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Gunline - The First Point of Contact | Published by the Royal Fleet Auxiliary Service | April 2009 | www.rfa.mod.uk

RFA FORT AUSTIN – BURNS NIGHT 250th ANNIVERSARY

The 250th anniversary of arguably the greatest bard of Scotland could not possibly go by without recognition, especially when the evening was to be hosted by the indomitable Rab McKillop.

RFA Fort Austin marked the historic occasion of the 250th anniversary of the birth of the 'Bard', Robbie Burns with a Burns Night Supper to remember. In his absence and to his great surprise, C/O(LS) Rab McKillop had already been appointed 'master of ceremonies' prior to joining Fort Austin, a task he was to undertake with great vigour and in legendary style.

A Piper had to be found for such an occasion, so a call was put out to find a suitable Pipe Major for the evening. PO(D) Kevin Mackinnon rose to the challenge presented to him. He set to and prepared his bagpipes for the evening and the haggis was ceremoniously piped in to the tune of "The Road to Gareloch" followed by the "Brown Haired Maiden".

In attendance and following behind the piper was CPO(CK) Neil Turner. The haggis, suitably dressed in time honoured tradition, was carried in on a silver salver by Neil to be received by Rab. Rab's address, of Ode to a Haggis, in his native tongue and strongest Scottish dialect was very well received by everybody attending the evening. It was a performance to behold given the spirit of the occasion. After the address 2/O(E) Robbie Wilkie performed another classic of the evening, 'Immortal Memory', played with equal amounts of vigour and enthusiasm.

Pipe Major PO Mackinnon, CPO(CK) Turner and the logistics supply department are to be congratulated on their splendid work in making the evening such an enjoyable and memorable occasion.

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Commodore Bill Walworth

With the departure of the TAURUS Task Group to the Mediterranean and the Far East we have half the Flotilla deployed on operations and the rest busy in various stages of the operational cycle. Fort Victoria will shortly start a substantial refit after from her spell at extended readiness and we hope to see her back at sea in September. Argus is having a major refit in Falmouth to upgrade her safety arrangements, accommodation, bridge and ops room. She will change her primary role from aviation to primary casualty receiving ship (PCRS) although we will continue to see aviators training and operating from her. Cardigan Bay, Wave Knight and Diligence continue to excel in the Arabian Gulf. Cardigan Bay, still helping with Iraqi Navy training, has seen a constant stream of visitors, all of whom return with glowing testimonials; CINCFLEET calling her the 'Jewel in the Crown'. Wave Knight has been operating in the Gulf of Aden with the EU task group on Counter Piracy operations along with a large number of ships from other nations. Largs Bay set off for the Caribbean to take on the Atlantic Patrol Task (North), was diverted to the South Atlantic to meet Black Rover for a few weeks but has now made it to the Caribbean to undertake the counter narcotics and hurricane relief task.

Since the last Gunline I have briefed the Navy Board, Commander In Chief Fleet and First Sea Lord on the current state of the RFA. At a lunch for the heads of specialisation (the Tribal Chiefs), First Sea Lord commented on the modern role of the RFA, our operational output and our position as a Service within a Service, sharing that distinction with the Royal Marines. I consider that a good position to be in; we are seen to be part of an integrated organisation but have our own ethos and identity.

Readers will have heard that the Fleet Tanker build has been deferred. We are disappointed at this, but in Portsmouth, Abbeywood and at sea we must re-focus on safe operation of the older tankers, particularly the LEAFS and ROVERS, and on reducing the risks of running them by a range of measures. We are investing large sums of money on maintenance, while working to ensure the men and women appointed to them are well trained and confident about the specialist skills required in a tanker.

I am asked frequently about Project Darwin, the strategic change plan to take the RFA into the future. The Darwin team is publishing a newsletter shortly so I will not steal their thunder, but there were a number of seminars during the Autumn to address the lines of work in the study and in January the RFA Management Board spent two days in a dark room reviewing the project and prioritising the next steps. Some work has already been done, but there is much to do to in the years ahead.

Six Nations Rugby is nearing a conclusion and spring is in the air. Enjoy this edition of Gunline and (unless you are reading this in the Southern Hemisphere) enjoy the thought of the Summer to come.

RFA MOTHER AND SON MEET THE HEAD OF THEIR SERVICE

By Third Officer (LS) Anthony Sincock

Commodore (Cdre) Bill Walworth, head of the Royal Fleet Auxiliary Service (RFA), has met a mother and son who have both opted for a life at sea with the RFA, during his first visit to HMS Raleigh in Cornwall, since taking up his appointment.

As part of a full day's visit designed to give the Cdre an appreciation of the training provided at HMS Raleigh to RFA personnel, Cdre Walworth presented end of course certificates to 13 Seaman Grade 2s (SG2), trained at the Royal Navy School of Seamanship. Among those completing training was SG2 Kyle Chapman, whose mother, Jayne, is also in the RFA Service and currently under training within the Defence Maritime Logistics School (DMLS) at HMS Raleigh. Jayne was in the sixth week of her course to become a Leading Hand Stores Accountant.

She said: *"It was really good to be able to attend Kyle's passing out. I am very proud of what he has achieved. It was also nice to meet Commodore Walworth who genuinely seemed proud of the training we were receiving and of us in general."*

Other highlights of Cdre Walworth's visit included the opportunity to meet the RFA personnel employed at HMS Raleigh including First Officer Richard Lavender and Third Officer Anthony Sincock who work within the DMLS. He was also briefed by key Royal Navy staff and was invited to view the training facilities. Cdre Walworth met a class of seven RFA personnel undergoing training to become Leading Hand Stores Accountants, as well as the latest class of RFA cooks, when he was invited to taste the fruits of their training with an omelette prepared for him by Catering Assistant (Cook) Glenn Hartley.

Third Officer Anthony Sincock said: *"Cdre Walworth's visit was a great opportunity to show off the training that new entrant seaman and logistic department personnel receive at the Royal Navy School of Seamanship and the Defence Maritime Logistic School housed at HMS Raleigh. We look forward to more visits from Cdre Walworth in the future as the Royal Fleet Auxiliary Services continues to evolve and more training opportunities present themselves at HMS Raleigh."*

RETIREMENT TERRY SIMMONS

After x amount of years at sea, I am now fully retired. I would like to express my sincere thanks to all who contributed to my leaving gifts and my wife's flowers. I would like to say a particular thank you to all those on board Fort Victoria for giving me a lovely leaving do and send off.

In my retirement I will look back at times spent with many great people, night RAS'es in both wet and windy weather conditions as well as those conducted in brilliant sunshine. I would like to say a big thank you to all those who made me laugh mercilessly and yes those who didn't.

My lasting memories of the RFA and all those working for the service will be good ones.

I wish all of you safe waters and happy times.

Terry Simmons (AKA Jerry Springer)

RETIREMENT 2/O(SE) ALAN BOND

I joined the RFA Service in June 1972 and retired in February 2009 after a memorable career spanning almost 37 years. During my appointment to RFA Argus I have worked with many friends to whom I have been able to say a fond farewell. After my last dinner in November 2008 I would like to thank everybody who was kind enough to contribute and I send best wishes to you all.

RETIREMENT C/O (SE) MARTIN SEYMOUR

As the last edition of GUNLINE went to press I was in the process of officially retiring after 42 years service in the maritime world, 39 of which were with the RFA service.

As former co-owner of RFA Fort Victoria I was assured my last year of service would be in helping to maintain her through extended readiness in Portsmouth. However the old adage "life in a blue suit" prevailed and I enjoyed two months sea time in RFA Fort Austin and a "last voyage" taking RFA Fort Victoria to Liverpool.

So rather unexpectedly, my last days in the RFA were spent in Liverpool where Commodore Walworth and RFA Fort Victoria saw me off in a fitting fashion. I was delighted to receive so many generous gifts and was dined out Chinese style before being finally piped down the gangway – minus the pipe!

I wish to express my sincere thanks to everyone who contributed to my gifts and to say I am proud and happy to have served an adventurous career in the RFA.

I wish everyone in the RFA service well in its new ventures.

DAVID JAMES MORRIS MBE 1929-2008

It is with deep sadness that we have learnt of the death of David James Morris MBE. Sadly Dave passed away last December. Dave was loved by all who knew him being a man of integrity, humour and knowledge. He will be greatly missed by all who knew him.

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BIOGRAPHY/OBITUARY

SURG.CDR. JOHN MOULLIN DAVIES RN (Ret'd)

28.10.1925 - 20.12.2008

JOHN MOULLIN DAVIES was born in London in 1925 but brought up mainly on the Sussex Coast with his older brother, George. This was the period after the First World War and the time of the Great Depression. John was 13 at the outbreak of the Second World War. He was a very bright boy but his parents were not in a position to fund his further education. However, a bequest of £500 from his grandmother made it possible for him to contemplate going to University and he obtained a place at St.Catherine's Hall, Oxford, which was not then a College, to study medicine going up at the very young age of 16 in 1942. Like other poor students, he could not have afforded college life and rented rooms in the poorer parts of town. His first year at Oxford was spent studying basic science subjects as, partly due to the call-up of teachers, he had not done sciences at school. The war-time rationing probably helped him financially as this gave everyone, including poor students, access to subsistence before the days of welfare and student grants.

At Oxford, he became part of a circle of friends including his wife to be, Elizabeth Ross, a fellow medical student although she left after one year to do secret work at the war-time code breaking centre of Bletchley Park and, following the end of the War, commenced an acting career. John just managed to eke out his £500 to cover the cost of four years at Oxford including fees and all his living expenses. By the time he came to the clinical stage of his training, the new student grants had been introduced which funded his two years at St.George's Hospital Medical School, then at Hyde Park Corner. This was followed by house jobs at the Radcliffe Infirmary in Oxford.

John and Elizabeth were married at Combe Church, Oxfordshire, in 1950, Elizabeth's family having settled in Combe after her father retired in 1945 as Deputy Treasurer of the Colony in Kenya, where Elizabeth had been born in 1924.

Influenced by Elizabeth, who wanted her family to see the world as she had and, following his own love of the sea, John jointed the Royal Naval Medical Service in 1952. John's first posting was a two and a half year tour aboard the Colony Class Cruiser, HMS Newfoundland, launched in 1941 and then the flag ship of the East Indies Fleet, based in Trincomalee, the RN base in newly independent Sri Lanka (Ceylon). Elizabeth had no intention of being left behind in the UK and followed the Fleet to Colombo on the troopship SS Empire Windrush staying with a small handful of other wives in the NAAFI family hostel in Trincomalee while John and the Newfoundland saw service in the Korean War and Malayan Emergency.

Newfoundland also escorted the Royal Yacht carrying the new Queen Elizabeth on her Commonwealth tour in 1954, during which their first son, Nicolas (Sandford), was born. It was while Newfoundland was off Colombo for the Queen's formal reception that news arrived that Elizabeth was giving birth and in severe difficulties in Trincomalee. Mother was in danger and the baby was not expected to live. The young Surgeon Lieutenant was given leave to miss the reception and also the use of the ship's jeep and a Royal Marine driver for the 300 mile journey over tracks through secondary jungle across the full width of the island. John and the Marine shared the driving and accomplished the journey in 24 hours. By the time they arrived, the situation had, fortunately, improved. In the meantime, the RAF, which had not used the Trincomalee airstrip since the Second World War, had flares put out to mark the runway and flew in new drugs which it was thought would help with the blood poisoning affecting mother and baby. In the event, the drugs were not used, mother, baby and father survived and Sandford was christened in the ship's bell of HMS Newfoundland in accordance with naval tradition.

HMS Newfoundland's three month refit in Singapore was an opportunity for some shore leave and Elizabeth, with baby Sandford, travelled there to accompany the ship for the duration as a passenger on the Royal Fleet Auxiliary (RFA) ship Dunera and returned to Ceylon after the refit on the troopship SS Cheshire. When the tour was over for Newfoundland, the civilians boarded the SS Asturias in Colombo and sailed home to Southampton via Aden, the Suez Canal and Gibraltar in time for an emotional reunion with the crew of Newfoundland when they arrived later at Portsmouth in February 1955. Almost all of the crew had been separated from their loved ones for the full two and a half years of the tour during which they had steamed 65,000 miles. Newfoundland herself was decommissioned in 1959, stripped of all RN regalia and sold to the Peruvian Navy.

After brief postings to the stone frigates (shore bases) of HMS Drake (Plymouth) and HMS President (London), during which time their second child, Jane (Polly), was born in 1956, the family set off for an overseas posting to the base of HMS Rooke on Gibraltar. John, the now, again pregnant, Elizabeth and two children all travelling out in a military transport plane with a refuelling stop in France. Their third child was born in 1957 on the Rock of Gibraltar and appropriately named Peter.

The family again returned to the U.K. on an RFA but John, not being assigned to a ship, drove home overland in the family's brand new Morris 1000 Traveller, bought tax free in Gibraltar. Any car and a new one in particular, was still a huge luxury in post-War Britain where Elizabeth's parents were seven years on a waiting list for theirs. The car was then mothballed in Elizabeth's mother's garage pending the return of the family from their next posting to Hong Kong (HMS Tamar) to where mother and three children set sail in 1960 on the troopship SS Oxfordshire.

The journey took them via the now familiar Gibraltar, Suez Canal, Aden, Colombo and Singapore. In Hong Kong, John was active in dealing with the cholera outbreak in 1961 and published a report in the 1962 Journal of the Royal Naval Medical Service. The return journey for the family took them first to Singapore with a detachment of Gurkhas who were regularly being shuttled between their main bases in Hong Kong and Singapore and who were involved in the Malayan Emergency and then aboard the troopship SS Nevassa back to the U.K. again calling at Colombo, Aden, passing through the Suez Canal and Gibraltar before Southampton.

Then followed two consecutive postings to Rosyth, Scotland (HMS Cochrane) as Senior Medical Officer to HM Dockyard which was, by then, a nuclear submarine base. Their fourth child, Frances, was born in Scotland in 1964 but brought back to Combe, Oxfordshire for her christening when the whole family turned out in Ross tartan kilts. After this, there was a two year unaccompanied posting to Malta (HMS St.Angelo) as Naval Medical Officer of Health Mediterranean.

The family visited Malta on holiday but set up its home in Stonesfield, Oxfordshire, to be near Elizabeth's elderly mother in Combe. John would be the last holder of this post as the base was closing when he left in 1968 to take up what would also prove to be a final post as the Senior Medical Officer to HM Dockyard Chatham, which also closed as his Royal Navy career ended in 1971. The family much enjoyed the final posting to Chatham where they resided within the walled Dockyard at No.9 The Terrace, which had been the dockyard doctor's house continuously since its construction in 1700.

Chatham Dockyard became a Heritage Site and the house was sold onto the private market. No.9 achieved minor notoriety when human remains were found in the garden. Of course, these were easily explained as, in the 18th and 19th Centuries, naval surgeons had scientifically valuable and relatively easy access to human body parts arising from combat and accidental casualties and it was surmised that one of the naval surgeons brought these home to examine and dissect and, quite naturally, buried them in his garden when he had finished.

At 46, John found that he was too senior in the now very slimmed down Royal Navy to be given the jobs at sea which he most enjoyed but he still had a yearning for the sea, not least because he had been shore based since 1955. He therefore took up a succession of posts on board ships of the Royal Fleet Auxiliary, the grey painted vessels which follow the RN fleet carrying fuel, ammunition and supplies but bear the Merchant Navy flag and have civilian crews, serving on the RFAs Tidespring, Sir Bedevere, Sir Geraint, Resurgent and Olwen in the Persian Gulf and the Atlantic, Pacific and Indian Oceans.

John much enjoyed the continued contact with the RN and was a frequent guest on RN vessels where word quickly spread that he was a retired Surgeon Commander, often making him the most senior ranking naval officer present. He was rather taken aback when, on deployment to the Persian Gulf, he was introduced among RN personnel as "the Senior Medical Officer to the Deployment". The RFAs were generally larger vessels than the RN ships and he enjoyed the luxury of facilities such as operating theatres, several cabins and, in particular, portholes which had disappeared from RN ships. RN ships had also been hugely scaled down since his early naval days and were reliant on helicopters to air lift casualties to shore bases etc. rather than having on board medical facilities.

His final RFA posting was on RFA Olwen, carrying fuel oil, in the Persian Gulf from which he finally retired, flying home six weeks before the Fleet was redeployed to the South Atlantic for the Falklands War. This was to have been Olwen's final tour and she was due to be decommissioned in Gibraltar and then scrapped. However, she was hastily re-crewed and sent to the South Atlantic. John's retirement at that point was fortuitous but the family was relieved that, at the age of nearly 60, he was spared more active service in what proved to be an extremely difficult and hostile environment for RN and RFA vessels and personnel.

John retired to Elizabeth's family home in Combe, Oxfordshire, but continued working as a civilian doctor doing GP locums in the Oxford area, while Elizabeth eventually, in 1978, obtained her degree from Oxford, which had been curtailed by her Bletchley Park war service though not in medicine but in English and Drama, which she followed by ten years of teaching and then a full time return to acting at the age of 60.

John's children, born in four different countries and possibly influenced by their itinerant childhood, eventually settled in Australia, the U.S.A and the U.K., married partners of four different nationalities and provided 16 grandchildren carrying at least five different types of passport.

John was also an active researcher and writer on the subject of his mother's Guernsey families, the Moullins, de Garis, Mancels and others, and Channel Islands history and a regular contributor to the Journal of the Guernsey Society.

He died suddenly of a heart attack on 20th December 2008 aged 83.

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BLACK ROVER VISITS TRISTAN DA CUNHA

RFA Black Rover visited the Island of Tristan da Cunha that lies on the parallel of latitude 37 degrees South in the South Atlantic Ocean during January 2009. The island is a huge active volcano rising from plus 4000m ocean depths to stand 2062 metres high at Queen Mary's Peak and last erupted during 1961. Due to its height the island was visible on the ship's navigation radars in excess of 70 miles!

The island was discovered and first named by the Portuguese Admiral Tristao Da Cunha in October 1506 but there is no evidence that early sailors risked landing on the island until1643 when the Dutch vessel Heemstede landed to take on fresh water and catch sea birds, penguins, seals and fish over an 8 day period.

British influence on the island started in 1815 after the island was seized on behalf of George 3rd to counter fears that the French might use it as a staging post to effect a rescue of the Emperor Napoleon Bonaparte who was incarcerated at that time on the island of St. Helena some 2400 Km to the North.

William Glass was the senior NCO in the Royal Artillery party of 72 who formed the garrison in 1816 and, after the garrison's withdrawal in 1817, he remained on the island with his wife and 2 Devonian Stonemasons to found the fledgling settlement that, through ups and downs, has become the island home to the present day population of about 350. The surname Glass is one of the five main surnames, each relating to early settlers that are to be found on the island today. The only settlement on the island has, as its full name, 'Edinburgh of the Seven Seas.'

One huge setback to the island occurred in 1882 when black rats escaped from the U. S. ship Henry A Paull that was deliberately wrecked on the island for an insurance scam; the rats devastated the island's fecund sea bird population that has never since recovered. Another landmark in the island's history was when the whole population had to be evacuated to the UK in 1961 when a volcanic eruption through a fumarole occurred right next to the Edinburgh settlement.

Nowadays the main export from the island is Crayfish and RFA Black Rover was privileged to find that 50 of them had taken up residence in her swimming pool during the visit! The Crayfish industry received a set back last year when its freezer plant burnt down but a new one is in the process of being built.

A significant event in the islands 2009 sporting calendar took place during the visit of Black Rover. This was an international football match between a Trista da Cuhna eleven and the ships team. The following match report is provided by Cdt (X) Paul Stubley.

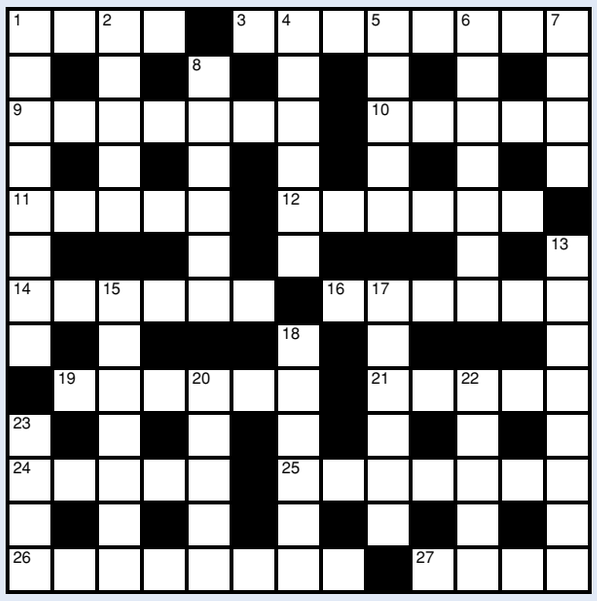
A Black Rover Select XI took on the youngsters of Tristan on a Sunday afternoon of mixed conditions upon the slopes of the playing fields that border the settlement. The game was full of incident and goals, with some clinical finishing from Tristan that although made the score look as lop sided as the pitch, perhaps didn't reflect the competitive but good natured spirit of the game and the chances created by both sides.

After winning the coin toss the Rovers chose to shoot down hill but made a slow start as the Tristan team took control of the ball to fashion a number of good chances that required some smart saves from the Rovers goalkeeper and some last ditch tackling from the defence. Although weathering the initial storm Tristan finally broke through after fifteen minutes with a low cross into the box which was turned into the net by C/O Shattock. This setback spurred the Rovers into action with some neat passing creating a half chance on 22 minutes for AB John Gartland. However Tristan continued to hit Rovers on the break and made it 2-0 on the half hour. This was quickly followed by a third as the ball was won in the middle of the park leaving Rovers exposed at the back and the Tristan striker to coolly lob the ball over the advancing CDT Stubley in goal. C/O Shattock had a chance, when the ball was crossed into the penalty area, he made a blinding shot at goal, firing from eighteen yards but unfortunately missing the target. AB Andy Carr also made the keeper work after winning a free-kick in the Tristan half, the goalkeeper pushing the ball wide for a corner. A dubious penalty decision was then given for Tristan who took advantage sending the keeper the wrong way. The scoring for the first half was completed with a well taken finish striking the inside of the post from outside the box leaving Cdt Stubley no chance.

In the second half Rovers again showed some excellent play and were more than a match for the young Tristans in both the tackling and creativity department. A host of chances fell the Rovers way with LH (C) O'Hanlon firing just wide from a free kick and opportunities falling to 2/O Parkin, AB Andy Carr and C/O Shattock producing saves from the keeper. Cdt Stubley also struck the woodwork after the passing move of the game. However for all the chances created the finishing was still lacking and as Rovers pushed forwards it left the defence exposed at the back allowing Tristan to slot home another four goals. However Rovers were to have the final cheer as in the final moments a corner swung into the box caused panic in the Tristan defence and drawing a foul on the striker. 2/O Parkin stepped up to fire the ball into the bottom corner of the net. The crowds that came to watch were in buoyant mood and contributed to the good nature of the high scoring and entertaining match. Although the result went against Black Rover everyone left in high spirits come the end of the game.

CROSSWORD

Answers on page 16



Across

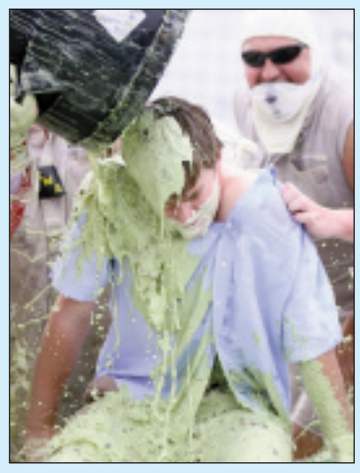
1 Architectural partition (4)
3 Container on top of car (4,4)
9 Cut of the skin (7)
10 Opus (5)
11 Russian ballet company (5)
12 Six feet deep (6)
14 Breath in (6)
16 Place things in order (4,2)
19 A full supply (6)
21 Words of a song (5)
24 Remove cover (5)
25 On the other hand (7)
26 Lowly gin (Ang) (3-5)
27 Starch resembling sago (4)

Down

1 Firmly constructed (4-4)
2 Intense monochromatic beam (5)
4 Become bony (6)
5 Hard kind of stone (5)
6 Anyone (7)
7 Furnace (4)
8 Of the same period (6)
13 Range of colours representing light (8)
15 Used to express surprise (4,3)
17 A relative by marriage (2-4)
18 Boa (6)
20 Joe Lyons tea shop waitress (5)
22 The Thames for example (5)
23 Chew over (4)

1/O(X) BEN RICHARDS CROSSING LINE CEREMONY

On 13th November last year the traditional indignities of the 'Crossing-the-Line' ceremony were once more perpetuated in RFA Largs Bay. Once the audience - comprising most of the ship's company - had witnessed the usual gratuitous violence being visited upon the crossing-the-line 'first-trippers', their attention was gleefully turned upon Ben Richards. Ben, a salty veteran of many such ceremonies himself, was suddenly 'volunteered' to enjoy some more ill-treatment at the hands of King Neptune and his Fun Police. The reason for this was simple: Ben had been promoted to First Officer (X) the previous day! Moreover, it seems that no one was immune to King Neptune's unwelcome attention that day - whatever their rank or experience - for following Ben's submission (see pic above), the Fun Police similarly exercised their 'rights' over the ship's Commanding Officer, Captain Ian Johnson!



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WELCOME TO THE WONDERFUL NEW WORLD OF FORT ROSALIE

By C/O(LS) David Johnson

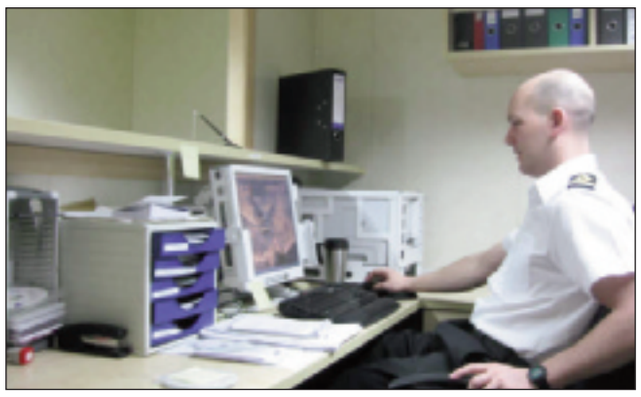
As you can see from the photos, the ship's internal accommodation has had a major face lift and the furniture used in the bars and cabins are good quality and classy. She was in refit for 13 months and although minor snagging lists have been compiled, I think most people are very impressed with the standard of their cabin, the bulkheads are also thicker ensuring more privacy.

After sailing from Birkenhead, the ship powered around the top of Scotland to Crombie where she busily re-stored prior to the start of the audit season.

Everyone on board has worked hard to bring the ship up to a good standard, but when a ship's accommodation area has been totally gutted and then put back together all the usual safety signs and fire equipment need to be sited and brought up to scratch, a major evolution but achievable with help from all departments.

We all on board have the usual feelings of trepidation going towards FOST but are quietly confident that the ship we have been given to work with is vastly superior to the ship that went into refit those many months ago.

A lot of us have very fond memories of this ship, I started as a Third Officer (LS) on her and then spent 6 months on the flight deck during the Bosnian conflict in which I experienced an emergency landing and the crash on deck! Definitely not what I had in mind when I read "see the world, join the RFA" in the Caterer and Hotelkeeper twenty two years ago.



'FIT FOR PURPOSE' ROSALIE SETS SAIL AFTER MULTI-MILLION POUND REFIT

RFA FORT ROSALIE is currently in re-store following a comprehensive multi-million pound refit undertaken at Cammell Laird Ship yard in Birkenhead.

The whole ship has undergone extensive changes. The accommodation has undergone a complete upgrade; the layout of the cabins has changed to incorporate wet units for all, so no more communal showers! All fixtures, furniture and fittings, including flat screen TVs in each cabin, are of equal quality throughout the ship. All of the public spaces on board have been updated to comply with new safety regulations. The equipment in the galley has been replaced to meet hygiene standards and the saloons appear brighter, cleaner and better lit. The hospital has also been upgraded. Commanding Officer Capt Bill Tate observed that 'The changes to the accommodation have really made a difference to the ship board personnel and is in keeping with other refurbs within the RFA fleet.'

Beyond the accommodation, other changes to make the ship safer and more efficient include the complete removal of asbestos from all accommodation areas; new air conditioning and improved fire protection.

The CO says that improving safety and efficiency on board was a critical factor in the refit.

"As part of the upgrade improved fire protection was key; new wiring, new fire doors as well as additional fire dampers in accommodation spaces have all been fitted.

The original engine is a supreme piece of engineering – simple, robust and reliable. However, a lot of equipment around it had reached the end of its life. The fuel purifiers, for example, which keep the dirt and traces of water out of the engine, have been replaced which is important to the inner workings of the engine.''

Also carried out during the refit was a hull survey, overhaul of the cranes and the replenishment rigs have been completely refurbished.

Commanding Officer, Capt Bill Tate, says that ROSALIE went to Cammell Lairds with one clear objective – to extend her life for another decade. He explains that the refit is in keeping with the Perkins Report recommendations which first consulted personnel and examined how RFA ships could be improved.

The ship will return to Birkenhead for regular maintenance work as part of the new cluster deal signed between Cammell Laird and the MOD in June 2008. The deal means that ROSALIE, along with 10 other RFA ships, will be maintained by the shipyard for up to 30 years enabling the yard to gain better knowledge of the ships and their needs as well as providing better value to the taxpayer.

Cdre Dave Preston, Head of Afloat Support in the DE&S, said that the success of the refit was directly due to the joint working between the CO and the Chief Engineer, Capt Bob Kirk with Capt Ian Schumacker and his team in Birkenhead and with the Cammell Laird team.

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BRNC NEW ENTRANTS GO PACKING

By 3/O(X) Dave Ellis

During the BRNC "Officer's New Entry" course of winter 2008, RFA officers collected money for the Children's Hospice South West, a charity based around the Dartmouth area.

On Friday 4 Dec, 3/O (X)s Dave Ellis, Jon Feaver and James Wright and 3/O (E) Tony Cummins assisted shoppers at the Dartmouth branch of Sainsbury's. This was the cause of many a middle aged woman going weak at the knees at the site of four fine officers in uniform helping them pack their bags, a couple of husbands being pushed aside in the rush for their assistance.

These scenes were repeated on Sunday 07 Dec when 3/O(X) Ellis returned with 3/O (SE)s Jim Hopps and John Bryson and RTO (X) Alex McIndoe for another 4 hours. A cheque for a total of £802.66 raised over the two days was presented to Mrs Sue Tweed, trustee of the charity, at BRNC.

Jon Feaver, James Wright, Tony Cummins and Dave Ellis with Sainsburys' staff Mary, Jane and Matthew

John Bryson, Alex McIndoe and Jim Hopps (nearest)

Sue Tweed from the Hospice is presented with a cheque for £802.66. Left to Right - Jim Hopps, Jon Feaver, James Wright, Dave Ellis, Sue Tweed, John Bryson, Tony Cummins, Alex McIndoe, John Jewell

RECRUITMENT NEWS

Have you thought of steering your friends and family towards a career with the RFA? All training for ratings is now carried out on RN establishments, living on site with full use of sport and leisure facilities, and working towards an NVQ qualification.

Since 2006 the GCSE requirement for ratings has been scrapped, all applicants now attend a psychometric test which is considered to be a fairer judge of ability. The only exception is that Comms branch trainees must have an ECDL or equivalent, as the work is now highly dependant on IT and some basic skills are expected on entry.

Officer Cadetships are offered in both Deck and Engineering branches and in addition to the HND qualification, there is now a Foundation Degree route for applicants with sufficient UCAS points. Minimum qualifications for cadets have been raised in the last few years, with GCSE English, Maths & Science required at grade B, in addition to at least 2 other subjects at grade C. Following a 3 year sandwich course with study at nautical college interspersed with "on the job" training on board RFA ships, cadets look towards a position as 3rd officer on completion of training.

In addition to recruiting trainees into all the branches, we also aim to recruit already qualified ratings – SG1As, MM1s, and experienced cooks and stewards.

Over the next few years we will also be looking towards a limited number of direct entry 3rd officers (Deck & Engineering) so applications would be welcomed from individuals holding STCW 95 OOW or EOOW certification looking for the benefits of a career with the RFA.

There are openings for Systems Engineers and possibly LSOs, both these branches requiring qualifications of HND or degree level in relevant subjects.

For anyone wishing to receive additional information and/or an application form, the phone number to ring is: 0845 604 0520, or by visiting the RFA Website (www.rfa.mod.uk) and clicking on "Join us" where details on all branches is available.

A LIFE IN THE DAY OF...

Martin Troman, Chief Officer (SE) was elected to the post of RFA/Nautilus UK Liaison Officer four years ago and has written an article giving an outline of a typical day's work. He is based in West Battery, Whale Island HMS EXCELLENT.

I am the main focal point in the 3-way relationship between the membership - RFA Officers, the union - Nautilus UK and the RFA Management.

The most important part of the job, for me, is offering advice and assistance to the members. I am in a position to provide speedy answers to the huge number of queries I receive covering the whole spectrum of RFA employee Terms and Conditions: Pay, Pensions, Allowances, Travel & Subsistence, Discipline, Grievance, Restoring Efficiency, Equality, Diversity, Employment Law and many other topics.

I am here to provide guidance and representation for members who are experiencing difficulties with regards to their working lives. This involves amongst other things helping them through the traumas of the Disciplinary, Grievance and Restoring Efficiency procedures.

I keep in touch with members through ship visits as often as the ships programmes and my own schedule permits, often accompanied by the Nautilus UK Industrial Officer. I keep members informed of current events in a periodical Newsletter which is sent to all ships and to all those who are on my email distribution list. If you are a member and are not already being e-mailed the letter please advise me of your email address.

As part of the Partnership at Work agreement, I have a role to play in consultations between RFA and Nautilus UK on changes in policy on any matters relating to Terms & Conditions of employment. These consultations could take the form of formal meetings, sighting and approval of RTEMs before they are issued, or informal discussions on possible future policy changes. We also have a formal quarterly meeting involving Nautilus UK officials, RFA Management and Officer Representatives at which we discuss ongoing issues of interest.

Carrying on from the consultation process, I am involved in various working groups which have been set up to look at, and periodically review, specific aspects of terms and conditions, e.g. Allowances Working Group, Accommodation Working Group and the Business Review.

I also sit on various committees as the representative of serving RFA Officers, e.g. Central Benevolent Fund Committee, Special Bonus Committee and RFA Association Trustee Committee.

Being in this post has enabled me to get a lot more involved in the work of Nautilus UK. I am privileged to have been elected to the Nautilus UK Council and I regularly attend Council meetings. I also attend the National Professional and Technical Forum whenever possible as well as periodical Liaison Officer meetings and the Biennial General Meeting.

It is also part of my Liaison Officer duties to keep track of membership numbers within the RFA and to try and recruit new members whenever possible.

So, that was a quick overview of why I am here and what I do on a typical day. The days are very varied and there are often challenges which present themselves ensuring no two days are the same. It is a hugely satisfying job when things go according to plan and when I am able to help individuals; at the same time it can be very frustrating when little or no progress can be made on issues that are important to us all. In all I have greatly enjoyed my time in the job but I am now looking forward to a return to sea later in the year.

A Life In The Day Of…

If you would like to tell others about a detailed description of your typical working day then send me an e-mail to mark.mundy307@mod.uk or FLEET-DCS-INFO-MEDIA OPS2 SO2 on DII.

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TALES FROM THE WILD FRONTIER!

By 2/O(LS) Kim B Bailie

CPO(D) Chris Coultas and I left UK on the evening of the 16th September 08 bound for Washington DC. Now most of you probably realise that there are no ships going in there, so why was that our destination? The reason for our destination being Washington DC was to attend a brief at the Military Sealift Command (MSC) HQ in the Navy Yard, before taking up an appointment on the USNS LEWIS AND CLARK. C/O(X) Karl Woodfield RFA met us at the airport and dropped us off at the hotel we would be staying in for the next two nights.

After breakfast - yes there were pancakes and syrup, also fruit, cereals, yoghurt, scrambled eggs, streaky bacon and beef sausages and lots and lots of decent coffee! - Karl picked us up and took us on the commuter drive into Washington DC, it is as bad as it looks on TV, and on into MSC HQ. Over more coffee we received our brief and what we are to achieve during the appointment, which I wont go into here you will be pleased to know! Any questions we had were answered and we met some of the senior management involved in running the organisation. This took us up to 1300 and Karl had left the afternoon free for Chris and I to do the cultural bit, dropping us off by the Museum of Space and Flight situated on the Washington Mall. From there we walked down past the World War 2 Memorial and the huge Washington memorial to the Lincoln Memorial, I wanted to see "the big guy in the chair", which is impressive in its solemnity and is of course part of American history. Coming back up the Mall we spied the White House, it is a lot smaller than shown on TV and Capitol Hill. From there a quick visit to the Smithsonian Building, all the museums are part of this institution which was set up by an Englishman called Smithson who never set foot in the United States, however after his death in Genoa his remains were removed from Italy and brought here to Washington by Thomas Eddison. We finished the afternoon off in the Museum of Space and Flight which has the most incredible array of aircraft ranging from models of the Wright Brothers contraptions, Lindbergh's Spirit of St Louis, to Jumbo Jets, early Apollo capsules through to the Lunar Module - yes it is real, not a conspiracy theory - and days could have been spent wandering through its halls. Karl picked us up at 1800 and dropped us back at the hotel ready for a 0900 pick up next day to drive down to Norfolk, Virginia to join the ship.

For those who are short on American history, Meriweather Lewis and William Clark were tasked by President Jefferson to explore and map the area to the north west of the Mississippi as far as the great ocean, which Jefferson had just purchased from the French for the United States. - The Wild Frontier. Lewis and Clarke set off in 1804, picking up a Native American woman, Sacagawea (which happens to be the name of the second ship of the Lewis and Clark class) who was a guide and interpreter. The expedition returned in 1806 having been all the way to the Pacific Ocean and back mapping the new lands and bringing back information on the tribes and land to be found there.

The USNS LEWIS AND CLARK is the first of class of the T-AKE ships - Transport-Auxiliary (K)cargo Explosives. That means dry cargo, refrigerated cargo, ammunition of various types and laterally a small amount of fuel cargo - so she is a sort of AOR, though not by intended design. The ship is 210m long, 32m wide, draws 9.5m and clocks in at 41000 tonnes, diesel electric powered she can make 20 knots when required. The ship has a Civilian Mariner crew, that is MSC personnel, of 124 and a Military detachment of 11 permanent staff. When the ship deploys it gains an Air Detachment of Contractors - yes you heard it here first - which normally includes 2 Puma helos, 4 pilots and 4 engineers.

USNS LEWIS AND CLARK (T-AKE-1)

There are spare berths on board for uprating the military detachments or transporting personnel from ship to ship.

We joined on the afternoon of the 18th and having met Captain JJ White and the Chief Mate R Baus at the clearway, were taken to our cabins - they call them staterooms - via the personnel elevator, on 05 Deck. The cabins are equal in size to our Wave Class Senior Rates, and senior officers have slightly larger staterooms, every one has a shower and toilet, crew cabins share a shower and toilet, and a small refrigerator as part of the furnishings. Having said that the accommodations are utility and quite Spartan, there are no carpets anywhere, every cabin deck is lino tiles, as are the Mess Rooms, Lounges and alleyways. The furnishings are metal with a wood surface on desks and drawers, so that lovely tinkling sound of vibrating metal is evident at sea, just like AOR's! As the ship was to deploy after the weekend, the majority of the crew were on leave, those left were involved with last minute stores arriving to be craned on board and stowed, some like the Supply Officer Ron McCann were ordering the last minute stores that people had run out of or forgotten - so just like an RFA really!

After the evening meal we headed off in search of the base clubs that both of us remembered from previous visits (albeit 1979 and 1996!), however they no longer exist. Apparently after some troubled times the Navy shut the clubs down and never replaced them. So next time you are in Norfolk Naval Base, either get at taxi to Virginia Beach or use the MWR Pool Hall which serves beer, or stay on board!

Next day we saw the Trainee Purser and got the inevitable Joiners Pack - yup they have them too - which we started to complete, most important was the computer log on, carried out by the Radio Electrical Technician in the shack. Same routine as ours, sign that you have read and understood the rules, however before you can get going on the system you have to sit an awareness test consisting of questions on the freedom of information, computer security, illegal use of computers etc. which takes 45 minutes. Email accounts were set for us and you can get access to the internet, however it can be slow or non existent depending on traffic and the time of day you try to log on. Everyone we have met has been polite and welcoming and only too happy to help us settle in on board.

We sailed from Norfolk on Monday at 1000 and proceeded down the waters of Chesapeake bay. At 1500, before heading out into the Atlantic, the ship received the AIRDET of Pumas and their crews supplied on contract from Evergreen Helicopters, (a branch of Evergreen Air Charters who supplied the Jumbo Jet in the film "Die Hard 2") they would be with the ship for the deployment however the personnel are on a 6 weeks turn around . The next day was taken up with Emergency and Boat Stations and the usual checking of everything to ensure that all was secured for sea. This became more important in the next few days as the ship ran before the seas formed by the hurricanes sweeping up the eastern seaboard of the US. Fortunately little

Pre-positioning USS IWO JIMA loads, Assistant Cargo Mate (in white) discussing the plan with Evergreen Engineer.

damage ensued to ship or cargo as the ship clocked a 20 degree roll, purportedly the first for this class of ship!

In the days that followed the ship maintained an easterly heading at a speed of 15 knots, the pilots got themselves re-qualified on deck landings and 'picking and dropping' as they refer to VERTREP's, both by day and night. Captain White informed the ship that we would increase speed and join an exercise in the Mediterranean as the tanker for the purpose had pulled out, this meant no stop off in Spain as originally planned on completing the Atlantic crossing and the next planned port visit would be decided on once we were in company with the exercise - so again no real difference from the RFA! What's a foreign port visit anyway? Loch Striven!!!

A few days later the ship passed through the Straights of Gibraltar and headed deeper into the Mediterranean for a rendevous with the USS MOUNT WHITNEY and the first UNREP - that is underway replenishment or RAS to us - of this deployment. The RAS over the ship headed into Soudha Bay for a 6 hour "gas n go" top up of fuel cargo, which after 16 days at sea allowed Chris and I to grab an adult beverage in the MWR on the pier, as you know MSC ships are alcohol free, then it was back to business with HMS CHATHAM popping alongside for a drop of fuel in the evening. Three days later Augusta was on the agenda for the weekend. This allowed for a visit to Naval Air Station Sigonella and the Navy Exchange, if you have not visited in the past decade or so this place has changed! All modern buildings, with a new bowling alley, cinema, swimming pool, fitness suites, pizza bars a pretty big NEX and a pub! More adult beverages were consumed after prowling around the NEX and picking up a couple of bargains. After Augusta where stores were picked up as well as a top off of fuel it was back to Soudha to pick up the Force Protection Team and some last minute stores for USS 's MASON and NITZE before sailing next morning and heading towards Suez for our onward passage to the Arabian Gulf.

Once through the ditch in the sand and past the Bab el Mandeb the ship became busy, as customers rolled in from 5th fleet, with the busiest time just after the Fujairah stop, again overnight, where 13 artic refrigerated wagons, and 6 artic wagons of general stores were loaded in 10 hours. The USS IWO JIMA came alongside for a VERTREP which entailed a 0600 start to get the stores out of the freezer and onto the flight deck, there would be 299 loads in all. The first load left the flight deck at 0720 and using 1 helicopter carried on until the last load at 1038, including a fuel stop on the IWO that gives a turn round of 1 load every 2 minutes, actually some loads were 1minute 45! By the time the nets and pendants used for the loads came back from the IWO it was 1200 and time to head for Bahrain where the ship would load over two days before heading back out to the Gulf to carry on storing and fuelling the fleet.

Evergreen Puma dropping the last load on USS IWO JIMA.

Sometime in the next 4 weeks the ship will be meeting USS THEODORE ROOSEVELT and carrying out VERTREP and UNREP operations, total number of loads not yet known but believed to be around the 400 mark. So in the next instalment from the colonies I will let you know how it went. Before I go, one of this class of ships is called the USNS CARL BRASHEAR, what film was made about this chap?

Men of Honour - Carl Brashear was the first Black US Navy diver and the first amputee to return to duty as a diver.

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RFA WAVE KNIGHT – BRINGING A LITTLE BIT OF CHRISTMAS TO THE CHILDREN OF KENYA

By Steward Kevin Jewel.

After a very busy end to the year replenishing an international group of ships in the Gulf of Aden we finally detached for a short R&R visit to Mombasa over the Christmas period.

On our voyage to Mombasa the Captain very kindly allowed us to have a BBQ at which we also held a crossing the line ceremony with a very scary Chief Officer as King Neptune and his lovely "wife", PO(Deck) Neil Anderton. Suffice to say we had a grand old time.

We were very fortunate to have a young lady AB JUSTINE LEWIS (RNR) from Force Protection Group RM onboard who came up with the idea to contact an orphanage in Mombasa to see if there was an opportunity to offer some assistance in improving the children's home.

In anticipation of this, I approached the captain to ask him if he had any artefacts he might like to donate that we could auction at the BBQ to raise some money for the orphans. He was only too pleased to help and provided me with some very smart baseball caps from the various ships that we had replenished. The crew certainly showed their generosity and Christmas spirit and we raised nearly 300 pounds. As a result of that it just snowballed (excuse the pun). Everyday more money poured in, there were donations from every department, officers and crew. I was stunned and all in all we raised $ 1100 which we changed for 76,000 Kenyan shillings.

Myself, Justine and SG2 Kevin Robinson then went to the local Nakumatt superstore on the day of arrival and spent 4 hours shopping for toys, sports equipment, toiletries etc, Well as you can imagine, give a woman a free reign to spend money in the shops and you're guaranteed to come out having spent the lot !! Bless her, she was in her element (couldn't have done it without her).

So then on the second day, the three of us went to visit the first orphanage called THE BEEHIVE Children's Home. I can honestly say I have never seen anything like it and I have visited an orphanage in Cochin in India which was nothing in comparison to this. One of their main problems is lack of fresh water, they have none at all. All the water they use has to be bought with money they can raise. The home also lacks any form of safe and hygienic sanitation raising the risk of food poisoning. With regards to food it became apparent that the home was desperate for food which made us feel guilty for spending money on all the provisions we had bought earlier. However they were still very happy to see us and made us very welcome.

On the third day (Christmas day) we had a great turn out and about a dozen of us set off at 07.00HRS. The CPO Cook Jonnie Linton did us proud and brought along food, milk and sweets etc, which was gladly received by the JOYWORLD ORPHANAGE who we visited that day. We spent the whole morning there playing games and dishing out sweets to the children. I will never forget their little faces. Wendy Veale, the Logistics Officer and Justine were brilliant reading stories to the children and doing drawing and colouring in from the books that we had purchased.

So please, if your ship ever gets to visit Mombasa then do try to visit these children and do what you can for them.

JOYWORLD CHILDRENS HOME
CAROLINE A O MBUGA
ADMINISTRATOR
PO BOX 41679
MOMBASA
KENYA
G.P.O. 80100
EMAIL carolomburo@yahoo.com

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RFA ARGUS:
Re-fit in Falmouth.

RFA BAYLEAF:
In Birkenhead undergoing re-fit.

RFA BLACK ROVER:
Currently heading north released from APT(S) to Brazil.

RFA CARDIGAN BAY:
Conducting OP TELIC tasking.

RFA DILIGENCE:
Gulf MCM Support.

RFA FORT AUSTIN:
Returning to the UK from TAURUS.

RFA FORT GEORGE:
FOST DCT for APT(N).

RFA FORT ROSALIE:
FOST preps Portland.

RFA FORT VICTORIA:
In Birkenhead in re-fit.

RFA GOLD ROVER:
On passage from the UK to APT(S).

RFA LARGS BAY:
Alongside in Charleston CSP.

RFA LYME BAY:
Sailing through the Red Sea to the Gulf.

RFA MOUNTS BAY:
Returned from TAURUS, alongside Marchwood.

RFA ORANGELEAF:
On task as FOST tanker.

RFA WAVE KNIGHT:
Currently Gulf Tanker off Oman.

RFA WAVE RULER:
Sailing through the Red Sea on passage East.

Provided courtesy of The U.K Hydrographic Office

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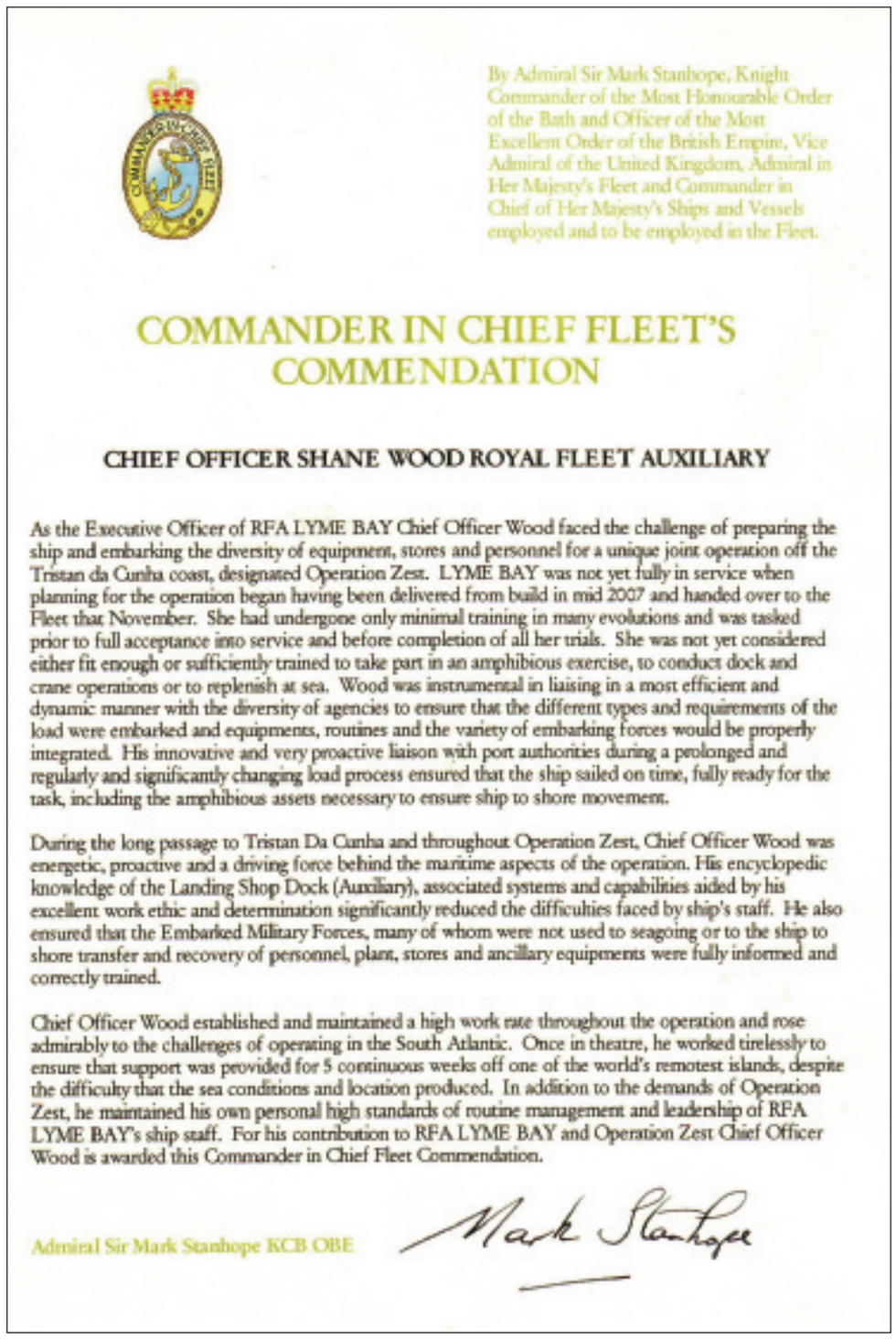
COMMANDER IN CHIEF FLEET COMMENDATION

Admiral Sir Mark Stanhope KCB OBE, Commander in Chief Fleet presented Chief Officer Shane Wood with a Commander in Chief Fleet Commendation for the work he undertook in preparing LYME BAY for the unique joint operation off the Tristan da Cunha coast last year, designated Operation Zest.

LYME BAY was not fully in service when planning for the operation began having been delivered from build in mid 2007 and handed over to the Fleet that November. The ship had not had the opportunity to complete training in many evolutions prior to any deployment. Chief Officer Wood was instrumental in liaising in a most efficient and dynamic manner with the diversity of agencies to ensure that the different types and requirements of the load were embarked and equipments, routines and the variety of embarking forces were properly integrated.

Chief Officer Wood worked tirelessly to ensure that support was provided for five continuous weeks off one of the worlds remotest islands, despite the difficulty that sea conditions and the location produced.



By Admiral Sir Mark Stanhope, Knight Commander of the Most Honourable Order of the Bath and Officer of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire, Vice Admiral of the United Kingdom, Admiral in Her Majesty's Fleet and Commander in Chief of Her Majesty's Ships and Vessels employed and to be employed in the Fleet.

COMMANDER IN CHIEF FLEET'S COMMENDATION

CHIEF OFFICER SHANE WOOD ROYAL FLEET AUXILIARY

As the Executive Officer of RFA LYME BAY Chief Officer Wood faced the challenge of preparing the ship and embarking the diversity of equipment, stores and personnel for a unique joint operation off the Tristan da Cunha coast, designated Operation Zest. LYME BAY was not yet fully in service when planning for the operation began having been delivered from build in mid 2007 and handed over to the Fleet that November. She had undergone only minimal training in many evolutions and was tasked prior to full acceptance into service and before completion of all her trials. She was not yet considered either fit enough or sufficiently trained to take part in an amphibious exercise, to conduct dock and crane operations or to replenish at sea. Wood was instrumental in liaising in a most efficient and dynamic manner with the diversity of agencies to ensure that the different types and requirements of the load were embarked and equipments, routines and the variety of embarking forces would be properly integrated. His innovative and very proactive liaison with port authorities during a prolonged and regularly and significantly changing load process ensured that the ship sailed on time, fully ready for the task, including the amphibious assets necessary to ensure ship to shore movement.

During the long passage to Tristan Da Cunha and throughout Operation Zest, Chief Officer Wood was energetic, proactive and a driving force behind the maritime aspects of the operation. His encyclopedic knowledge of the Landing Shop Dock (Auxiliary), associated systems and capabilities aided by his excellent work ethic and determination significantly reduced the difficulties faced by ship's staff. He also ensured that the Embarked Military Forces, many of whom were not used to seagoing or to the ship to shore transfer and recovery of personnel, plant, stores and ancillary equipments were fully informed and correctly trained.

Chief Officer Wood established and maintained a high work rate throughout the operation and rose admirably to the challenges of operating in the South Atlantic. Once in theatre, he worked tirelessly to ensure that support was provided for 5 continuous weeks off one of the world's remotest islands, despite the difficulty that the sea conditions and location produced. In addition to the demands of Operation Zest, he maintained his own personal high standards of routine management and leadership of RFA LYME BAY's ship staff. For his contribution to RFA LYME BAY and Operation Zest Chief Officer Wood is awarded this Commander in Chief Fleet Commendation.

Admiral Sir Mark Stanhope KCB OBE

Mark Stanhope

CARDIGAN BAY UPDATE

It has been a little while since there has been an update from the Cardigan Bay, so I shall give you a brief update of my last month onboard. The vessel remains in the Northern Arabian Gulf (NAG) and after a large crew change the Cardigan Bay set sail from Bahrain to her usual stomping grounds of over 28 degrees and 30 minutes north.

I somehow sensed that the job up here was going to be a little different from my Replenishment days on RFA Bayleaf and Pirate hunting ones onboard RFA Argus. I wasn't wrong!

With the brand new technology of a Bay Class vessel and a new operating area my brain was full of all sorts of information, but with a great team onboard support has never been far away. So to describe a typical week onboard, well there are never any two days the same that is for sure. Unlike most people the week starts Monday and finishes Friday, here it's Sunday to Thursday with the embarkation of Iraqi troops to commence their training. Friday and Saturdays are for Ships Company training. We also provide a landing platform for the American Desert Hawk Aircraft, here we either receive personnel for transfer to other vessels or into theatre and more often stores this being in the form of mail for all the units operating in the areas and many needed spare parts, so on Tuesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays we are a very popular vessel.

The Iraqi troops which are embarked are being trained in many different roles from the protection of their Oil platforms to the receipt of the new Defender Class vessels which are being built in Italy. There is a Royal Naval team embarked which is assisting in each of these different areas. Some of the training does require a little integration with the Ships Company, Damage control and Fire Fighting being one of them. I received a phone call from our PO (Q) "Don't panic if you start hearing Fire, Fire, Fire, the Iraqi troops are getting prepared for their own Thursday War scenario" Ah I thought to myself. By turning the CCTV camera screens to the Tank Deck I was able to view what was going on. In addition to this they also had a few casualties thrown in and the Doctor and Medical Technician were at hand to advise.

The time then came for the ship's company to conduct a little training of their own, this was in the form of Man Overboard Drills, Machinery Break Down Drills, Steering Gear Break Down Drills, Quickdraw Exercises and a fire exercise or two.

The sun had only just risen and the XO, Bosun and the Deck team were preparing the deck to put the Iraqi Boats into the water. This was to conduct two Security Sweeps of tankers, prior to them moving to one of the Iraqi Oil platforms to fill up with fuel. This particular day was no ordinary day though, it was Christmas Day. Whilst the rest of our friends and family were opening presents and eating lots we were still doing the job we are here to do. The only RFA vessel at sea over Christmas anywhere in the world!! However in order to lighten the mood with our Australian and American Cousins at 23:00 on Christmas Eve, my ever eager on watch communicator gained Arial sector clearance for Call Sign, Santa and eight reindeer to visit RFA Cardigan Bay to conduct a stores transfer. This caused much amusement to all of the coalition vessels who were patrolling the Oil Platforms and surrounding areas over Christmas. A little bit of light humour in a very serious situation. Many thanks for all of my gifts Santa!!!

Following rather a long December Patrol the ship managed to get into port for New Year's Eve..... and my Birthday!!!

Despite being thousands of miles away from home, the ships company have done a sterling job in raising a lot of money for various charities. These being, Help for Hero's, Make a Wish Foundation, the RNLI and not forgetting the British Legion Poppy Appeal. Well over one thousand pounds has been raised!!! And if you are a keen watcher of Soccer AM then watch out for the ships company photograph.

I am going to leave it there for the moment and see what else unfolds, so until next time this is Third Officer X Tanya Warner Signing Out.

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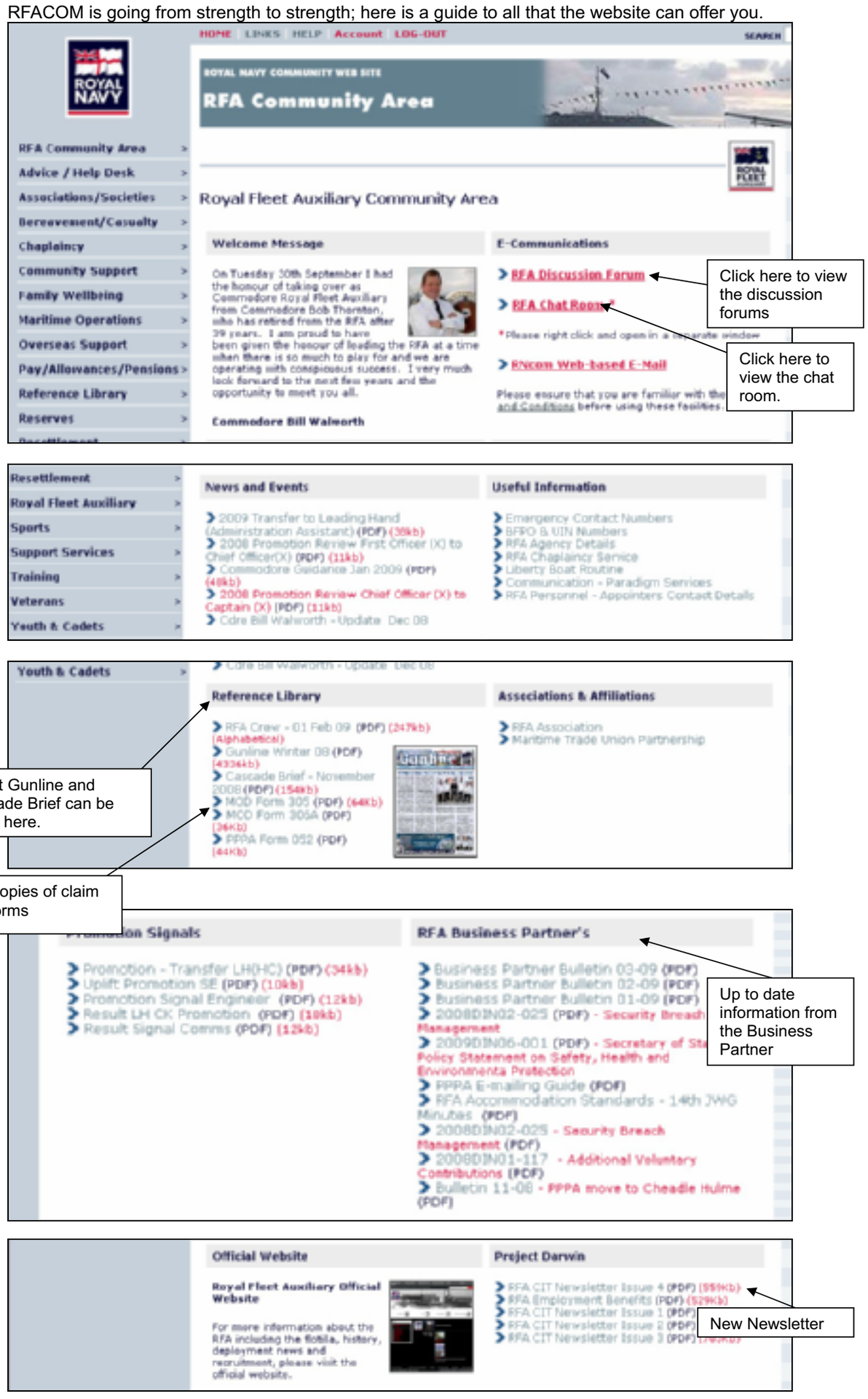
RFACOM is going from strength to strength; here is a guide to all that the website can offer you.



GUNLINE AVAILABLE ELECTRONICALLY

Over the last year work has been undertaken and is ongoing to widen the availability of GUNLINE both within the service and also to organisations and services within the wider maritime audience by making it available electronically.

The intention is to make the paper more available to students seeking a career at sea, former employees and their family and friends. It will prove particularly useful to all those living abroad whose copy is more likely to get lost in the post.

GUNLINE is already available in electronic format on the RFA page on the www.royalnavy.mod.uk website and the RFA Community website www.rncom.mod.uk

If you have not already visited either or both of these sites then this is an ideal reason to do so. If you are keen to reduce the amount of mail you receive, then choosing to read the paper in an electronic form is an ideal opportunity.

In turn it will reduce the carbon footprint of GUNLINE by reducing the need to print as many copies which can end up being recycled. It also reduces the carbon footprint associated with the distribution of the paper which is increased significantly in copies which are sent abroad. All these changes will also help in reducing the costs associated with GUNLINE, which will eventually be significantly reduced as more people agree to read it online.

Work is ongoing to look at making changes to how and where the electronic format is available and these changes will, all being well, be made over the next few editions of the paper. Information will be in each GUNLINE as to how the changes are moving along to ensure you are kept informed.

If you would like to start reading GUNLINE on line and stop receiving it in the post please e.mail me at mark.mundy307@mod.uk or if you are on dii at the following - FLEET-DCS-INFO-MEDIA OPS2 SO2

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Chairman's Dit.

Firstly the long awaited new RFA Association website has finally arrived, still in its infancy it will evolve into something eminently more readable in the next couple of months as I become more proficient in finding my way around its nooks and crannies. The intended additions to the site will be a guestbook, a photo gallery and the RFA Association "goodies" shop. A very important add on will be the facility to download various thinks like membership application forms, change of address forms and back issues (where we have them) of Gunline.

And on the subject of Gunline I hope that from the next edition the Association will have an expanded presence within Gunline under our own title, "Force 4". As you may know it was hoped to publish Force 4 as our own standalone periodical but problems with the publishers/printers proved insurmountable, twice in fact the copy had been written and two issues prepared and sent off for publication. In both cases we were badly let down, this coupled to the high cost of having it printed and distributed ourselves became impracticable. During my recent visit with Commodore Walworth it was agreed that an expanded presence for the Association in Gunline was possible and that is being actively worked on.

Returning to my visit with Commodore Bill it is evident that he is proving to be a good friend to the Association. Amongst the topics discussed were, Gunline, RFA Trophies and Awards including the "James Coull Memorial Award" which is of course sponsored by the Association and closer links with our parent service. Positive support for the Association was clearly there and there should be more to report in the future.

David Cameron has now retired as Association Treasurer after many years of stalwart service. On behalf of the Association I

offer a big thank you to him for all his valuable work and effort. David is seen here bring presented, by Rex Cooper (Immediate Past Chairman), with a well earned retirement present of books that complete his collection of the Wainwright Walks. I gather he will soon be undertaking a marathon walk up the West Coast of Scotland with Son and grandson. David has been relieved by Roy Oxby, a retired Barclays Bank manager who lives in Eggleston (Near Barnard Castle), his email address is accounts@rfa-association.org .

The Association has become a "Country Member" of the Royal Maritime Club, Queen Street, Portsmouth, PO1 3HS which brings discounts to members wishing to stay at the Club or use its facilities, bar, function rooms, health club etc. It is within walking distance of Portsmouth Harbour Station. The phone number is 02392 824231 and there is a website at www.royalmaritimeclub.co.uk

Not long now to the annual "Reunion" this year being held in Liverpool. All members should have received the application form by now, if you haven't and wish to come please get in touch ASAP. Enclosed with the Reunion application was a "Change of Personal Details" form if your details have changed and you have not completed the form yet please do it soon. It's also not that long before we will be holding the 2009 AGM, details of the venue and all the usual and associated bumpf will be mailed out IDC.

As ever my thanks go to Mike Day, George Mortimore, Brian Waters and Dave Gerrard for their contributions to this edition and I would like to take the opportunity of reminding members that if you have a story to tell, an event to advertise or anything that would be of interest to Gunline readers please send it in to me.

Pat Thompson

ADEN EVACUATION

RFA Tidespring anchored off Aden. October 1967. I was First Off standing on the flight deck waving at RAF helicopters who largely ignored me. Suddenly I was struck down with the most excruciating pain, collapsed and was carried midships. After a day of agony the Doc - Joe Washington - said "Boy, I'se going to call you a helicopter". This was done and I was airlifted to the RAF Hospital at Khormaksar Beach where after a short examination I was taken to theatre and operated on for appendicitis. The surgeon said he put his arm in up to his elbow but couldn't find it so presumed it must have burst. At the end of the first week Matron came in and told me I was "off the List". I asked her what list and she said "the dangerously ill list". I didn't even know I was on it - the shock put me back about a week. At the end of the second week I was told that the hospital was going to be evacuated and everyone flown to Bahrain. The bad guys must have heard about this because they threatened to shoot down the Britannia aircraft that took the doctors and nurses (and patients) away because the RAF were treating their wounded as well. They used to roar over the Causeway at night and chuck their casualties out into the hospital garden. I asked how we would get from the hospital to the airfield and was told that the Regiment would look after us. The RAF Regiment did a grand job. Completely surrounded the hospital and escorted us to the bus. The only criticism I had of the operation was the young RAF doctor sitting next to me with a drawn and clearly loaded revolver. "In defence of our patients" he said "we are allowed to be armed" I moved to another seat.

The threat to the Britannia was taken seriously because we flew out in a Armstrong Whitworth Argosy aircraft and arrived in Bahrain after a very slow flight. We were taken to the RAF hospital and stayed there for a couple of days. As I was now walking wounded I found it rather boring and accompanied by a Royal Marine captain with a broken arm tried to get out for a visit to the local pub. But every exit was guarded by the Regiment and we were politely but firmly sent back to our ward,

On the third day we embarked in a Britannia for the flight to Lyneham but after only a few minutes in the air we heard the pilot talking to the tower (he had left the radio on through to the cabin) "I have lost an engine - I am returning to Muharraq - I want foam on the runway - this is a Casevac". I thought it was all rather exciting but the young RAF chap in the next seat was clearly terrified. I suppose he knew what could happen. But we landed safely and were taken back to the hospital while they flew another engine from the UK. A few days later we left again and headed for home. But the fates had not finished with us yet.

Over the UK there was thick fog and both Lyneham and Brize Norton were closed. We diverted to Heathrow but couldn't, for some reason, get in there. So we finally landed at Thorney Island - a little used airfield near Portsmouth. We were deplaned and enbused. "Where" I said "are we going now?", "To Wroughton" I was told. That's an RAF hospital up in darkest Wiltshire. "But we want to go to Haslar - if I stand on the roof I can see it". "No" I was told "Wroughton". The Royal Marine told me to keep them talking while he phoned for help. This I did successfully and about an hour later an RN ambulance arrived and took us to Haslar where we arrived tired but triumphant.

Another week in Haslar before being allowed home but one last kick was in store. Before being discharged all patients have to be interviewed by the Surgeon Captain. He looked at me and said "you've got a cold - go back to bed".

But I was home in time for Christmas.

George Mortimore
February 2009

Photograph courtesy of George Mortimore.

OBITUARIES

Since the last edition of Gunline the following members and ex-RFA non members have sadly "Crossed the Bar"

Jim Burt, Captain(E), member, aged 77

Doug (Kyushu) Cunningham, SRO, non member aged 78

Tom Humphrey C Eng, Commodore(E),aged 78.

Sonny West BEM, CPO(Cook), non member.

Maurice Vincent, non member.

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FOR SERVICE, SEAFARERS AND FAMILIES

REG CHARITY NO. 1093950. PATRON: HRH THE EARL OF WESSEX, KG KCVO ADC REGISTERED IN SCOTLAND No. SC039054

Part of THE MAINE STORY

The name Maine is synonymous with the RFA since the now famous Admiralty Letter of 3rd August 1905 using the hospital ship's name as the example of the newly styled prefix "RFA Maine". For historians she is referred to as RFA Maine [1], being the progenitor of no less than 5 others, 3 of which actually served in the RFA fleet over the following half-century.

RFA Maine [1] was built as the SS Swansea and traded for the Atlantic Transport Company of West Virginia, USA. She was renamed SS Maine, in 1889. In 1899 she mobilised by Lady Randolph Churchill to go to South Africa as a charity hospital ship. Her son John was serving as a Major in the Boer War. "The other" son, Winston, arrived on the scene as a war correspondent. After the war, in 1902, Maine was presented to the Admiralty and commissioned as HMHS Maine, before being transferred to the RFA.

In 1904, the Director of Naval Construction, Sir Phillip Watts, initiated the new "fleet" hospital ship project, when he was also very busy with many other new naval developments and projects. By 1909 it was confirmed that the new hospital ship was to complement the aging Maine [1], not replace her, and would be named RFA Mediator.

A lot of effort was spent looking at other navy's hospital ships, their equipment and manning levels before draft designs were made. Special attention was given to the engines, to avoiding vibration during surgical operations, and the use of sails to improve stability and reduce rolling. By 1911 DNC's New Hospital Ship committee was ready and invited tenders to build the very smart looking twin-screw ship. In March 1912 the new First Lord, Sir Winston Churchill, decided that he preferred to buy a ship off the slips or convert an existing liner, and the 8-year new-build project was abandoned.

In June 1914 RFA Maine [1] ran aground off the coast of Scotland and was a total loss. I don't think the effects and ramifications of that loss at that time can easily be imagined today, but that will be covered later. It was decided the second ship being bought and converted as a result of the March 1912 decision would be renamed Maine [2]. However, it was such a botched up job that the ship in question never entered service, being sold "as lying" in 1916.

The March 1912 decision had not been so clever after all but events were to overtake the project. As the First World War began, dozens of merchant ships were taken up to be used as hospital ships. Twenty two were used in the Gallipoli campaign alone, and many were lost including the RMS Titanic's sister-ship, HMHS Britannic. The name RFA Maine was absent from the RFA Fleet List until the navy stabilised after the war, and the peace-oriented Admiralty rationalised that the fleet still required two permanent hospital ships, as had been decided in 1909. Both the chosen ships had seen service as hospital ships in the war. They were purchased in October 1920; the Berbice and the Panama, and the latter was renamed RFA Maine [3].

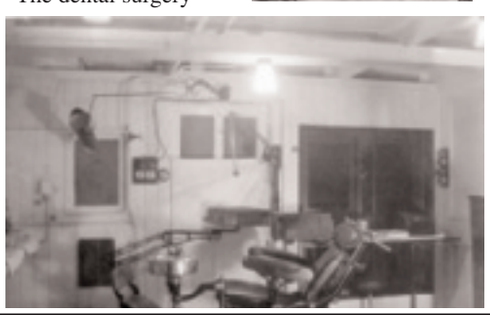
RFA Berbice was sold in defence cuts in 1922. RFA Maine [3] had a lot of money spent on her permanent conversion, updating her fleet requirements including a new bridge, as well as her hospital facilities. She spent most of her long and successful career based at Malta.

Above: Vessels in Malta's harbour

Above: At Navarin Bay
She can easily be identified in photos of the fleet at anchor in Italian or Yugoslavian bays capable of taking 30 to 50 ships.
At other times she supported the submarine and destroyer flotillas based in Malta and on occasional visits with them to Algiers, other Arabic or Palestinian ports or the south of France.

Left & Right:
In dry dock in Gibraltar
She accompanied the Mediterranean Fleet on the spring, summer and autumn exercises.

Below: A Ward and the staff
The dental surgery



Below: At Haifa, Palestine

The Ship's mascots

To be continued.
Taken from "British Fleet Auxiliaries" by Mike Day.
All photos privately taken and owned by Mike Day. Originals (c) 2009 Mike Day

Plymouth and District Branch

Christmas Lunch at the Moorlands Links Hotel Yelverton

Pictures by Chris Locke

Solent Branch

Following a period of ice and snow in the south, the weather was a relatively kindly drizzly mist when a large gathering of members and guests assembled at the Vine Inn, Ower, for our first meet of 2009.

It was a great pleasure to welcome quite a number of new faces among our many regulars, including several serving sea-goers. They are always assured of a particularly warm welcome. Altogether, we mustered 42 for this convivial lunch-time meeting, and this was duly reflected in raffle ticket sales which raised over £100 for the charity.

The Branch chairman, Brian Waters, briefly brought members up-to-date on some RFAA issues at national level including the re-build of the Association's website, but mostly concerning the non-appearance of long-promised publications, as well as circulation problems with this fine organ! He assured members that the Trustees were actively pursuing cost-effective publishing options in an era of reducing income. He also sent best wishes from all present to Maureen Williamson, a Branch Friend, who with our secretary Alan does so much for the Solent Branch. We wish her a speedy return to good health.

Our next gathering is in the diary for April 15th and details of the venue etc will be in the next Branch Newsletter. Members and guests are always welcome to join in, whether from this branch, another or indeed none!

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The Marine Society & Sea Cadets

THE MARINE SOCIETY CELEBRATES A 40 YEAR PARTNERSHIP WITH THE OPEN UNIVERSITY – AND BRINGS NEWS OF A MAJOR BENEFIT TO SEAFARERS...

The Marine Society College of the Sea continues its close collaboration with the UK's biggest provider of higher level distance learning courses for the benefit of seafarers.

This year The Open University is 40 years old: and The Marine Society, which played a part in its foundation, has been running its exams at sea and providing underpinning logistical support for its programmes from the beginning.

The Marine Society has recently got the OU to offer academic credit for seafarers' HND in Nautical Science or Marine Engineering.

This is a significant step that will benefit seafarers who wish to continue their education with all providers, such is the perception of the OU as a gold standard in terms of academic credit transfer.

Business, Leadership & Management Degree

To mark this 40 year partnership, The Open University has launched a BA/BSc Open Degree expressly for seafarers with a focus on Business, Leadership & Management.

The degree programme comprises preselected, recommended strands that are seafarer-friendly and tailored to the needs of the maritime sector.

Mapped to HND

The degree has been mapped for credit transfer against a seafarers' HND in Nautical Science or Marine Engineering and attracts a very generous 120 points at Level 1 and a further 60 at Level 2.

That leaves only a 60 point course at Level 2 and two 30 point courses at Level 3 to get the degree. That makes the qualification achievable within just two years and far more affordable than would otherwise be the case.

Seafarer friendly

And because it comes from The Open University and is seafarer-friendly it can all be achieved - as you'd expect - either at sea or ashore.

What's it about

Students who complete this degree will have a good understanding of business, leadership and management and their impact on organisations, including wider considerations in the external environment.

They will have a range of analytical and problem-solving skills incorporating the management of functions such as marketing, human resources and finance, and leading and influencing change.

They will also have relevant and practical skills in communication, the use of IT, numerical interpretation, collaborative working and reflective thinking.

International Affairs & Cultural Understanding

There is a second degree put together by The Marine Society in conjunction with The Open University. This, too, is an Open Degree with preselected strands thought to be of interest and relevance to seafarers and all entirely seafarer-friendly.

Graduates of this degree programme will have a broad understanding of contemporary global issues, of the key political, economic, environmental and cultural aspects of the international order, and of the dynamics of the global system. Students will gain an appreciation of cultural diversity and knowledge of international institutions, together with an awareness of global citizenship.

The same credit transfer arrangements apply to this degree as to the Business, Leadership & Management: 120 points at Level 1 and a further 60 points at Level 2. So again this degree is attainable within just two years by distance learning and at a price that is more affordable than would be the case if the credit transfer arrangements were not in place.

Interested?

The Marine Society would like to tell you more about its partnership with the OU, the new degree programmes, and the credit transfer arrangements.

For more information please visit www.ms-sc.org/ou or email education@ms-sc.org

Of course the range of support services offered by The Marine Society for OU study continues. If you're thinking about OU study you really should contact The Marine Society first. They can offer free and impartial advice about making the most of your professional qualifications as a seafarer in terms of academic credit transfer, offer underpinning logistical support for your study, arrange for examinations to be taken anywhere in the world (including at sea), and there are even some course fee discounts available for some programmes.

Taking the world of learning to sea

The Marine Society College of the Sea was subjected to the scrutiny of an Ofsted inspection in February and Gunline is delighted to note that, as may have been expected, the Government's inspectors found no fault.

Indeed, Ofsted concluded that "The Marine Society College of the Sea offers an outstanding range of programmes to meet the needs of seafarers" and, furthermore, that "teaching and learning are good, with examination pass rates above national rates".

Of course all this will come as no news to the generations of RFA personnel who have benefited from its services over the years.

The college prides itself on its dedication to seafarers with its offer of courses constantly evolving. It's fair to say it includes learning programmes and skills to suit every taste, age, background and ability.

Most popular amongst RFA personnel is the college's offer of an extensive range of subjects at GCSE and A Level. All subjects are tutor-supported, and come with professionally prepared learning materials. As you would expect, the provision is seafarer-friendly, meaning it's ideally suited whether you're at sea or ashore.

And because the College of the Sea is an examination centre, it can also enter you for examinations and make arrangements for you to sit them either ashore or afloat.

The college also administers a suite of financial schemes to help RFA personnel to advance their academic and professional qualifications.

These include the John William Slater scholarships for serving ratings (administered on behalf of NautilusUK); Marine Society Worcester scholarships for qualified mariners undertaking higher level education programmes; and arrangements to offer interest-free loans to help offset the costs of attending vocational courses or studying at colleges for professional advancement - the principal beneficiaries of the latter are those studying for certificates of competency.

The college also considers the award of loans which may subsequently be converted into grants. For example, should a seafarer wish to study for a vocationally orientated diploma by distance learning he/she may be offered a loan, but when the course has been successfully completed the loan may be converted into a grant. The aim is to provide additional motivation for a form of study that is often very difficult to follow through.

Director of Education at the College of the Sea, Brian Thomas, told Gunline: "Our learning programmes are about delivering flexible solutions at the point of need. We remain a source of unbiased, confidential, free, and expert advice for RFA personnel on all aspects of learning, personal and professional development ... and all matters beyond!

Whatever the issue we promise a swift, positive and personal response: if we don't know the answer ourselves we'll consult others who do and feedback to you a range of possible solutions."

Contact The Marine Society College of the Sea:
202 Lambeth Road, London SE1 7JW
www.mscos.ac.uk
education@ms-sc.org
020 7654 7050

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!

For more information: www.ms-sc.org
email: legacies@ms-sc.org **phone:** 020 7654 7013
The Marine Society & Sea Cadets
202 Lambeth Road
LONDON SE1 7JW
A charity registered in England & Wales 313013 and in Scotland SC037808

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RFA BLACK ROVER VISIT TO RIO DE JANEIRO FEBRUARY 18TH TO 22ND 2009

RFA BLACK ROVER sailed from East Cove on February 9th to conduct a patrol of the Falklands, however instead of returning to East Cove as initially programmed the ship was tasked to alter course and made her way north to warmer waters to rendezvous with the incoming APT(S) ship, HMS MANCHESTER and then conduct a joint visit to Rio de Janeiro in Brazil.

After making a northerly passage we rendezvoused with Manchester for a RAS on February 17th before turning for Rio, arriving alongside on the 18th. The sightseeing and picture taking started almost immediately the ship was in sight of the port with both Sugar Loaf Mountain and the statue of Christ the Redeemer being visible during the pilotage. Even the Navigator was in on the act, being unable to resist the opportunity to include some famous landmarks into the bridge routines, "Chart, Navigator. Next fix will be Statue of Christ, Sugar Loaf Peak and Santa Cruz Light." Let's face it; it's not every day that you get to include a world famous landmark into your fixing routine, let alone the statue of a deity!! (Note: Smeaton Tower in Plymouth and Spinnaker Tower in Portsmouth do not really count as 'World Famous' landmarks). There was much to-ing and fro-ing up and down the berth, whilst the jetty master and pilot figured out where they wanted to tie the ship. This included about 5 changes to our position, including one false start on making fast before the ship was finally deemed to be well and truly 'in position'.

The gangway went down and the visit could begin. The usual first day's business in a foreign port got underway immediately with a stream of visitors to the ship looking for everyone from the Captain to the Logistics Supply Officer. Our Visit Liaison Officer was the busiest of them all, gathering the final details for the excellent sightseeing opportunities that he had organised for the ship's company. A job very well done – thank you Del!!

A meeting was held onboard with HMS MANCHESTER's key players to organise the program for the passage back to the Falklands, which included Gunnery, Replenishments, OOW Manoeuvres, Flying and ADEX's. This was followed up by the obligatory first night in Cocktail Party before the serious business of sightseeing could begin on the next day.

Tours had been organised for those that wished to soak up the local culture. These included visits to the previously mentioned landmarks of Christ the Redeemer atop Corcovado Mountain along with Sugar Loaf Mountain and its cable cars as well as the beaches at Copacabana and Ipanema. Stunning and spectacular views available at all locations!!

An excellent BBQ lunch was laid on as part of the tour which included, as you might expect from a South American country, as much meat as you could manage.

Luckily for us it was the start of Carnival season, so the city was alive with the electric atmosphere associated with this spectacular event. However, Carnival does not take place through the streets of Rio as many believe; it takes place within a display area specifically designed for the annual showcase of music, colour and dance. Several members of the ship's company took the opportunity of purchasing tickets in the stands to watch the hundreds of Samba Schools perform their bright and dazzling routines, which as it turned out was merely a precursor to the main event of Carnival and Mardi Gras which was just getting into full swing. Each year thousands of dancers and musicians from all over Rio compete in what can only be described as 'dance-off' competitions before the full blown Carnival gets underway. The prize from the dance-off is the opportunity to perform in the main Mardi Gras Parade during the following year. By all accounts it is a fiercely competitive event lasting throughout the night, spilling out onto the streets in a kaleidoscopic night of carnival. This, however, just involves the larger Samba Schools of Rio; there are also smaller Schools within the suburbs and districts of the city which hold their own separate Carnival events in their locality. So no matter where we went, from Sugar Loaf to Copacabana and back again, Carnival could be found everywhere.

And for those not wishing to attend Carnival, there was an event with just as much atmosphere and quite a bit of tension as it turned out – Football – Brazilian Style!!!! Our visit coincided with the semi final of the Carioca Championship, a state championship that is played amongst the clubs within the city and state of Rio. The clubs within the contest included the big four in Rio (Botafogo, Flamengo, Fluminense and Vasco) plus 12 smaller clubs from the surrounding district. The match was played in the Maracana Stadium, which is anticipated to host the 2014 World Cup Final, and was between the favourites, Flamengo (pronounced Flamenco, playing in Red and Black Hoops) and the underdogs, Resende, (Playing in Black and White Stripes and being supported by the ships contingent of

Newcastle United fans). The action was fast paced, much faster than the English game. But not so fast as the referee's cards!! There were 3 red cards during the match and more yellows than we could count. Controversy was the main topic of discussion, with 2 red cards for Flamengo in the first half, the first lead to a penalty which opened the scoring for Resende and the second was the result of a disagreement as to where the ball should be placed for a free kick. The odd thing was that it was a Flamengo free kick from within their half!! Needless to say the ref was not the most popular person at the half time break as he and the other officials were treated to a barrage of abuse as well as the launching of a few empty bottles and cans from the Flamengo supporters. They were quite safe though as they were escorted off the pitch by their own security detail! Not surprisingly with Flamengo reduced to 9 men for much of the game, Resende were the victors, winning 3-1. Pleasing the travelling Resende fans that formed a puddle of black and white when compared to the sea of red and black of the Flamengo fans that occupied the majority of the stadium.

We were in a totally different country but the language of football was the same with shouts for a poor decision and cheers for a favourable one and before the end of the game the Flamengo fans voted with their feet and walked out of the match long before the final whistle blew, obviously ashamed by their teams disappointing result.

So, with sights seen, bars visited, postcards sent, silly photographs in front of JC taken and (tacky) souvenirs purchased BLACK ROVER sailed from Rio in company with HMS MANCHESTER on the morning of February 22nd and following one final bearing of Sugar Loaf we turned south and headed for the cooler climes of the Falkland Islands, setting up for an OOW Manoeuvres serial as we did so.

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WAVE RULER – THE ONLY TANKER IN THE VILLAGE

Since returning from APT(N) in December 2008 Wave Ruler had a frenzied short AMP in Portland. During which the ship had to accomplish a complete ERS kit change, de-store the remainder of flight equipment and prepare for Operational Sea Training (DCT(H)). On completion of the AMP it was a quick transit to the South Coast Exercise Areas to conduct DCT(H) and load cargo. Back to Portland to complete deployment preps and then deploy to the Mediterranean as a pivotal unit for Op Taurus 09.

The post APT(N) and AMP period was extremely busy with the usual conflicts between getting the Ship in a fit state to safely deploy and getting personnel into the training mindset required to successfully deal with the challenges of State 1 DCT(H) at FOST. As expected and with full credit to the Ship's Company WAVE RULER presented on time for FOST and was assessed safe at MASC. Little did we no that this was only the beginning of what was to become a protracted training period. Owing to the taut time scale FOST staff decided to continue the training into the shakedown phase of the deployment. The final weekend in Portland can only be described as organised chaos with lorry load after lorry load of all manner of stores arriving essential for the forthcoming deployment – Op Taurus 09.

Taurus 09 is the major RN deployment in 2009 and involves 25% of the RFA fleet. It has deployed to the Mediterranean and will continue into the Red Sea, Gulf of Aden, Indian Ocean and Far East including Malaysia, Singapore and Brunei. The deployment is broadly split into 2 phases; the first phase is to demonstrate the UK's

Maritime Small Scale (Focused Intervention) capability prior to a smaller group regenerating for Anti Submarine Warfare, riverine and jungle skills training in the complex littoral environment of the Far East. Wave Ruler is the only tanker taking part in the exercise and is an essential unit in both phases and pivotal to a successful conclusion.

So the deployment began with FOST staff embarked. Damage Control Exercise followed Gunex, followed Damage Control Exercise briefly interrupted by Replenishing. Once the Task Group was formed there was a settling in period followed with Anti Submarine Exercises, Quick Draw, Surfex, Casex, Navcomex, OOW Manoeuvres, Gunex, MOBex, MBDDs, Screenex, Fire Fighting and Damage Control punctuated by Replenishing, Boat Transfers and Sootax. Overnight transit of the Straits of Gibraltar provided a superb opportunity to prove our Force Protection posture prior to entering Taranto for a well deserved operational standown albeit at anchor. Taranto is the capital of the Apulian province and lies in the northern bay of the Gulf of Taranto on the south coast of Italy. The port is a considerable industrial and commercial town and offers little in entertainment, but the crew managed to find a pastry shop to watch England vs Scotland in the six nations.

Exercise Cyprus Wader followed the brief respite, in earnest, with a busy RAS programme. Shortly afterwards a larger FOST team embarked and so began the now familiar round robin of Damage Control Exercise, Gunex, RAS…… and finally on Wednesday 11th March, a momentous date in the calendar as the FOST staff departed. Wave Ruler was finally able to fully concentrate on the Suez Canal and continue into phase 2 –. But, before phase 2 could be considered there remained a visit to Soudha Bay to load cargo then into Exercise Egemen. Egemen strayed from the familiar scripted exercises into a free play arena where the ship is required to execute a host of tasks with short or no notice – night flyex, night RAS, quick draw….. To date Wave Ruler has conducted RAS(S) and (F) with USS Mitscher (6), HMS Somerset (2), HMS Argyll (2), HMS Bulwark (3), HMS Ocean (3), Fort Austin (2), FS Dupleix (2), RFA Lyme Bay (2), RFA Mounts Bay (2), HNLMS Rotterdam (1), HNLMS Johan De Witte (2).

A second visit to Soudha Bay for an operational stand down and to load cargo was a welcome break. In spite of its natural advantages as a port, Soudha has little historical background compared to the nearby ancient town of Chania. Only 6 miles from the Naval Base Chania boasts some excellent beaches, lively pubs, taverns, shops and nightlife. It also provided an opportunity for cultural visits to its numerous ancient sites and buildings.

Standby for part 2 of the life and times of – The Only Tanker in the Village!

A FOND FAREWELL (HONEST!) FROM RFA LARGS BAY TO THE FALKLAND ISLANDS

LARGS BAY (LRGS) said farewell to the Falklands Islands after a very successful first visit by a LSD (A) and following a spectacular display of her prowess during a Capability Demonstration.

The display was attended by a number of distinguished guests which included CBFSAI, CBF Staff, The Governor of Falklands Islands and members of the Falklands Islands Government (FIG).

The day got underway in accordance with the meticulous planning of the Executive Officer, Chief Officer Simon J. Cox. It was unfortunate the weather was not kind with a steady flow of rain however this did nothing to dampen the enthusiasm of all involved as the guests arrived, some by Royal Navy Lynx others by the FI Brintel Helicopter. They were greeted by Commanding Officer Captain I E Johnson and escorted to the Officers Mess for introductions with Senior Officers who would be their hosts for the day.

On with Proceedings

First order of the day was a presentation by the CO about LRGS and the Ships capabilities. The 6 monthly meeting between BFSAI and the FIG then took place in the conference room.

After an excellent luncheon, thanks to CPO (Ck) Mickey Walker and his team, the guests were taken on a tour of the ship and giving the opportunity to question members of the Ships Company and to see them in action. During the tour they had an opportunity to witness LRGS in her amphibious role with the Ship in the action condition (docked down) and the dock and

vehicle being worked. This was all very impressive with LCVP, MEXE, vehicles and the Roulement Infantry Company all participating. Many questions were asked and all guests were suddenly very aware of what a capable and versatile ship LRGS is.

From the dock area it was then up to the Hospital for a comprehensive brief on facilities onboard by RFA MEDTECH Stuart Hamer before venturing out on to the Container Deck, Temporary Aircraft Shelter (TAS) and Flight Deck.

LRGS deployed with a LYNX helicopter (219 Flt, 815 NAS) embarked and headed up by Flight Commander, Lt Cdr Lee Davis. The LYNX was ranged and spread on deck and made an impressive sight, especially now that the sun had come out!

Finally onwards and upwards to the bridge (the centre of the Universe!) for a look around and tea and biscuits.

The day was judged a rip roaring success and fitting finale to LRGS 6 week APT(S) tasking.

Henry Graham, Leading Hand (AA)

RFA ORANGELEAF UNDERGOES MAINTENANCE PERIOD

Following a well deserved rest for the crew over the festive period, ORANGELEAF underwent a maintenance period at Portland to bring her back to her best to support Flag Officer Sea Training in the south coast exercise area. Repairs and scheduled maintenance were carried out all over the ship from the engines to the signal halyards. She also underwent a close inspection to assess the material state of the ship in the run-up to her next refit.

ANSWERS

Across:

1 Wall
3 Roof rack
9 Lesions
10 Idyll
11 Kirov
12 Fathom
14 Inhale
16 Tidy up
19 Plenty
21 Lyric
24 Uncap
25 However
26 Low-lying
27 Arum

Down:

1 Well-knit
2 Laser
4 Ossify
5 Flint
6 Anybody
7 Kiln
8 Coeval
13 Spectrum
15 Holy cow
17 In-laws
18 Python
20 Nippy
22 River
23 Mull

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