in which she has played a massive part in developing the effectiveness of the Iraqi navy."

Sir Bedivere's outstanding service during deployment was recognised with the award of the RFA's prestigious Wedgwood Bowl for 2007. The Bowl is presented to the RFA ship which has done most over the year to foster international relations or to conduct humanitarian aid (see separate article concerning Sir Bedivere being awarded of the Wedgwood Bowl).

HRH The Earl of Wessex receives a momento from Captain Buck RFA

HRH The Earl of Wes
Captains Jones and La

Sir Bedivere wins the W

The RFA Centenary Wedgwood Bowl is awarded annually to the vessel which has contributed most towards Humanitarian Aid and International Relations. The recipient of the bowl for 2007 is RFA SIR BEDIVERE and this was presented to the Commanding Officer and the Ship's Company by the Commodore-in-Chief of the RFA, His Royal Highness the Earl of Wessex, on February 18th 2008.

The award was made in recognition of the variety of roles and operations that the ship had been successfully involved in throughout the previous year. Throughout 2007 RFA Sir Bedivere made a significant and sustained contribution to international relations against a challenging operational background through her support to Iraqi Transition, and Coalition partners in the Northern Arabian Gulf (NAG).

The ship arrived on station in the NAG on April 1st 07, deployed in support of the UK-led Naval Transition Team. For the remainder of the year, she provided an Offshore Support Vessel (OSV) capability for Iraqi patrol boats, acted as a training platform for the Iraqi Navy and facilitated broader Iraqi involvement in maritime security and policing of Iraqi territorial waters.

Falklands Landing Ship

Sir Bedivere, now more than 40 years old, is the last of six landing ships which began entering service in the 1960s, all of which were named after King Arthur's knights. Sir Bedivere entered service in 1967 and has a complement of forty-nine, and could carry up to three hundred and forty troops and fifty vehicles. Between 1994 and 1998 the ship underwent significant ship's life extension programme.

During her life she was involved in many conflicts, and during the Falklands War, Bedivere was hit by a 1,000lb Argentinean bomb which bounced off the ship without causing casualties and exploded in the sea. Almost ten years later she saw service in the first Gulf War when she delivered equipment and supplies to 7th Armoured Brigade. In 2003 she was back in the war zone for the conflict with Iraq. During this conflict she played an essential role in the amphibious assault on the Al Faw Peninsula – the largest amphibious operation since Suez in 1956.

Sir Bedivere and other ships of her class have been replaced by four much larger and more capable Bay-class vessels. Her role in the Middle East is in fact being taken on by one of them, RFA Cardigan Bay.

Sir Bedivere is currently undergoing a period of de-storing in Portsmouth which will take many months before the final crew members are paid off and a decision over her future is made. Throughout her history Sir Bedivere has played a key role in military and humanitarian matters and it is with great sadness that we say farewell to our final knight.

Mike Hood

ssex talking with amb

Mike Hood

Sir Bedivere at Marchwood

Wedgwood Bowl for 2007

With up to 40 personnel embarked every week, Sir Bedivere allowed the Iraqis to significantly increase their presence off shore, greater interaction with other Coalition partners and the local maritime community, thereby ensuring progression towards Iraq assuming responsibility for her maritime security. Towards the end of 2007, this broader involvement offshore had led to a noticeable improvement in attitude, motivation and confidence within the Iraqi Navy and had established the UK OSV as an integral and fundamental element of the transition process.

As well as establishing a close relationship with the Iraqi Navy, Sir Bedivere provided stalwart support to general Coalition maritime security operations. She quickly became the longest serving unit in the NAG, working seamlessly with US, Australian, Kuwaiti and Singaporean units. Regularly hosting multi-national meetings, briefings and conferences, Sir Bedivere played a prominent role in furthering UK objectives as a leading Coalition partner representing not only the RFA, but the wider naval community during high-profile operations. In spite of an embargo on national UK media coverage throughout most of the year, the ship's activities and achievements featured on UK and US forces news and in UK local news and Defence related publications.

At the height of operations, SIR Bedivere regularly had personnel from four nations embarked, played host to the Australian Task Force Commander, operated US patrol boats and provided accommodation for US carrier based helicopter crews. The ship's company rose to the unique challenges of providing facilities and a home for an ever-fluctuating, eclectic mix of cultures, nationalities and cap-badges. This included observing diverse cultural occasions such as Ramadan and Thanksgiving. A prominent ambassador for the UK, RFA Sir Bedivere played a key role in the strengthening of international relations in the NAG. The contribution of SIR BEDIVERE has been exceptional and deserving of the highest commendation in the strengthening of International Relations, and as such is a worthy winner of this award.

Captains Buck. Lamb and Jones with the Wedgwood bowl

Adieu Fowey

RFA Sir Bedivere arrived at Fowey Pilot Station on Thursday 21st February 2008, on what would be her final port visit. The ship was affiliated with the Cornish town in 2005, which made this four-day visit even more special.

In addition to the 'Final Crew' onboard were 24 Sea Cadets and 3 instructors, representing various units from Kent, including the ships own affiliated unit from the Isle of Sheppey. A large number of family members were also invited onboard in Marchwood to join their loved ones for the final trip to Fowey.

News of our forthcoming arrival had been well publicised by the local radio station, and the large crowd gathered along the shoreline gave the ship a warm welcome.

After securing to the buoy in Fowey Harbour, a regular liberty boat service was established by 'Troy' and her crew, and provided an excellent and reliable link between the ship and the centre of the town.

The first of the receptions took place onboard later that evening, with the Officer's Mess hosting a wide variety of local dignitaries including the Mayor of Fowey and her Consort, members of the local council and retired RFA Captain Richard Williams. On arriving at the ship, the guests were met by the Duty Officer, before being escorted to the Officers Lounge where they were introduced to Sir Bedivere's Commanding Officer Captain Dave Buck and the rest of the ships officers.

During the evening the guests were treated to a banquet of food and wine prepared by the ships catering department. The Sea Cadets were also keen to play an active role during the course of the evening, providing a welcome party at the gangway, and helping the galley team and stewards prepare and serve the buffet in the Officers Saloon.

Day Two of the visit to Fowey saw the Sea Cadets get a chance to find out a little more about the ship and its crew. They were divided into groups and rotated around different stations about the ship. Each group observed demonstrations and briefs by enthusiastic volunteers from each department, including Fire Fighting Training by PO (Q) Barker and a hands-on demonstration of some of the self-defence weapons the ship was carrying by the WMO, 3/O (E) Pryce. Having arrived back in the UK just a few days earlier from her yearlong deployment, the Sea Cadets also received a short brief from 3/O(X) Galbraith on Sir Bedivere's role in Op Telic supporting the Coalition Units and Iraqi Navy.

Saturday 23rd February saw Sir Bedivere opening her doors to the general public. The weather forecast wasn't particularly promising and the general concern around the ship was that the turn out from the public might be low. However, the popularity of the towns' newest visitor attraction far exceeded anyone's expectations, with upwards of over 230 people walking up the accommodation ladder over the course of the afternoon. At its peak, the queue of people waiting to get aboard 'Troy' to ferry them to the ship stretched from the town quay steps into the town centre!

Sir Bedivere at Fowey

Once onboard, the visitors were received by a group of Sea cadets who escorted them along a pre-designated route around the ship, and met members of the ships' company at whom they directed a barrage of questions on the ships' role and its equipment!!

As a result of asking for small donations from the public during their countless trips from Fowey town centre to the ship, the crew of the liberty boat 'Troy' managed to raise over £250. The monies were presented to Captain Buck, who then donated it to local charities.

Among the guests that arrived that afternoon were eight prospective RFA cadets. The purpose of their visit was to give them their first insight into life onboard an RFA, and accompanied by RFA Recruitment Officer 2/O(X) Sutton the cadets quickly settled in.

Later that evening the local council held a reception party ashore for members of the ships' company, and the opportunity to be 'wined and dined' by our hosts was swiftly taken advantage of!

Sunday 24th February, the ship's final day in Fowey. The morning saw Captain Buck, the Sea Cadets and a number of ship's company attend a service at St Fimbarrus Church, in which Captain Buck was to read a lesson to the congregation. The Sea Cadets marched to the church from the town quay steps and lined the path leading to its entrance, and stood to attention as the local residents made their way in.

After lunch shore leave expired the ship prepared to make its final voyage. As Sir Bedivere departed the harbour, the message 'Adieu Fowey' was flown from the starboard yardarm and local residents gathered along the shoreline to say a final goodbye. An enjoyable time was had by all, and the ship and its crew achieved much, particularly over the last 12 months. A fitting end for the First Knight.

By 3/O(X) W Spedding & 3/O(X) P Galbraith

Letters

Letter from L/H (STWD) BRYAN TRAVERS (Abridged)

Hi folks and all my many friends in the RFA still fit and well and going strong after so many years at sea, so here is a short resume of my life on the ocean wave. I got my first sea legs sailing on the paddle boats between Pompy and Ryde as a deck hand. I guess this is where I got my taste for the sea, so top I went to Gravesend sea school in January 1952. After passing out as a catering candidate I was sent to the Southampton Sea Federation where I was told I was joining the Royal Mail Ship Andes. I stayed on this vessel for nineteen years and she will always be my ship. During this time I witnessed the Rio Carnival twice and saw Eva Peron lying in state.

After the demise of the Royal Mail Ships I worked for Cunard, sailing mainly around the Caribbean. I did this for fourteen years. I have many happy memories of this time, including seeing Nat King Cole live in Havana. When sailing on the Cunard Ambassador I had to abandon ship due to a massive fire onboard which started in the engine room, unfortunately the ship couldn't be saved and after four days in Key West we were flown home. I still continued to work for Cunard after this, but in 1982 the ship I was on was taken over by the British Government for eight months during which time we ferried troops between Ascension Island and Port Stanley, which proved to be quite an interesting time in my sea career. By December 1986 I lost my job with Cunard as British seafarers became an expensive commodity for commercial companies. That being said I joined the Canberra until 1989, when unfortunately the same crewing arrangements occurred.

It was the crewing federation who first got me in contact with the RFA, joining the Percy in January 1990. I saw out my career in the RFA eventually retiring after competing my appointment on Sir Geraint in 2000. I only wish I had joined the RFA so much earlier, as outside of war games, I enjoyed my time so much. My special moment in the RFA was being in Hong Kong for the Hand over to China and being the very last ship to sail out behind the Royal yacht, and then having the horrible time of having to go to the Philippines and the Maldives on the way home.

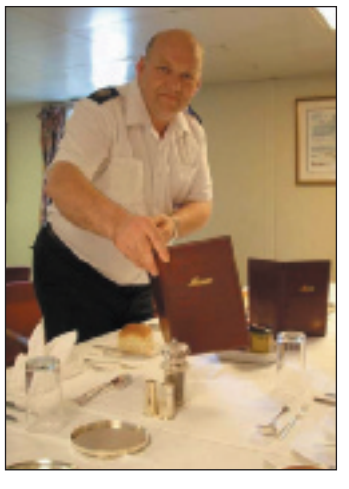
I guess that covers my forty-eight years at sea, so many good memories, but then again you only remember the good times!!! On leaving the sea at sixty-five I wasn't ready to retire so I took up a job working in the Ward Room in Whale Island which has become a very energetic job which has kept me on my toes but also kept me in touch with so many RFA Officers, it's almost like I never left. I eventually decided to call it a day this year but still sometimes find myself being called in to help out; I enjoy this, still working at seventy-two!!!

I married my lovely wife Barbara in the Isle of Man in 1962. I have been blessed with two super children, Julie and Michael. Life is really good and I have no complaints and with Pompy doing so well what more can I ask for, so to all my many friends who can remember me I give hem my best wishes and good sailing.

Regards,
Bryan Travers

Farewell Walter

Walter Light has retired from the RFA after 36 years service. During his employment he has sailed on many vessels, his first being RFA ENGADINE back in 1972. He also sailed on RFA EDDYFIRST which had oil burning galley stove and it was his job to extinguish the flames. Walter's final trip was on RFA ARGUS. Walter said "it has been a privilege to be employed by the RFA and to have seen so many parts of the world. I will miss my shipmates". Walter claims in future he can be found in the Anchor Blue Inn, Bosham, Chichester. Farewell Walter and enjoy your retirement.



Walter Light at work

Obituary for Harold and Dorothy Percy

It is with sadness that we have been informed of the death of both Harold and Dorothy Percy on the 22 November 07 and 2 December 07 respectively. Both died peacefully within a very short period of time.

Harold Percy was a qualified MN Chief Radio Officer, and spent some time at sea during WW2 serving in an armed merchant ship. After the war he entered the civil service technical branch.

About 1972 the MoD agreed that the RFA needed a permanent Superintendent to integrate and interface military and civil communications on RFA ships. After being interviewed Harold was appointed as the first RFA Communications Superintendent. He soon established valuable contacts within MoD and training programmes with HMS Collingwood. Harold continued in this post until he retired in 1975.

Harold was a very gentle man with extremely high standards and integrity. He believed that the main purpose for good communications was for the Safety of Life at Sea and he worked tirelessly with people and equipment to that aim. He once said that he considered his biggest breakthrough at the MoD was obtaining a "second radar scanner" so that one could be used for safe navigation, and the other for helicopter control.

Harold was very concerned about good communications, both in the military and civil field, but his main concern was for his men, and he was an excellent listener with one main purpose in life which was to provide the equipment for the men at sea so that they could do the job and compete with the RN who had a much bigger slice of the defence budget than the RFA.

Dorothy and Harold will be sadly missed.

Argus Has Charity Beard Growing Competition

Shortly after deploying the Crew of Argus had a beard-growing competition. Many were willing to pay the £5 entry fee which coincidentally allowed them an extra 5 minutes in bed every morning due to not having to shave! The event culminated in Captain Whyte presenting a cheque for £245, which was raised as a result of this event, and will go to the NSPCC and the Special Care Baby Unit at Treliske Hospital in Cornwall.

Word Quiz By Chris White

Clue: they were all Captains back in 1980

Answers on back page

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HISTORY OF TRISTAN DA CUNHA

Tristan da Cunha is the world's most isolated community and consists of an island group consisting of the main volcanic island of Tristan da Cunha with the other islands of Inaccessible, Nightingale and Gough Island. The population of Tristan da Cunha is around 270 inhabitants, who are wholly self-supporting and have an economy based on fishing and tourism. Some of you may be aware where to find Tristan da Cunha on a map but how many of you know about the islands' history?

The Tristan da Cunha Islands were discovered in 1506, with the main island being named after the Portuguese admiral Tristano da Cunha. The discovery of these islands was no accident- at the time Tristan was on the main trade route out of Europe to the Indian Ocean. Despite being discovered in 1506 the first recorded landing was not until 1643 when the crew of the Dutch Vessel Heemstede landed to re-supply its fresh water. At the time the Dutch were looking for Islands which could be used as a supply base, but the idea of using Tristan da Cunha was abandoned, probably due to the lack of a safe harbour at the time.

The first British involvement in Tristan came in August 1816 when the island group was taken into British possession. The main reason doing this was military. There was a growing concern in the UK that the French would try to free Napoleon, who was imprisoned on St Helena. The admiralty dismissed the islands importance in 1817, and ordered the British garrison to leave. However Corporal William Glass remained with his wife, two children and two stone masons. The early settlers agreed to share everything, from stocks, stores and profit. Initially the community grew slowly, with several men but no prospect of women settlers until in1826 five women were persuaded to leave St Helena to set up home in Tristan da Cunha, so the community became sustainable. By 1832 the population of Tristan had reached the dizzy heights of 32!!

Tristan da Cunha became increasingly isolated from shipping for three reasons. The Whaling industry began to decline, whilst the opening of the Suez Canal in 1869 gave a safer and quicker route to the Far East markets. Perhaps more importantly the sail vessels were replaced by steam ships.

Over the next few decades the Islanders had to deal with numerous problems, including the loss of 15 men in a lifeboat tragedy. By the 1890's the British Government began to send an annual supply ship to help the beleaguered community, and once again it was survivors of ship wrecks which increased the population, which stood at 74 by 1899. However, this was just the start of Tristan's most isolated period, when the supply vessel was stopped during both the Boer War (1899-1902) and the First World War.

During the Second World War Tristan da Cunha took on a vital role, being used to monitor German U Boats movements and as a meteorological station. It was during this time that new buildings were constructed, such as a hospital, school and store. After the war a successful crawfishing industry was established and the economy thrived.

Tristan da Cunha came into the international scene after a volcanic eruption in October 1961. Before the eruption occurred Tristan had been hit by a number of earthquakes, which severely affected the eastern settlements. Administrator Peter Wheeler decided to evacuate all 264 Islanders. The community were moved in three stages, from Tristan to Nightingale Island, from there to Cape Town and then on to Southampton, arriving in the UK on November 3rd 1961. By which point the spotlight of the world's media was fully projected onto the world's most isolated community.

The British Government of the day believed that the evacuation would be permanent. However, the islanders had other ideas. Although some Islanders adapted well to life in the UK, many others did not, but it wasn't until a Royal Society Expedition in 1962 reported back favourably that the Islanders lobbied the government to return to the Island. In August 1962 twelve islanders returned home to begin the formidable task of making the settlement habitable. The main resettlement occurred in Novemember 1963 when 198 islanders returned home.

Since then Tristan da Cunha has been mainly out of the media spotlight, until this year when aid was requested to help repair the harbour which had been damaged by South Atlantic swells, and the destruction of the Fish Processing Factory and electricity generators by fire. RFA LYME BAY was tasked with providing assistance and will hopefully be seen in a positive light by the Islander's and their future existence in the most isolated community in the world.

Anthony Sincock

Information reproduced with kind permission of Richard Grundy, Manager of the island website: www.tristandc.com which can be visited for further information.

Lyme Bay to the rescue

RFA Lyme Bay – the newest of our four landing ships has been tasked to support the repair of the harbour and the people of Tristan da Cunha. RFA Lyme Bay was handed over to the Royal Fleet Auxiliary Service in a major ceremony in Portland Port in Dorset last August. Since then she has continued on her new-ship acceptance trials programme and supporting the Royal Marines winter training programme in Norway. Whilst in Portland she was re-tasked at short notice to proceed to Tristan da Cunha.

Volcanic Tristan da Cunha

Tristan da Cunha is the world's most isolated community, situated 1800 miles west of Cape Town in the South Atlantic and nearly 5,000 miles from Portland. Their harbour is the principal method of access to the island for people, supplies and trade, its loss would result in some difficulties for the islanders and may result in a total or partial evacuation to be considered. The harbour was undermined by the South Atlantic swell and is in need of temporary repair prior to a major refurbishment due to commence in the summer.

In order to affect that repair RFA Lyme Bay loaded 150 pallets of cement, a number of construction machines such as bulldozers, stone crushers and cement mixers and landing craft to move the stores and people ashore.

To conduct the repair 40 Royal Engineers plus a detachment from the Royal Logistic Corps and a medical support team from the Royal Navy were supplemented to the crew of RFA Lyme Bay. The ship left in early February to collect additional stores personnel and bunkers en-route before reaching the Islands towards the end of February. Work will commence immediately and hopefully complete before the commencement of the Austral winter on 31 March when it is increasingly likely that access and the ability to continue with the repair will become untenable due to the sea conditions.

RFA Lyme Bay Commanding Officer Captain Peter M Farmer said: *"This short-notice task indicates perfectly the utility, versatility and facilities of this class of ship. I recall saying at the handing over ceremony in Portland Port last year that these ships offer not just a very capable amphibious platform, but that utility transfers easily to other arenas including humanitarian effort. Lyme Bay will operate off the harbour for about a month in probably difficult sea conditions to offload the necessary equipment stores and provide a base for the medical and engineering teams involved. The isolation of the community brings its own challenges and the ship's company are thoroughly looking forward to the task and hopefully a successful outcome for the islanders"*

UPDATE ON OPERATION ZEST

RFA LYME BAY arrived in Tristan da Cunha on February 28th 2008. Due to the reported bad weather that was expected OPERATION ZEST began with earnest. The whole operation is time sensitive and as such the Royal Engineers, with support from the RN and RFA are racing against time to shore up the damaged Calshot Harbour before the winter gales arrive by the end of March. Cadet (X) Richard Pennell takes up the timeline for us after arrival at anchor of Tristan da Cunha:

28 February

First Day proves to be successful launching the Mexeflote running army and construction vehicles ashore. A barge from the Island, Atlantic Isle manages to run 3 containers ashore with vital equipment and pallets. The LCVP makes runs ashore transferring the essential military and RFA personnel ashore to set up for the beginning of repair work.

29 February

Successful use of the Mexeflote to discharge stores and equipment ashore. Lyme Bay uses Atlantic Isle and LCVP along with other smaller shore boats to offload as much equipment as possible in the prevailing weather conditions.

1-5 March

Remaining cargo is discharged ashore. Good progress to the repair work is being achieved.

6 March

Replenished with RFA Gold Rover. After the RAS, both ships proceed back to Edinburgh harbour. Gold Rover stays at anchor overnight to allow her personal to take part in a climb to the summit of Tristan da Cunha.

7 March

Lyme Bay takes delivery of the much needed generator for the island. After the fire on the 13th Feb 2008 which destroyed the Fish Factory and one generator, the island has been without 24 hour electricity. The generator has been shipped from Cape Town onboard MV Edinburgh, a large fishing vessel. MV Edinburgh successfully rafts up to Lyme Bay on our starboard side. The generator was craned onboard the main deck, then craned onboard the Atlantic Isle. This operation went very smoothly and efficiently.

7 – 11 March

In support of OP ZEST, running LCVP runs ashore for personnel. Work continues to progress ashore successfully.

RICHARD JONES AWARD WINNER:
Third Officer (x) David Cameron Young

David joined the Royal Fleet Auxiliary as an Officer Cadet in September 2003. Attending South Tyneside College, David sat and passed his MCA Orals in November 2006 after a commendable Cadetship.

Third Officer Young was selected for this award following excellent performance at college combined with first-class sea going reports. David has applied himself with enthusiasm and became an integral part of the Bridge Team wherever he served.

His last two reports as Cadet were assessed as significantly above requirements and well fitted for promotion. His college reports were time and again outstanding in particular his final report in which the College Tutors praised his consistent effort and excellent results. He is no doubt a very worthy recipient of the Richard Jones Award.

During his training David served on RFAs Fort Austin, Wave Knight, Fort Rosalie, Argus & Diligence.

David took up his first appointment as 3/O(X) on RFA Argus on 1st February 2007 and he is now undergoing training on the PDO course.

Commodore Thornton pictured with Jane Jones and David Young

Seamanship Course Passing Out Ceremony

Thursday 14th February 2008 saw nine trainees pass out from the Royal Navy School of Seamanship at HMS Raleigh in Cornwall. The Passing Out Ceremony marked the culmination of six months hard work, involving two spells at HMS Raleigh and a trip on RFA Fort Rosalie. The first six weeks of the course saw the new recruits learning about Replenishment at Sea, and the fundamentals of rope and rigging work.

On completion the group joined RFA Fort Rosalie to put into practice their newly learnt skills. During their appointment Fort Rosalie enjoyed several port visits, and also gave assistance following a collision between a tanker and fishing boat. In addition to this, the trainees experienced 13 Replenishment at Sea (RAS).

With the group returning to HMS Raleigh in January 2008, a host of new training evolutions began. Further boat handling, line throwing and SSE courses completed a comprehensive package.

Captain Ray Bennett, Commanding Officer RFA Orangeleaf, attended the Passing Out Ceremony to present the SG2s with their Course Certificates and also to present the Petre Trophy.

Started in 2006 as a memorial to an RFA Seaman lost off RFA Orangeleaf near the Isle of Man, the Petre Trophy is awarded to the student demonstrating the best all-round achievements on the Initial Seamanship Course. The award this year went to SG2 Gary Lockley. The 19 year old, pictured together with Captain Bennett, was delighted in receiving this award.

Crossing the line brings a bit of Zest to the Lyme Bay!

RFA Lyme Bay is at sea, deployed from Portland with an important and crucial job to do. Our destination is the British Island of Tristan Da Cunha, the most remote populated island community in the world! Our objective is to restore the islands only harbour wall in the capital town of Tristan Da Cunha, Edinburgh. This will bring great support to the livelihood of the local people and the islands fishing based economy. To ensure all goes well we have a crack team of Royal Engineers, Royal Logistic Corps, and expert medical support from the Royal Navy and Royal Air force. On route we will be calling into Cape Town to take on the final crucial equipment, supplies and personnel to fulfil our objective. And so we set sail…on Operation Zest!

As the Lyme Bay steamed majestically south, the weather became fairer and warmer in contrast to the cool English winter we had sailed from less than two weeks previously. We headed west down the English channel, crossed the Bay of Biscay, and had by now been steaming south down the west coast of Africa for some days on route to faraway Cape Town on the farthest tip of the Cape of Good Hope. All onboard by now had settled into to the sea journey, sporting tanned faces, arms and legs (to the sock line) looking forward to reaching our destination. All seemed contempt and well, all, however except the Lyme Bays younger & less travelled sailors! For days now the question from the older weather beaten mariners onboard to us younger travellers, was the same, “have you crossed the line yet”. It didn’t matter how we answered, they knew if you hadn’t. All the tales in an instant became true. We were about to enter into the ‘Realm of King Neptune’ and Lyme Bay was going to honour a time old tradition of ships at sea, the fabled ‘crossing the line’ ceremony.

By the command of King Neptune (LHD Cook Dave ‘McDish’ McDonald), and the bidding of the infamous Davy Jones (Choff Shane ‘Mad Dog’ Wood), all ‘Pollywogs’ (over 40 of us from the crew and embarked forces that had never crossed the equator) are summoned to face the punishment of entering Neptune’s Court. We could hide but we would be found, as Neptune had a crew of Loyal ‘Shell Back’ Police harshly enforced by PO cook Graham ‘basher’ Baisley, SG1A Paul ‘clubber’ Ransley, SG1A Paul ‘scouse’ Johnson, SG1A Donald ‘funky chicken’ Gillan, LCPL ‘Smudge’ Smith, and 2/0 SE Mike Ferris (those who have crossed the line before). And so, on a scorching Tuesday afternoon, the Lyme Bay crossed the equator.

The spectacle of the event was wonderful. Neptune and his Queen (nurse Emma Carpenter) sat upon their thrones (toilets rigged on a pedestal to be exact), his Court Judge (3/0 C Steve Pointing) to read out the charges to the accused, and of course Davy Jones with his ‘Polar bears’ (SG1A Mark ‘Yogi’Horton & 3/O E Colin ‘Boo Boo’ Thompson) to wreak out the punishment and give you a good dunking afterwards. One by one we were found and dragged before Neptune. We all had our own individual charges, to which we were all of course guilty. Once declared guilty, Davy Jones gave us a good dousing in smelling green galley slops (kept for some time) and covered with feathers, and then we were ‘administered’ a very un-agreeable tasting snack (a cake of spices, pepper and chocolate), washed down with a syringe of yellow liquid administered by the menacing Doctor Dave ‘relax’ Longmore, then given the honour of kissing the ‘royal’ babies tummy (played by the wonderful Charlie ‘bite size’ Pace) all before a good dunking in sea water by Jones’ Polar Bear henchman.

All of us onboard had a great and memorable day. After we had all had our dew, Neptune declared us all too now be new ‘Shell Backs’, with his protection when we ‘cross the line’ in the future. So next time we will be the weathered sailors telling our tale of Neptune’s court to the ‘Pollywogs’. And who knows maybe we’ll get to do the dunking!

So now we continue onwards to complete our crucial job in Tristan Da Cunha…all with a bit more Zest in our spirit.

Richard Pennell CDT(X) RFA Lyme Bay

VOLUNTEERS REQUIRED - PRESENTATION OF THE QUEEN’S COLOUR TO THE RFA

The Earl of Wessex will be presenting the RFA with the Queen’s Colour onboard RFA LARGS BAY in July 2008. This is a great honour for the RFA and is one of the most important days in our history.

The RFA contingent for the ceremony/parade will comprise of one officer and twenty-four senior/junior rates. At the time of going to press we are still looking for volunteers to form up this colour party.

Anyone wishing to volunteer should not be serving onboard ships throughout June or July 2008, need to be medically fit and have no outside commitments. If you wish to take part in this high profile event please contact 1/O Chris Jordan via email: chris.jordan450@mod.uk or FLEET-NLM PERS RFA AT SO2C or phone 023 9262 8613 as soon as possible.

THE JOURNEY SO FAR

By 3/O (X) GEMMA GILCHRIST

As a 20 year old coming from jobs which had absolutely nothing to do with the sea there were more than a few concerns to start with. Would I be the oldest there? Would there be any other females? What were the other cadets going to be like? Well no, no and varying levels of crazy were the answers I would soon find out!

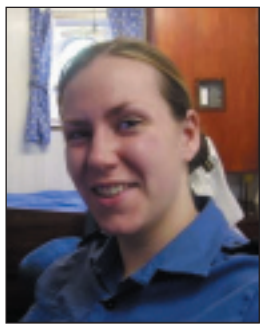
Luckily I was sent to Glasgow College of Nautical Studies (GCNS) which is only 40 miles West of where I live, even so I decided to partake in the residential delights of Glasgow for the duration of my cadetship. I found this an important step towards independence as "Mummy and Daddy" weren't going to be able to rush to my aid at sea (although they did manage to somehow send some Irn-Bru out to the Caribbean on my first trip on the Wave Ruler, the most expensive bottle ever I think BZ parents!).

Even coming back into Phase Three from and eventful sea phase on the Wave Ruler (Caribbean 2004 the trip the legend!) and the Argus all the scaremongering over the MCA Orals was never heeded and a fun and productive time was had once again at GCNS when the "real" work began.

It was back to sea for probably one of my busiest appointments on the Orangeleaf as FOST tanker as well as various other duties including an intensive JMC and Fleet Review. Then another entirely different trip on the Fort Austin (although more JMC and FOSTing yay!) followed by a second trip on the Orangeleaf (yup you've guessed it…..more FOST!).

Once more it was back to Glasgow for Phase Five. I would say that I probably found Phase Five the most taxing and the carefree socialising became much reduced, we finally started taking all this talk of the Mythical Orals seriously. With the successful completion of the Phase it was once again back to sea.

Back to the Caribbean again on the Wave Ruler for one of her most successful trips out in the region, it was much harder work this time around but ultimately more than worth it. Then on for a short burst freighting on the Oakleaf, it was quite a bit different sailing off the North West cost of Scotland in November to cruising through the Windward's in July!



The end was in sight, back to Glasgow for Phase Seven! Although a long Phase it didn't prove as difficult as Phase Five apart from that little bit called the Orals at the end. The last Phase ended, loose ends were tied up and paperwork sorted, there was no escaping it, the only thing left was the Orals.

A group of three friends and I started our own Orals prep avec flashcards, little models, torches and some carrot and stick techniques (some rather violent!). All four of us worked for entirely different companies doing different types of work so we drew from each others experiences.

The day was approaching and I had decided not to tell my parents what the exact date was, until I decided that a "Daddy lift" might be in order, you know just in case the rail network suddenly disappeared overnight. Okay so it was to give me cuddles and hand out the hankies if it didn't quite go to plan.

The day finally arrived, I surprisingly had a good nights sleep and probably even more surprisingly was calm and collected. I had decided that no one was going to die if I didn't pass so carried on with my pre oral preps. I went over to the college first thing to check the weather and pressure readings then went back to my flat to get suited and booted, looking very smart (probably for the first time in my life).

My Dad arrived on time and we set off towards Greenock MCA. I already knew the way as four of us had gone a fortnight before to take one of the variables out of the equation on the day. A few of my classmates were there, one who had passed that morning and a couple who had passed the day before and were waiting for my classmate who was currently sitting the exam.

The time finally came when I had to go in so I said my Goodbyes and headed down the hill. I went in half an hour early and the candidate before me ran half an hour late so I had a long wait! Forty minutes later it was all over and I swaggered back up the hill to the car park to break the news. I had finally successfully finished my cadetship, I spent the whole way back to Glasgow phoning and texting various people. After I got back to my flat and my friends got there it gets a bit hazy for a few days (well we deserved it!).

I'm now looking forward to getting back into the fleet and working towards, in due course taking another step up the rung. The most important thing now is to continue to learn and improve. Looking back it all seems worth it.

Ecole Des Fourriers Exchange

February 2008 saw Third Officer David Adkins, currently working within the Afloat Support Logistics Training Squadron at the Defence Maritime Logistics School, undertake an exchange visit to the Marine Nationale (French Navy) and the Ecole Des Fourriers.

Situated next to an old Fort built by Louis XVI in 1776 in Querqueville, near Cherbourg, the Ecole Des Fourriers is a Tri-Service and Gendarmerie school delivering training across the Logistics specialisation. This training ranges from New Entry training to Phase 2 – Chefs, Stewards, Accountants, Personnel Management and Stores Accountants. In addition to these functions, the school also has an English teaching department.

Each year more than 3,000 students pass through the school, with approximately 800 there at any one time.

It was through the English Department that the exchange was organised – essentially the purpose of the visit was to provide an English speaker for the students.

Numerous classes pass through the English department for a variety of reasons, although the primary reason is to allow effective working within the Joint Environment.

Classes with which 3/O Adkins was involved included an Army group, Naval Secretaries, Entertainment Specialists, Stewards and an intensive English course. All the appointments to which these students are destined require a minimum level of English.

Various role playing scenarios formed the basis of the work involved – the Army had to hand over a military site, the Entertainment Specialists had to book hotels, meals and visits, with the Stewards being required to conduct service in English.

In addition to role playing, time was spent in lessons providing an 'English voice' and assisting with pronunciation & structure of sentences.

The assistance with English was not limited to the classroom – indeed numerous Officers took the opportunity to practice in the Wardroom.

Commenting on the exchange, 3/O Adkins said '*The opportunity to live and work with the French Navy was one I was not going to turn down; it was a tremendously enjoyable experience, if my somewhat limited French proved a little frustrating at times. Opportunities existed (almost hourly!) to further develop my language skills; whilst not fluent, they have improved markedly*.'

Integration with the Marine Nationale was not limited to the classroom, *'Imagine my surprise at being required to parade with the entire school early one morning. Learning French drill in French whilst on Parade was an amusing challenge.'*

CONGRATULATIONS TO RICKY

Leading Hand (E) Ricky Green has successfully completed the RFA Apprentice Technicians Course, which has awarded him the BTEC National Certificate Operation and Maintenance (Engineering) and NVQ Level 3 (Electrical Engineering Maintenance). In the above picture, Ricky is being congratulated by Commodore Thornton during his visit to RFA DILIGENCE. We wish him well in the future with his career.

Sea Cadets Have the Best Week Of Their Lives Onboard RFA Fort George

During the ships recent passage from Liverpool to Plymouth the ship embarked 6 Sea Cadets from TS Diadem (Camberley Sea Cadets) and TS Ganges (Cambridge Sea Cadets). Unfortunately our other affiliated Sea Cadet unit TS Collingwood had to decline our invitation for administrative reasons.

During the week onboard the Sea Cadets worked with all departments onboard. Primarily the Sea Cadets spent most of their time on the bridge standing watches gaining their 2nd Class Chart work badge and Offshore Power Badge. Each evening the Sea Cadets assisted the Stewards in the Officers Saloon in all aspects of dinner service including silver service, clearance of tables and relaying for breakfast.

Below is an extract from Able Cadet Rebecca Woodcocks diary of her week onboard RFA Fort George

"None of us wanted to leave that ship! It had been our lives, our homes and our friends for the past week!! We all had the best week of our lives on RFA Fort George. The crew made us feel very welcome and part of the team and they helped us learn so much about what life is like on a ship. We also achieved more knowledge in our navigation. Each of us is now working hard to get enough grades to join the forces whether it be the Navy or the Royal Fleet Auxiliary. We would like to thank the Captain and Crew of RFA Fort George for allowing us to visit and giving us the time of our lives."

NEWS FROM THE MIDDLE EAST

RFA Bayleaf's Monthly report – February

Well another month has passed already in the blink of an eye and it is monthly report time again. Last time I reported we were alongside for a few days in Dubai, since then we have continued our support to coalition warships in the Gulf of Oman and as far as the coast of Somalia.

Once out into the Gulf of Oman everyone quickly settled back into there normal sea routines with our first RAS (replenishment at sea) of the patrol with HMSC CHARLOTTETOWN. After the refuelling we received two rescued Pakistani sailors who the Charlottetown had plucked from a large barge adrift in the Arabian Sea, sadly the towing ship had sunk with the loss of the crew. We arranged to transfer them to the Pakistani warship Tippu Sultan for onward movement home.

Before our RAS took place with the PNS TIPPU SULTAN formerly HMS AVENGER we exchanged two of the BAYLEAF's crew for two of the Pakistani crew. This was a particularly emotional moment for PO Comms "Bungy" Williams as this was the first time he'd stepped foot on the ship since his 3 year draft ended 26 years ago and included the Falklands conflict. He was greeted warmly and their crew made him immediately feel at home and were pleased to hear of his experiences onboard and particularly those in the Falklands conflict. Cadet Alan Doyle was able to view our replenishment from the Pakistani's point of view.

This time the patrol took us further south to the better weather and the glorious sun to meet HMS ARGYLL and drop off essential stores and more importantly the ships company's mail!!!!

The sun didn't last and when we returned north we were greeted by fog, dust haze and cool winds. Our next replenishment was an American warship, the USS WINSTON CHURCHILL. We remembered it had a lone Royal Navy Officer onboard as the Navigator, so we sent across a 'red cross' parcel containing tea, mustard and HP sauce – the Americans had thought they'd converted him to coffee and ketchup, but we saved him!

The last couple of days of the Patrol were spent in restricted visibility with thick fog enveloping our RAS with the French warship GUEPRATTE. This was interesting as we could barely see our bow and they also needed to land their helicopter which could be heard close by and then emerged from the gloom in time to land onboard safely.

Next stop was Dubai for a well-deserved maintenance period; everyone was looking forward to a bit of time alongside with the opportunity for retail therapy, skiing! and visits to the seamen's mission (for sun bathing and swimming) and my personal favourite as a Bridge Watchkeeper, a full nights sleep in bed!!!

3/O(X) Amy Black

RFA Cardigan Bay Assists Stricken Sailors

The Royal Fleet Auxiliary's new in service multi capability vessel RFA Cardigan Bay has steamed to assist stricken sailors rescued from their sinking vessel M V Nadi in the middle of the Arabian Gulf.

RFA Cardigan Bay is one of the most recent and modern additions to the flotilla. Landing Dock Assault vessel (LSDA) has the capability to land and recover troops and vehicles via a stern water dock, she is also equipped with side door and ramp to enable loading on and off direct to shore. In addition it has a flight deck to allow helicopter operations, along with the capability to load and unload containers, boats and equipment using her own deck mounted cranes.

RFA Cardigan Bay is currently stationed in the Northern Arabian Gulf where she provides a platform for Iraqi Naval and marine personnel to train in various aspects of territorial water defence. She also utilises all aspects of her capability to provide support to the coalition assets in this area.

Whilst under going operations in the northern Gulf a mayday call was received by USNS Sacagawea from the MV Nadi. The stricken vessel was listing badly and in danger of sinking leaving the entire ships company of ten Iraqi sailors floundering in the busy and dangerous waters of the Gulf.

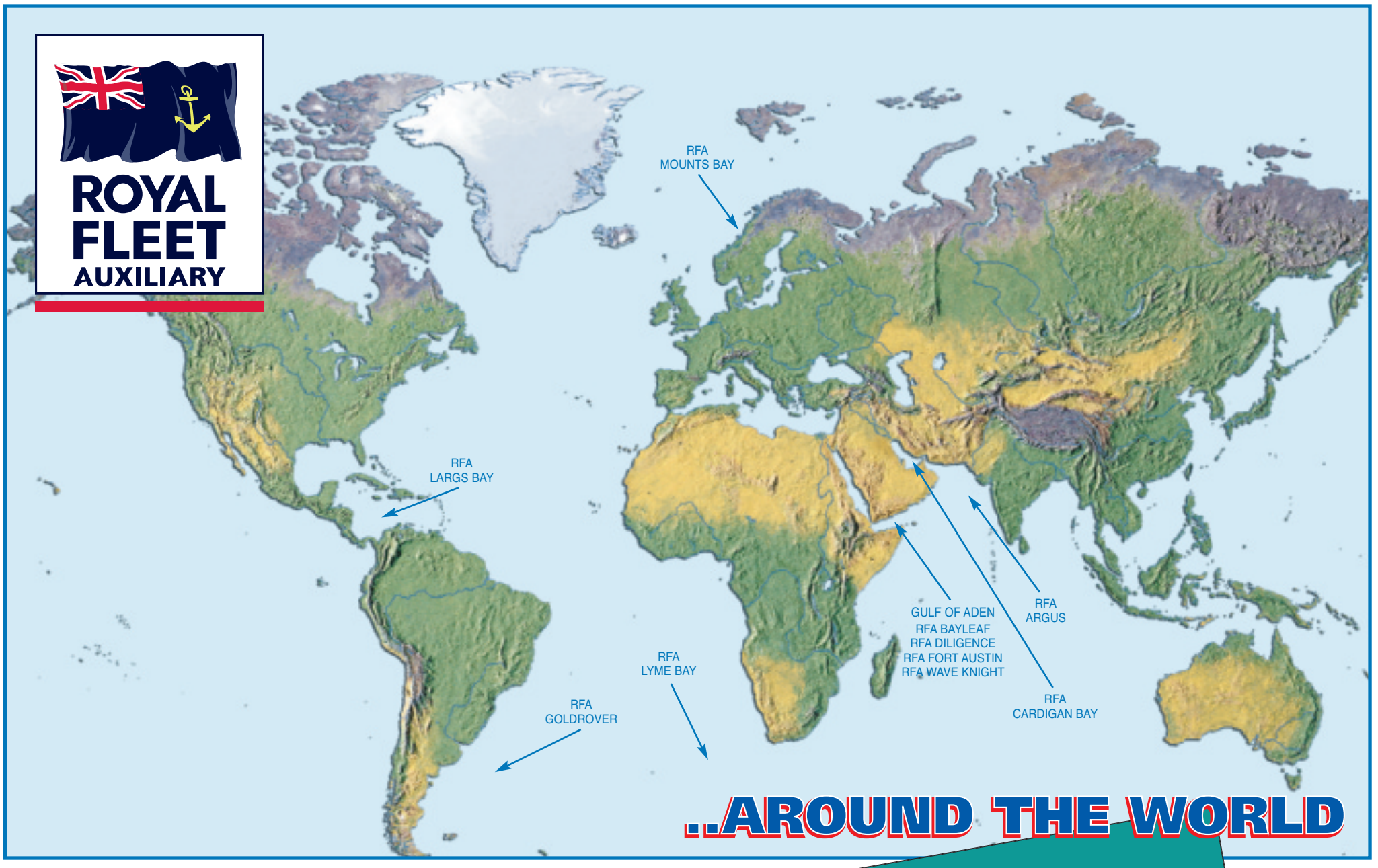
The Korean registered MV Nadi was on route from Umm Qasr to a UAE port to be sold when she got into difficulty and suffered total loss of power for what appears to be no other reason other than the sheer age. The captain of the Nadi said they had been in difficulty for 5 days sending out Mayday signals day and night. They had been trying in vain to make contact with the ships owners without success, due to a combination of weather and poor radio facilities. Eventually their plight was noticed by the Sacagawea who plucked them from the sea.

RFA Cardigan Bay Commanding Officer N A Jones did not hesitate when asked if his ship could provide the ten rescued Iraqi seafarers with accommodation, food and beverages for possibly 24 hours whilst arrangements were made to repatriate them back to their families. They were then transported by helicopter Sacagawea to the Cardigan Bay, where they were met on deck and shown to their accommodation where they could store their belongings and get some well needed rest.

Later they were introduced to an interpreter who was transferred from another ship in the area to Cardigan Bay to help break down the language barrier. The rescued sailors were then given a ships safety brief and tour conducted by the ships Senior Warrant Officer R Matheson.

Once the Officers and crew off M V Nadi had rested and eaten, commanding Officer N A Jones introduced himself through the interpreter to the crew and made sure that they had all they required for a comfortable stay on Cardigan Bay and chatted to the sailors about their ordeal assuring them that they would be looked after until such a time as transport could be arranged to reunite them with their concerned waiting families in Basra.

ROYAL FLEET AUXILIARY



RFA ARGUS:
Currently under going tasking in the Indian Ocean before heading into the Gulf region.

RFA BAYLEAF:
Currently on ORION 08

RFA BLACK ROVER:
Currently undergoing FOST training before having an AMP.

RFA CARDIGAN BAY:
Conducting operations under he OP TELIC tasking

RFA DILIGENCE:
Currently on ORION 08.

RFA FORT AUSTIN:
Currently on ORION 08.

RFA FORT GEORGE:
Conducting flying trials before de-storing prior to re-fit.

RFA FORT ROSALIE:
Under going re-fit.

RFA FORT VICTORIA:
Continues her extended period alongside in Portsmouth Dock yard

RFA GOLD ROVER:
Continues her tasking around the Falklands before going to Freetown.

RFA LARGS BAY:
Conducting CD ops and other maritime exercises in the Caribbean before having a brief AMP.

RFA LYME BAY:
Continues OP ZEST in Tristan da Cunha, before heading for South Africa in April.

RFA MOUNTS BAY:
In Norway on exercise before returning to the UK. Will go on exercise later in the year.

RFA ORANGELEAF:
Currently on tasking as FOST tanker.

RFA SIR BEDIVERE:
De-storing prior to disposal.

RFA WAVE KNIGHT:
Currently on ORION 08

RFA WAVE RULER:
Conducting training after undergoing a re-fit.

Provided courtesy of The U.K Hydrographic Office

RFA ASSOCIATION

THE WAY AHEAD FOR THE RFA ASSOCIATION

Following the AGM in November the Trustees have actively addressed the issue of the future management of the charity and the location of our HQ and archive premises. Restructuring has also been considered, and the preliminary views of the Charity Commission and the RFA command have been sought on how best to deliver benevolence to the overall RFA community. The board now feels ready to share their conclusions and begin the process of setting these matters before a general meeting.

The trustees are determined to protect the RFA identity and integrity of the Association at all costs - indeed it is their duty so to do, and it is evident these sentiments resonate strongly with the Membership. Earlier studies focussed on sharing resources or co-locating with other charities, and then building a matrix of management and administration based on the geography of the chosen partner. This approach was driven in part by perceptions about use and access issues surrounding the Bellingham location and the contribution that pools of volunteers might make in other branch areas. This formula did not produce any full consensus about location, and it was not possible to finally identify new leadership and management in the alternative areas considered.

The board of trustees now recognise that the fundamental and urgent requirement is to identify and recruit a new chairman/chief executive, and the domicile of the successful candidate should be the main factor in deciding whether to remain in present premises or locate elsewhere. Other premises have been offered with the Royal Naval Association in Portsmouth and the Marine Society in Lambeth, and no doubt others could be found. In every such case the arrangement would be on a basis of hiring space, and possibly services, with no question of merger, and indeed this has always been the basic assumption in all previous studies. However there is also much to be said for staying put, offering continuity and stability while minimising costs, and retaining existing world-wide membership support and administration. The present location is neutral for an English charity registered in Scotland, and access to the archive might be overcome by on-line exhibitions, and physical loans to branches.

The trustees now wish to appoint a new Chairman who will combine the roles of CEO of the charity and Curator of the archive, and invite applications from suitably qualified candidates. The post will particularly suit a recently retired Member of the Service, and will require full-time commitment and a wide range of organisational, communications, inter-personal and IT skills, and for these reasons an honorarium will be offered. Full terms of reference will be devised and will be based on Institute of Chartered Secretaries and Museum Documentation Association guidance, but in brief the CEO will –

- Manage the day to day business and communications of the charity
- Manage and account for the executive budgets approved by the trustees
- Manage and develop the membership and membership services, with particular reference to improving understanding and relevance within the serving population and families
- Explore the outer limits of IT to deliver communication, membership service and retailing in order to improve service while reducing postal costs
- Identify new sources of funding and income stream, and endowment
- Develop plans for a corporate structure, possibly using the new vehicle the Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO)
- Manage and develop the Archive as a growing and relevant element of delivery of our Aims, and explore potential income streams from permitted use of the resource
- Lead on all matters of in-house publication (Force 4, RFAA Yearbook and Gunline)
- Maintain liaison with COBSEO and the CEO's of other naval and maritime charities
- Meet regularly with the Commodore RFA in furtherance of the established MOU
- Liase with our Patron's private staff, and hold himself/herself available to give advice to HRH on RFA Association matters
- Press for proper recognition for all RFA achievements and losses in all appropriate fora and media.
- Maintain contact with the Charity Commission and collate all statutory responses and returns to them
- Maintain contact with the Scottish regulator and develop our operations, presence and institutions in Scotland

The present Membership Administrator is available to support the CEO if wished, and other honorary officer or portfolio appointments by the board would be appropriate. As part of the commitment to the RFA Association the RFA Command is considering creating a part-time post in the PERSOPS area at Whale Island. How this would work in practice has to be developed, together with proposals for the range of work that might suitably be devolved to the post.

Applicants should write in the first instance to the Secretary, RFA Association, PO Box 120, Hexham NE48 1XA, giving full details of RFA service, CV and qualifications. A full business plan is not required at this stage but the trustees will wish to see a clear VISION statement, with proposals for retention or relocation of premises. The candidate whose qualities and vision are thought to be most likely to command the support of the board and the Membership will go forward to stand at a general meeting in June. In the event there are two or more suitable candidates the matter will be resolved by a formal ballot.

The closing date for applications was originally set at 31st March, but this is being extended by a further two weeks to allow for this announcement to be published and circulated within GUNLINE. For any further information about the Association, its accounts, reports and meeting minutes, or any other guidance, please write to the address as above.

National Memorial Arboretum

The National Memorial Arboretum honours those who have given their lives in the service of their country. It hosts memorials from a range of organisations both military and civilian, charities, and local and overseas groups. It is the UK's living memorial set in 60 hectares of woodland and is located at Alrewas, near Lichfield, Staffordshire. The centrepiece is the circular Armed Forces Memorial which was opened by HM the Queen last year.

In February Captain Tony Pitt and Frank Andrews (RFAA Trustee) visited the arboretum for a meeting with Paul Kennedy, (Museum Curator) to discuss how the RFA presence could be enhanced. We were shown the circular memorial on which the names of the RFA personnel who lost their lives in 1982 are engraved. We also saw the whole of the well maintained and extensive grounds. It is in this area that some further RFA recognition is possible and this is being discussed by the RFA and RFA Association. The grounds receive a large number of visitors and even on a cold February day many people were enjoying the grounds which include, a chapel, cafeteria, lakes, shelter and numerous walks. Hopefully in the future they will see more of the RFA too.

A CHARITY REGISTERED IN SCOTLAND

At the AGM on 14th November approval was given to amend the dissolution clause, a prerequisite for registration as a charity in Scotland. The Scottish regulator was subsequently informed of this change, and the RFA Association is now registered as a charity in Scotland under number SC039054 (note this is not the same thing as a Scottish charity). By June it will be necessary for all stationery and tickets etc to bear this information in addition to the existing England and Wales charity number.

In the longer term the trustees hope the change will allow us to develop our membership, operations and institutions in Scotland. The RFA REUNION 2008 is being held in Edinburgh on 10th May (details on RFAA web site) and will be a fitting harbinger for this new era.

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http://www.rfaaplymouth.org

TRUSTEES OF THE RFA ASSOCIATION

The chairman and trustees are elected or re-elected annually at the AGM which is rarely attended by more than 10% of the voting membership. The majority of Members who do exercise their voting rights most often do so through proxy or postal voting, so they will not see and may not know the candidates standing. It was therefore agreed at the last AGM that notes and photographs would be circulated prior to the next meeting, and we begin this process in this edition. We will be running a series of these mini-biographies as publication space and mailing resources allow, and aim to cover all candidates in this way before the next general meeting. If you would like to know more about being a trustee and what it entails, please write to the Secretary, RFA Association, PO Box 120, Hexham NE48 1XA

Brian James Waters OBE

Brian Waters spent his entire working life at sea. He went to sea straight from school in the early 1960s under the Red Ensign, serving in the Blue Funnel Line and after gaining his certificate as Master in 1972, decided to join the Royal Fleet Auxiliary.

From 1973 until retirement, Brian served in almost every class of ship under the RFA Ensign (the NESS Class being the notable exception), in each rank from 2nd Officer to Captain. He saw active service in the Falklands and the two Gulf Wars of 1991 and 2003 as well as operational service in many other theatres including the Adriatic. Captain Waters was awarded the OBE 1991 in recognition of service following the disabling of RFA Gold Rover when she lost her rudder in heavy weather south of the Falkland Islands. He has also served ashore in administrative appointments in London and Bath and in the post of Chief Staff Officer (O&W) at Portsmouth.

Following retirement in 2004, Brian has widened his interests, mainly in his local area in south Wiltshire but has retained an interest in RFA affairs and became a Trustee of the RFA Association in 2005. In the same year he became the founding committee chairman of the Solent Branch which currently enjoys a good level of support from members over a wide area of the central south of the country.

Brian Waters offers himself for re-election as a Trustee with a particular interest in widening the activities and active members base of the Solent Branch. He brings to the Association's board his 44 years of experience at sea, both commercial and military, and in shore posts.

2008 SUBSCRIPTIONS

As previously advised subs go up this year to £15 p.a. (£150 Life), and this rate becomes payable on the anniversary of joining. Dawn Reay, our Membership Administrator, is in the course of issuing new Banker's Standing Orders (BSO) in advance of the due date, and we thank all those Members who have returned these so far this year, or who have made arrangements to adjust existing orders.

It is important to realise that this is not the Direct Debit (DD) system, and the Association does not collect or take payment directly from the member's bank. It is the customer's written instruction (BSO) held in the bank that triggers payment annually to the Association. The new design standing order has a bottom line cancelling the earlier standing order, and we advise Members to check this has been done before the renewal date. Where banks have mistakenly actioned both the old £10 and the new £15 BSO that is immediately apparent from our bank statements and refunds will be made without request to any Member who has overpaid. In some cases new BSO's have reached us too late to action this year, resulting in an underpayment of £5 by some Members. We will be in touch for the adjustment, and will arrange with the Members concerned for the new £15 BSO to take effect in 2009.

It is of course perfectly satisfactory for Members to increase their existing £10 orders on line or by calling into the bank, and we thank those who have taken this option. We would only ask you note the fact on Dawn's letter, and return to her in the SAE provided.

Captain John Hood RFA

John Hood was born a Kentish man at Dartford on September 8th 1955 and went to school at St Stephen's in Welling.

Having attended Hotel School in London, he joined the Royal Fleet Auxiliary Service in 1974 as an assistant purser serving onboard RFAs REGENT, TIDESPRING & LYNESS. Promoted purser in 1978 sea service continued onboard RFAs OLMEDA, FORT GRANGE, BLACK ROVER & STROMNESS. In 1980 he attended the Lieutenants Greenwich Course and in 1982 served as purser onboard RFA SIR GALAHAD during the Falklands Conflict, surviving her tragic loss at Fitzroy.

In 1984 he was promoted First Officer (Supply) serving onboard RFAs OLMEDA, RESOURCE, DILIGENCE, OLWEN, ARGUS, SIR TRISTRAM & the new SIR GALAHAD, standing by during her build at Swan Hunters on Tyneside. During this period he served ashore as Pay & Admin IT Officer to the Chief Supply Superintendent RFA.

On promotion to Chief Officer (Logistics Supply) in 1991 sea service continued in RFAs FORT AUSTIN, ARGUS, FORT GEORGE, FORT VICTORIA & FORT ROSALIE. Between 1995 & 1997 he served ashore as SO1 Supply to COMRFA and in 2002 as SO1 RFA Manpower, Recruitment, Training & Education in the newly formed Fleet HQ.

Throughout his extensive time afloat he has served in many theatres of operation as well as deployment to the Far East, Falkland Islands, Caribbean, Eastern Seaboard of the United States, Arabian Gulf & the Balkans to name but a few.

He was promoted Captain in Sept 2005 and is currently serving Fleet Headquarters on Whale Island in Portsmouth.

He is Head of Profession for the RFA Logistics and Supply specialisation, Chief of Staff for the Fleet Logistics Capability Division and Chief Staff Officer Logistics Compliance for the Naval Service.

A Fellow of the Chartered Institute of Logistics & Transport, a Graduate and Chartered Member of the Institute of Personnel & Development and a Member of the Hotel & Catering International Management Association.

He lives at Gateside by Barrhead in East Renfrewshire and is married to Freda. They have four daughters, Kathryn (22, Emily (20), Louise (19) and Evie (14). When time allows, he finds refuge in fly fishing (doing much to maintain stocks at their current levels), genealogy, and is a supporter of Kent County Cricket Club and Queens Park Rangers Football Club.

Frank Andrews

I joined the RFA in 1966 as a Radio Officer and left 34 years later as a Chief Officer System Engineer. Since then I have worked as a Senior Manager in the NHS and now continue to work as a Director of a small consultancy business which helps and advises small businesses and charities. Whilst in the RFA I was lucky enough to run the PR desk which included producing 4 issues of Gunline per year and was later based in HMS Collingwood where I was responsible for managing all RFA business as well as lecturing a range of naval courses.

It is my experience in helping and advising charities along with an in depth knowledge of the RFA that should qualify me to help the RFAA achieve its remit as it moves through to the next phase of its development.

At home I edit the local village website and moderate its forum. I am also a member of my Parochial Church Council and chair several of its committees. My wife and I live in a small Lancashire village which is handy for the Lake District but not quite so handy for our 2 children and 3 grandchildren who are all hundreds of miles to the south.

Captain Alan T Roach OBE

My RFA career began on 1st. January 1970 as Third Officer having spent six years in the commercial world in Royal Mail Lines/Furness Withy and G. Heyn & Son's (Head Line), serving in passenger, general cargo and refrigerated cargo ships.

Progressing through the ranks of the Service and having served in most classes of RFA I found myself, in 1982, as Chief Officer of SIR TRISTRAM during the FALKLANDS CONFLICT. Promoted Captain in 1987 and appointed to BLACK ROVER, the first of nineteen commands, two of these being "first of class" appointments FORT VICTORIA (1994) and WAVE KNIGHT (2001). I saw operational service in the Gulf in 1999 and in Sierra Leone in 2000/01 whilst in command of FORT AUSTIN and SIR PERCIVAL respectively. I retired from the RFA in July 2007 after thirty-seven years in the Service and a total of forty-four years at sea.

I fully support the Aims of the Association and having been a member of the RFAA since 2004 felt that in retirement I would be in a position to assist in the running of the Association by volunteering to serve as a Trustee. I bring no special skills with me, other than, a pragmatic approach to life in general, a strong sense of humour and an unbounded enthusiasm for the RFA Service and those that serve and have served therein.

Living the village of Hillsborough in Co. Down my wife Elinor and I are keen members of our local gym, and we enjoy walking the theatre and orchestral concerts in Belfast. I am a member of the Belfast Master Mariners Association and The Merchant Navy Association of Northern Ireland.

The Marine Society & Sea Cadets

KEEPING BRITAIN SHIP-SHAPE

In a bold bid to help safeguard Britain's maritime future, a new generation of budding sailors is getting a first taste of life at sea aboard RFA ships. The "Sea Legs" initiative is a partnership project with the UK's leading maritime charity, The Marine Society & Sea Cadets, offering 12-18 year old cadets in units throughout the country the opportunity to experience blue water seamanship with the RFA fleet.

In recent months cadets have sailed with RFA LARGS BAY on her first visit to London and RFA SIR BEDIVERE on her nostalgic farewell voyage to Cornwall.

Commented project co-ordinator Lt Cdr (SCC) Janet Picton: "We have always had a close association with the RFA and the opportunity for cadets to sail aboard the working ships of the fleet is a real bonus. Their first taste of life at sea under the wing of RFA crews is a perfect entrée to a maritime career under either the blue, white or red ensign."

Focus of the scheme is to encourage young people to consider a career at sea and help maintain Britain's pre-eminence as a maritime nation.

In a reciprocal move, the MSSC offers serving RFA personnel the opportunity to gain career enhancing qualifications with bespoke distance learning programmes leading to university degrees.

The work-based College of the Sea courses are designed to meet the needs of seafarers who can study and complete learning modules whilst at sea.

Explained MSSC Director of Education and Adult Learning, Brian Thomas: "The good news for seafarers is that they don't need to come ashore to further their education – our courses are tailored to meet their requirements wherever they are in the world. Our over arching philosophy is to make study and gaining extra qualifications seafarer friendly."

Formed just four years ago through the merger of The Marine Society (founded in 1756) and The Sea Cadet Association, parent charity of The Sea Cadet Corps (founded in 1854) the newly combined charity The Marine Society & Sea Cadets forms the bedrock of maritime training and the provision of education and welfare for seafarers – including a sea-going library service.

Forged on the anvil of war, the Crimean conflict, the Sea Cadet Corps has served conspicuously in both world wars, most notably through the *"Bounty"* scheme providing desperately needed communicators for the fleet in the darkest days of WW11 and *"Warspite"* trained merchant seamen kept the Atlantic convoys going against the odds. But despite the patronage of the Royal and Merchant navies the nation's most enduring youth movement still needs positive public support to stay afloat. In a new move to reach out to the maritime community, a legacy giving campaign *"Your Legacy – Their Future"* has been launched to give supporters an opportunity to leave a tax efficient gift in their wills.

Now with 13,000 cadets and 6,000 adult volunteers in 400 units – described as Training Ships — across the UK, the Sea Cadet Corps is the primary inspiration for youngsters interested in a career at sea. And a seagoing fleet of purpose built vessels ensures that cadets can experience the age old thrill of sailing "before the mast" as a member of the crew of the Sea Cadet flagship, the square rigged brig *TS Royalist*, or standing a bridge watch aboard a state of the art motor vessel, *TS John Jerwood* or the newly commissioned *TS Jack Petchey* which will come into service in 2010.

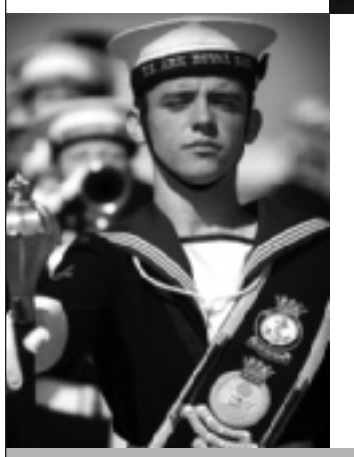
But nothing beats the reality of sailing with the "Grey funnel Line" and the partnership with the Royal Fleet Auxiliary provides a seamless transition into the world of the professional mariner. Long may it continue.

If any of these topics has whetted your appetite for more information, visit our website: www.ms-sc.org or e-mail info@ms-sc.org for our latest brochures.

We are at your service

Nelson sent us a fiver before Trafalgar ...and his legacy lives on today!

For 250 years The Marine Society has supported seafarers and championed Britain's maritime heritage. And with 400 "training ships" nationwide, the Sea Cadets offer young people a start in life – Navy style.



Now we need your help to stay afloat in a fast changing world.

By leaving us a legacy you will be our next naval hero!

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email: legacies@ms-sc.org **phone:** 020 7654 7013
The Marine Society & Sea Cadets
202 Lambeth Road
LONDON SE1 7JW
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Press Release from Barnsley Sea Cadets

Air Cadets from 148 Squadron Barnsley ATC joined Sea cadets and Marine Cadets from TS Diomede (Barnsley Sea cadets) for a week long visit on board the Towns affiliated Ship RFA Fort Victoria.

11 Sea Cadets (SCC), 7 Marine Cadets (MCD) and 6 Air Cadets (ATC) stayed onboard the Auxiliary ship, which is currently berthed in Portsmouth Dockyard.

During the week cadets took part in many activities and visits. And probably looked very odd in our collection of different uniforms, also our drill made a few passing sailors smile, as we all do it slightly differently.

This included a visit to RAF Odiham, Hampshire. Where cadets had a lecture on Sea survival equipment and a chance to see some of the bases armoury as well as the opportunity to try out the cockpit of a Chinook helicopter and there hand at fire fighting with the bases dedicated fire crew.

Cadets also visited local attractions such as HMS Victory, the Royal Navy Museum, The Royal Marine Museum and the Submarine Museum, as well as what I think was possibly the best attraction for most of them Action Stations, where they were able to put into practice some of the skills they have learnt at school and try out the simulators and climbing wall, which did get fairly completive between the MCD and ATC, with the MCD coming out slightly on top.

While onboard the cadets received training in Basic ships fire fighting with the ships PO(Q)'s (we were lucky that she had two during our stay) and damage control, much fun was had with the splinter box on the flight deck. All I can say is it is lucky the she has access to sea water for the fire hoses and is not on a water meter as a lot of water was used on those days. First Aid training was provided by the ATC staff and all cadets passed their Heartstart qualification whilst away.

Expedition training took place in the Queen Elizabeth country park on what were unseasonable warm days, with cadets only managing to get a little lost.

In the evenings cadets took part in a variety of activities on one evening put on a fashion show to entertain the staff and some of the Royal Navy personal on board, they costumes were all made out of bin bags, and cardboard boxes and other throw away items and it is amazing what they can do with some black bin sacks and some sticky tape. There did seem to an awful lot of female costumes which was odd as we only had 8 female cadets with us, and yet they were at least 12 females in the fashion show.

Overall it was an excellent week, with all the cadets and staff having a fantastic time, our thanks to the officers and crew of RFA Fort Victoria for a great week, we are now planning our next visit.

Top: RFA Fort Victoria

Right: Damage control experts of the future

Left: Cadets on RFA Fort Victoria

Stunning South Georgia

By 2/O (X) Rory Hamilton.

After a month island hopping around the Falklands, RFA Gold Rover headed for South Georgia before leaving the APT(S) theatre and back towards UK. Given the weather forecast, I had hoped for a dramatic arrival: Rugged, snow covered peaks appearing through the morning mist with the rising sun and random clouds creating a dazzling spectrum. There had been no icebergs on the passage from the Falkland Islands which was a surprise considering that only weeks earlier numerous bergs had been reported. I woke up at 0500 and the view from my cabin was awesome. My arrival on the Bridge also revealed that we had found some new radar contacts: Numerous giant tabular and weathered ice bergs to port.

As the sunrise neared the whole scene drew closer and became more colourful. Individual details now discernable; Prominent heads of land to towering peaks and the huge glaciers flowing down to the sea.

All too soon we were making our approach into Cumberland bay and it was time to get down to the business of anchoring the ship. With the giant Nordenskjold Glacier on the port bow and the Moraine Glacier on the starboard bow we steamed south into Cumberland Bay East. After Grytviken and King Edward Point opened to starboard we made our final approach and anchored just outside King Edward Cove.

The rugged coastline creates significant local wind patterns and despite a steady 20kts out at sea the anemometer was showing gusts up to 35kts in the anchorage. Fortunately for us RFA Gold Rover is equipped with a sturdy Viking boat which has proved invaluable throughout the deployment for ferrying people ashore and bringing guests to the ship. The Bosun and his team brought the Viking alongside the starboard pilot ladder and the first shore party was on its way.

After a short brief on "Bio security" from Emma Jones, the South Georgia Government Officer, the exploring began. Popular sites were Sir Ernest Shackleton's Grave, the old Whaling Station and the South Georgia Museum. Not to mention the Fur Seals, Elephant Seals and King Penguins lazing in the sun along the shore. Some of the Fur Seals were somewhat excitable and decided to give chase to certain members of the ships company! However standing your ground and clapping your hands generally proved effective at keeping them at bay.

After two days at Grytviken we made way for HMS Nottingham and sailed for Stromness. We sailed at 0700 so there was plenty of time to proceed up to the head of Cumberland Bay West where the Nordenskjold Glacier calves into the bay. The final few miles were made at slow speed weaving in amongst the numerous "growlers" (chunks of ice). It was a truly stunning sight and once again the weather played its part to ensure that many fantastic pictures were taken to remind us all of the unique experience.

Despite some "encouragement" the CO decided that to take his ship right up to a calving Glacier might not be the wisest thing to do! So we turned around and after negotiating the growlers again, increased to 16kts and proceeded around to Stromness. A beautiful Pilotage ended up in a well sheltered harbour and precision anchoring was required to let go outside a foul area but leaving us enough room to safely swing in the bay.

A tip from LT James Baker, the Navigating Officer of HMS Nottingham had given us the idea of retracing the final leg of Shackleton's famous trek from King Haakon Bay to Stromness. This final leg was from Fortuna Bay over the pass to Stromness (We planned to walk to Fortuna Bay and back which we estimated to be around 8 miles).

The first party consisting of Capt Hanton, 1/O (SE) Webb, 2/O Colin Graham and I set off at 1130. The scenery was breathtaking and we soon found ourselves looking back down Shackleton valley to the ship peacefully anchored in Stromness bay with the ice bergs out at sea in the background. After reaching the snow line, the terrain leveled and we made our way through the pass and to a good vantage point overlooking Fortuna Bay and the surrounding Glaciers. It really felt like being on top of the world with no other sign of human existence. We sat in silence just taking in the beauty and tranquility of what appeared before us – few words were spoken – None could do justice to the awesome panorama. With rations consumed we set off back toward Stromness taking a slightly different route so as to take in the river valley and the waterfall we had read about. On the return journey we met 3/O Dave Young and Cadet Joe Anderson who had reached the pass. They informed us that 2/O (E) Daren Laming and 3/O (E) Olly Stock had taken a different route and may well be half way up one of the summits. We pressed on and sure enough met up with the other two, who after reaching a near vertical gradient and heavy snow had decided that they were not quite on the right track. We gave them directions and they too reached Fortuna Bay.

A steady decent past the waterfall, which Shackleton had come across some 90 years earlier, led back down into the valley. The final leg was completed amongst the Reindeer and finally the Fur Seals and King Penguins. Clapping would not deter some of the more boisterous Seals, so running was the chosen method of avoidance. Back on board we reported details to C/O Andy Gudgeon who decided that he would also do the walk the following morning with the two cadets. While they were gone the Viking Crew took other members of the ships company to the next bay south to visit the old whaling station at Husvik.

Anchored at Gryviken

Local wildlife take in the Outsider

Who said penguins can not drive

The plan was to sail around to St. Andrews bay to visit the largest King Penguin colony in the world but we received a telephone call from HMS Nottingham saying that we had to depart that evening because they needed to get a crew member to hospital as quickly as possible. So we sailed north back into the South Atlantic in amongst the beautiful giant and jagged bergs and headed for warmer climes.

I and I know many others will have the incredible memories of South Georgia etched in our minds for ever.

Tristan da Cunha – The conquest of the Summit

Early March saw RFA GOLD ROVER make her third visit to Tristan da Cunha in just over four months. Back in October 2007 she stopped off enroute to Cape Town where opportunities to get ashore were limited due to poor weather conditions. In December the ship was required to deliver Emergency Medical supplies and on this occasion time constraints meant that the ship did not stop. 2/O Rory Hamilton reports on the third visit.

In December we all felt that we had seen the remote South Atlantic Island for the last time. However, RFA LYME BAY had been tasked to proceed to the Island and provide support to the Royal Engineers who were to undertake the essential maintenance of the breakwater and Calshot harbour at Edinburgh, the settlement at Tristan da Cunha. RFA LYME BAY could not carry enough fuel to allow her to remain on station supporting OP Zest for its entire duration. This meant that RFA GOLD ROVER had to break off from her support of HMS NOTTINGHAM to top her fellow RFA up with fuel.

Ascending to the summit

Made it!

Before long Tristan da Cunha once again appeared over the horizon. RFA LYME BAY had been waiting for us and quickly took charge of us for the RAS. The replenishment course took us south west between Inaccessible Island and Nightingale Island, also part of the Tristan da Cunha group of Islands. On completion of the RAS we returned to Edinburgh and did a couple of OOW manoeuvres in front of the settlement prior to anchoring half a mile north of the small harbour.

The recent walk on South Georgia (See South Georgia article) had wetted the appetite of some of us to embark on another challenging expedition: To reach the summit of Tristan da Cunha. Some 2050 metres in height would be no walk in the park. With the ship safely anchored the first shore party departed in the trusty Viking launch and by a chance encounter I met the Foreign Officer Administrator of the island: Mr. David Morley. We discussed our return to Tristan and the passage his wife had taken on RFA GOLD ROVER back in December to allow her to get back to UK. On hearing of our desire to reach the summit the on our final day in Tristan, David very kindly called around the various guides to arrange one to meet us the following morning at 0700, Simon Glass was flexible enough to agree to take on the task.

On leaving the settlement, 2/O Colin Graham was most surprised to hear the instruction to turn left. This would take us straight toward the near vertical looking rise up to the initial plateau known as the base. The initial climb was very steep and quickly gave way to zigzagging our way up a near vertical gradient using a narrow sheep path. Determination and adrenaline propelled the party to the base at around 2000 feet which gave a fantastic view down to the two RFA's at anchor. With our guide forecasting that we might not reach the summit by the required cut off time some members of the party made the decision that the pace was a little high and decided to return to base camp. So Capt Hanton, 3/O Dave Young, 3/O (E) Olly Stock and I continued under Simon's guidance. Lactic acid was by this stage causing severe pain to the legs, particularly those who weren't regular patrons of the gym! The going went from boggy grass to moss covered volcanic rock and then finally ash and finer volcanic rocks. The gradient was steep and the final thousand feet or so over the ash and small rocks was incredibly energy sapping. We climbed into the cloud and finally the marker of Church Rock appeared through the mist. Every step of the final climb was a battle against the pain barrier; Notwithstanding this, Olly and Dave were making light work of the climb and stormed ahead up to the lake at the crater summit and then finally on to the peak. Dave reached the summit first followed shortly by the rest of the party, the last up being Capt Hanton, whose achievement at 30 years our senior put ours very much into perspective. There was an incredibly great sense of satisfaction on reaching the summit. After the obligatory photos we began the descent and at the Crater Lake level the cloud lifted briefly to reveal a wonderful view of Inaccessible Island far below. Descending was a much less painful process. By mid afternoon we reached base level and with a certain level of trepidation from some party members began the slow climb down the very steep section of the mountain.

After snaking our way back down to the grassy level we were delighted to be invited to Simon's house for refreshment prior to returning to the ship and weighing anchor to depart Tristan da Cunha for (surely) the last time this deployment.

Visit from French Rear Admiral Jean Louis Kerignard

RFA Argus was privileged to have a visit from Task Force Commander Rear Admiral Jean Louis Kerignard. He arrived by helicopter from the French ship FS Marne.

Following an update on Argus' work so far Admiral Kerignard enjoyed a tour of the Sea King Mk 7 helicopter and the Casualty Receiving Facility. He was suitably impressed and appreciated the versatility and capability of the ship.

During the visit Admiral Kerignard presented the Long Service Medal to LWEM Turnbull on the flight deck and congratulated him on his dedicated work in the Royal Navy.

RFA Largs Bay Visits Grand Turk

Patrolling the Caribbean waters as part of the international effort to counter illegal narcotic trafficking is a relentless task so when the opportunity to go alongside in Grand Turk, part of the Turks and Caicos Islands, appeared we took full advantage. The visit was designed to provide reassurance and demonstrate the UK's commitment towards the support and security of one of its Overseas Territories.

Largs Bay Beach cleaning

Largs Bay Bridge

The Governors office asked the ship for ten volunteers to help with beach cleaning operations. The islands environmental agency has the on going task of looking after the islands coral reefs and beaches. Due to human wastage and natural over growth the composition of the sands is changing. With the help of the local people and members of ship's company we were able to make a big impression and clean up a large stretch of beach. The local people were very appreciative and with members of the ships company enjoyed a barbeque provided by the Governor's office.

At the same time it was a good opportunity to allow the local school children a chance to have tour around the ship. They really enjoyed this and by far their favourite attraction was the embarked Lynx helicopter, where they all showed an interest in being pilots. It was a successful visit all round.

Come fly With Me – No I want a rest

February started with the Flight working many hours to get all of the required flying done for the month. The workload was added to with a couple of out of hours call outs as we were winding down from the days work. 427 soon put a fuel smelling spanner in the proposed flying program though. Obviously feeling tired she decided that she'd had enough and the resulting problem left the avionics supervisors losing a fair amount of hair (what's left of it) due to the near continuous head scratching.

215 Flight aboard RFA Largs Bay

Thanks to a Bargain Hunt style find, 427 was airborne again a week earlier than expected with her freshly 'borrowed' parts working brilliantly. The rest of the flight used the down time to get some deep maintenance done ahead of schedule.

By the end of the three weeks we were all thoroughly in need of a wind down, which was thankfully accomplished by a short port visit, which also allowed the ship to re-fuel. That is to say the inevitable trip to the base Naval Exchange ensued with everyone having a month's wages burning sizeable holes in their pockets and finished off sampling the American hospitality at the various watering holes around the base.

RFA Fort George in Liverpool

This is Fort George looking very ship shape on a sunny spring day in Gladstone Docks after completing a period of maintenance in Liverpool. As can be seen, the time in port was put to good use by the Deck Department who carried out some much needed external painting in the good weather.

RFA Fort George underwent maintenance in Liverpool in February prior to embarking various helicopter squadrons to conduct periods of Operational flying training. These will allow both trainee and experienced pilots to become re-acquainted with ship bourne flying operations in various different types of weather and sea states.

RFA Fort George with a good looking paint job

The time in port has also allowed Fort George's affiliated Sea Cadet Units TS Diadem (from Camberley) and TS Ganges (from Cambridge) to visit the ship and take advantage of the sights and sounds of the Liverpool – 2008's European City of Culture.

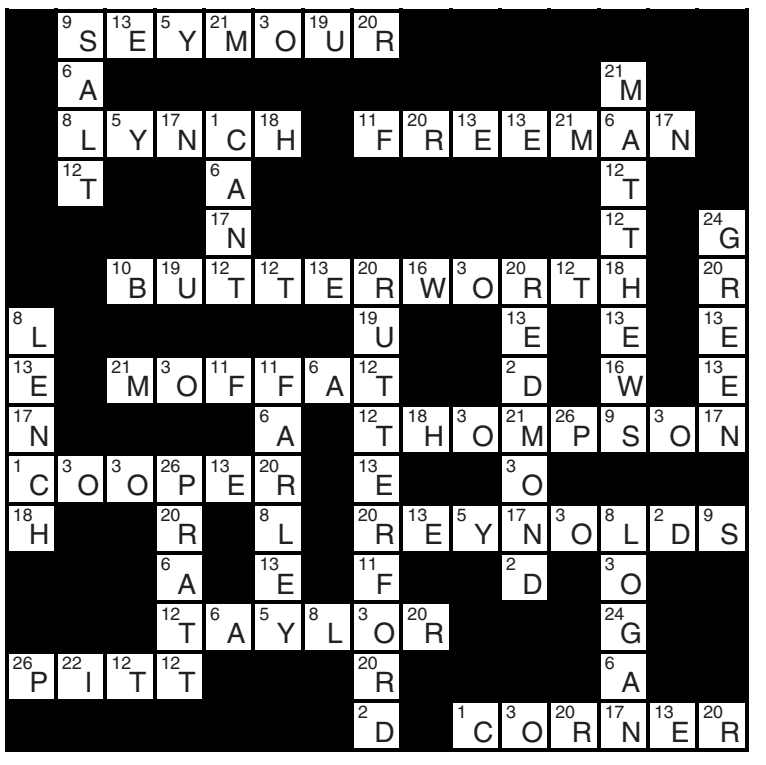
RFA MAINTENANCE CONTRACT: AS REPORTED IN WARSHIP WORLD MARCH 2008

According to the publication WARSHIP WORLD (published by Maritime Books, located in Liskeard, Cornwall) two British companies have been confirmed as preferred bidders for a contract of over £200 million to provide maintenance for the RFA flotilla. The two contenders have been named as the Northwestern Shiprepairers and Shipbuilders of Birkenhead, while the other is the A&P Group.

Northwestern Shiprepairers and Shipbuilders, based in Birkenhead, currently employ over two hundred and ten people and has been involved in recent maintenance work on Wave Ruler recently. In the past this company has delivered similar work programmes on Diligence, Orangeleaf and Wave Knight.

The A&P Group, based in Falmouth and Newcastle-upon-Tyne, employs over one thousand people throughout the UK and has the contract for the continual life support for Argus. Over the year A&P has completed major work packages for Black Rover and Fort Austin. Recently this company has been involved with upgrading equipment throughout the Bay class vessels.

1980 RFA CAPTAINS



1 = C	8 = L	15 = V	22 = I
2 = D	9 = S	16 = W	23 = Q
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5 = Y	12 = T	19 = U	26 = P
6 = A	13 = E	20 = R	
7 = K	14 =	21 = M	

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