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Gunline

ROYAL FLEET AUXILIARY

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

FORT GEORGE IN MONTSERRAT

RFA Fort George visited Montserrat from 15th -20th July 2009. On Saturday 18th July the ship hosted a BBQ ashore for 20 children with special needs, including several members of the island's very successful Special Olympics team. The BBQ was held at the island's cricket ground and was followed by a 20/20 Cricket match.

DSTO(N) Rhodes, the Visit Liaison Officer, paid tribute to the ship's company for their efforts. "There is no doubt that the 30 people who went ashore to assist with the BBQ were great ambassadors for the RFA. It is not easy to host an event like this from an anchorage but everyone played their part. The ship's own boats took the food ashore, along with an advance party of helpers. The remainder followed on local liberty boats. The children had a fantastic time. At one stage during the afternoon I counted more than 70 of the ship's company at the cricket ground, including the Commanding Officer and Chief Engineer which help to produce a tremendous atmosphere."

The cricket proved a challenge too far, though it was definitely a day when the game mattered more than the result. No fewer than 14 members of the ship's company took part against what was a powerful batting and bowling side. But they stuck to their task and whilst they were never going to win, they tried their best from first ball to last. A great day was had by everyone.

Right: Gregory Willcock, President of the Montserrat Cricket Association with his daughter Keanna Meade, after receiving an RFA Fort George plaque from 2/0 (LS) Alex Cook.

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Commodore Bill Walworth

Welcome to Gunline, the house magazine of the RFA. Since the summer edition Wave Ruler and Diligence have returned from the Middle East. Cardigan Bay, Lyme Bay and Wave Ruler remain on operations with a substantial coalition maritime force conducting maritime security operations including counter piracy, smuggling and trafficking. Fort George is in the Eastern Atlantic in company with HMS Iron Duke as APT(N) and Gold Rover in the Falklands, although as I write this she is in maintenance in Rio De Janeiro, it's a hard life. Lyme Bay is settling into her deployment with the UK Mine Countermeasures Group, but able to do that as the result of a fine collaborative effort between our engineers in Abbeywood and contractors who have the through life support contract. These along with a local ship repairer resulted in a complex upgrade of her machinery to enable her to operate in the high ambient temperatures of the Gulf. All three ships are operating extremely well in a busy and environmentally demanding theatre and we are all very proud of them. They are all demonstrating the wide utility of the modern RFA in operations as well as their core job of providing fuel and support to warships and the Royal Marines. Wave Knight in particular has been active in the counter piracy operations. Headquarters' effort is very much focussed on supporting them and our manpower team are working hard to ensure they get the manpower they need to do their jobs.

Less operational but no less busy are the five ships in major upkeep. ARGUS is starting to emerge from her conversion in Falmouth with A&P, while a quarter of the Flotilla is in Birkenhead at various stages of repair. We are all looking forward to seeing FORT VICTORIA back on the operational strength in the coming months.

This edition, as ever, gives the reader a taste of the breadth of activity we undertake and I hope a view that after all the hard work there are interesting runs ashore and events to enjoy. You will find articles amongst others on training at Warsash College, visit to Guantanamo and Montserrat as part of the regional engagement work of our ship in the Caribbean – Fort George, the RFA Golf Tournament at Waterlooville golf club, Cardigan Bay in the North Arabian Gulf, Fort Rosalie assisting Ministry of Defence Police in an exercise as well as news about our colleagues past and present. Mounts Bay was a major feature of the summer round of public events and you can read about her part of the Bournemouth Air Show and Plymouth Navy Days. There was a strong RFA presence at the Merchant Navy Day service in Trinity Gardens in London in early September, which remembered the 30,000 men and women of the Merchant Navy who lost their lives in the Second World War.

Off watch time is important and I have been reminded of the sporting and adventurous training activities available to RFA members through the Royal Navy. The list is enormous and caters for sportsmen and women in a huge range of sports, from beginners to the Olympics. You can find details on the RN Web. On an associated note we are considering forming RFA Sailing and Rugby clubs or associations and Captain Richardson is looking at starting an RFA Model Aircraft flying club. Details will be announced on the RFA Community Web Site in due course.

Enjoy the autumn and the run up to Christmas. The RFA will be very busy for the rest of the year, on operations for some but the rest of us will be preparing for 2010 when the current plan is for all our running ships to be on operations for the majority of the year.

Father Graeme Elmore 1947-2009

Father Graeme was a priest, a friend and showed many signs of being a truly holy man. He served as a Naval Chaplain for twenty one years and we regularly worked together. We attended the sea survival and the helicopter dunker courses when we joined our first ships. As a priest he loved his work, always ready to celebrate mass, say prayers, hear confessions, anointing the sick and the dying. He radiated the true values of the church. His services were never dull or long but were filled with joy and godly humour. Many chaplains and friends shared in the pilgrimages to Walsingham in North Norfolk. These times followed the Chaucerian style which included a great deal of time spent in various public houses and with the help of a spirit in liquid form drank from a glass we all edged our way closer to the divine.

Father Graeme said that the four years he spent as Chaplain to Royal Fleet Auxiliary was the most productive part of his ministry. He was at sea for the start of the Afghanistan conflict and throughout OP TELIC. His presence brought comfort and a sense of normality during those exceptional weeks. His humour defused and helped at such an anxious time.

Less than a year ago Father Graeme was diagnosed with cancer. He faced his time in hospital and as a patient at the hospice with great courage. Many friends visited and even more read his blog on the internet. In the last weeks of his life Graeme made his own personal journey. Having helped so many others see the value of faith and the way to holiness he left the Church of England and was admitted into the Roman Catholic Church.

May he rest in peace and rise in glory

Heroes of the RFA

Commodore Henry Owen L'Estrange DSC RD RFA

Henry Owen L'Estrange was born in Southern Ireland in 1912 and after being educated at home and at Castlepark Preparatory School in Dublin, he joined his elder brother in the Merchant Navy.

In 1926 Henry L'Estrange joined the training ship HMS Conway at Liverpool and on completion of his studies he became an indentured apprentice with Alfred Holt of Liverpool, serving his time on 'Blue Funnel' line ships. On completion of his training Henry remained with Holt's as a fourth mate until 1934, when ships and jobs started to be reduced during the great depression. Henry found and secured a job with the War Department fleet at Watchet in Somerset, where he spent a year as a temporary mate on a target towing vessel.

Henry L'Estrange joined the RFA in 1935 as a 3rd Mate, where he remained until being called up for war service in 1940 with the Royal Navy, as he had joined the Royal Naval Reserve in 1938. Henry first served in an Anti-Submarine trawler HMS Northern Sun from July 1940 until February 1941, in July 1941 he was given his first command, another Anti-Submarine trawler HMS Kingston Agate, where he was to win his Distinguished Service Cross.

On the 27th August 1941 the German submarine U 570 was about 80 miles south of Iceland when she was spotted by an RAF Hudson and damaged her with 4 air launched depth charges, the U boat had come up to periscope depth when it spotted the aircraft, and by the time it had started to dive again the depth charges were in the water. Eventually, the boat returned to the surface and the Hudson attacked again, this time with machine gun fire, the submarine hoisted a white flag, whilst the aircraft radioed for reinforcements.

The following day, Henry L'Estrange and HMS Kingston Agate were one of the first on scene and accepted the U-boat's surrender. They were followed later by the destroyers HMS Burwell and HMS Windermere and other units which stood by the U-boat.

The submarine commander had ordered all ammunition and confidential papers to be jettisoned, so when an armed party from the Kingston Agate boarded the U- boat they found that some of the German crew had attempted to open the sea cocks to scuttle the submarine, this was stopped and the submarine taken in tow to Barrow in Furness. On arrival at Barrow the U-boat was found to still have two live torpedoes in her tubes which could have been used against the Kingston Agate.

Compiled by the RFA Historical Society 2009

CAPTAIN (E) GEOFF STOKES RETIREMENT

After nearly 42 years service in the RFA I have, unfortunately, had to take medical retirement following a 'cardiac event'.

I joined the RFA in September 1967 and have enjoyed a very interesting and varied career until my retirement in May 2009.

During my time in the service I made many friends and worked with many colleagues, not only within the RFA, but the Royal Navy, the MoD and industry. I would like to thank everybody for the help and support I have received throughout the years.

I was lucky to end my career working for Afloat Support and assisting with the Cluster Support contract and working closely with Cammel Laird at Birkenhead. I am just sorry I couldn't finish the job that I started.

Finally I would like to thank everybody that contributed to my 'Mont Blanc' retirement gifts and the dining outs in both Bristol and Liverpool. It was very much appreciated.

Good luck and best wishes to you all for the future.

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THE MERCHANT NAVY HONOURS WAR HEROES IN THE CAPITAL
COMMEMORATIVE SERVICE – TRINITY GARDENS, TOWER HILL MEMORIAL

In this, the 70th Anniversary year of the outbreak of the Second World War, the Merchant Navy Association honoured fellow seafarers lost at sea in their service to the country with a special Commemorative Service at the Tower Hill Memorial in Trinity Gardens, London on Sunday 6 September 2009.

Her Majesty The Queen, in her role as Master of the Merchant Navy and Fishing Fleets requested that a special greeting be read by the Commodore of the Royal Fleet Auxiliary, Commodore William Walworth OBE.

Prime Minister Gordon Brown also sent a generous tribute letter to the Merchant Navy Association Service extending his appreciation and respect for the sacrifices made by the Merchant Navy over many years. In his message the Prime Minister said he "greatly values the distinguished service by merchant seafarers over the years in support of military operations and that those attending should feel justifiably proud of their contribution."

Guest of Honour at the Service was Admiral the Lord West of Spithead, Parliamentary Undersecretary of State for Security and former First Sea Lord of the Royal Navy. A strong supporter of the aims of the Merchant Navy Association, he is clear about the debt owed to the thousands who sacrificed their lives. He said: *"The public today does not comprehend the debt it owes to those of the Merchant Marine. In the Second World War some 30,000 merchant seamen were lost with 5,140 ships. Today some 34,000 UK seafarers continue to ensure our wealth and survival transporting over 95% of our trade. As with their forefathers, they come from a proud tradition as can be seen by the names on the roll of honour at the memorial at Tower Hill."*

The Commemorative service drew hundreds of attendees, many who gathered in reunion receptions afterwards in the city. The Band of HM Royal Marine Collingwood played the Crimond, a musical tribute prior to the service and this signalled the lowering of the Red Ensign with Last Post. Guests remained silent until the Reveille and wreaths were laid in the sunken garden.

The Commemorative Service was led by The Principal Chaplain of the Sailors Society Reverend David Potterton. Reflecting the wide range of creeds and religions of those all over the world who have served in the Merchant Navy; Mr Ron Maddox of the Buddhist Society, Senior Jewish Chaplain to Her Majesty's Forces, Reverend Malcolm Wiseman, Reverend Canon Ken Peters from the Mission to Seafarers and Reverend Father Edward Woo from the Catholic Church dedicated prayers for those who died and those who suffered from their loss.

Howden Hamilton Haugh 1950-2009

Everyone who met Howden liked and admired him and well over one hundred people attended the funeral held in his home town of Eyemouth in the Scottish Boarders. Mandy, his widow, and his daughters, Helen and Shona, were grateful to the many friends and family for the support during their grief.

Howden joined the Royal Fleet Auxiliary as a Radio Officer then later transferred over to Systems Engineering. He had a string of medals demonstrating that he had served in most of the major conflicts during the past four decades.

Seymour Haugh, his identical twin, gave the tribute at the funeral. He reminded us all that Howden had lived a full and happy life, rounded and always with great humour. He studied Scottish heritage and literature, and enjoyed poetry and music. A significant part of his leave time was spent on the golf course and in the club house. Over the years he was the winner of many golfing trophies.

His inner courage and natural goodness helped him face his illness with serenity.

May he rest in peace and rise in glory.

Paul Mackey 1958-2009

Paul was born in Chelsea on 30 April 1958 attending first the Strand Grammar School (London) between 1970 and 1972, then the London Nautical School between 1972 and 1975. This clearly set his mind on a career at sea and from April until July of 1975 Paul attended Warsash Maritime College Hampshire.

After this short period he joined the Shaw Savill Line in 1975 as a deck cadet for three years leaving in 1978. By 1979 his career had taken a slight change of direction and from the Shipping Federation he joined his first Royal Fleet Auxiliary (RFA) vessel RFA LYNESS as a non contract Efficient Deck Hand (EDH). Obviously deciding this was the right choice for his career, he signed a contract with the RFA in August of 1983. In recognition of his hard work throughout his career with the RFA, Paul was promoted to Leading Hand Deck in 1993.

By September of 2002 Paul had undertaken many training courses with the RFA; this included coxswain training which was utilised in RFA BAYLEAF when he was involved in the rescue of personnel from the Motor Vessel FALCON which was taking on water and in the process of sinking. This resulted in a personal message being sent from the then RFA Commodore Peter Lannin to Paul remarking on his professionalism and skills.

Having served on vessels during the Iraq war, Paul received the General Service medal in November 2002 and by February 2004 he had also received the RFA Service Medal awarded for twenty years unblemished service.

Paul an accomplished photographer spent many of his leave periods in the Alicante region of Spain where he eventually settled, this was to be his final resting place when he sadly crossed the bar. Many ships will seem a somewhat quieter place with the sad loss of Paul and he will forever remain in our hearts and prayers.

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RFA FORT ROSALIE CONDUCTS TRAINING AND SUPPORTS HMS ILLUSTRIOUS

RFA FORT ROSALIE rendezvoused with the Fleet Flagship HMS ILLUSTRIOUS and RFA ORANGELEAF in the North Sea to conduct training and to replenish HMS ILLUSTRIOUS. Flying exercises were conducted with one of HMS ILLUSTRIOUS's Lynx helicopters, practising a number of serials including Emergency Low Visibility Approaches (ELVAs), emergency landings and winch exercises.

Overnight both HMS ILLUSTRIOUS and RFA FORT ROSALIE conducted a 'Screenex'. This involved both ships manoeuvring to a pre-determined position in relation to the other vessel when ordered. Each ship marked the other on their stationing accuracy and awarding points; the scores were very close, but we won!

The following day we conducted a Replenishment at Sea (RAS) with HMS ILLUSTRIOUS. This was the first time since 2003 that RFA FORT ROSALIE has conducted a RAS using two RAS rigs to deliver stores to a capital ship. On the forward RAS rig we delivered ammunition, missiles and bombs whilst on the aft rig we delivered victuals and General Naval Stores (on this occasion, cleaning gear). The RAS took 4 hours and concluded with both ships conducting a formation anchorage off Sunderland.

Passing Out Ceremony

Cadets from Warsash Maritime Academy celebrated the successful conclusion of their cadetship at the Passing-Out Ceremony held at Southampton Guildhall. The cadets were supported by family, friends, company representatives and Warsash staff who joined them to celebrate the end of their cadetship.

They have all been awarded company service contracts and are now poised to embark on their first sea phase.

Pictured from left to right: Cadets Tom Wyatt, Hannah Vickers and James Holloway.

RFA GOLF Golf Tournament 2009

The 47th RFA Annual Golf Competition was held at Waterlooville Golf Course (near Portsmouth) in glorious sunshine and temperatures of 25°C. The event followed the usual format of freeplay in the morning, Stableford in the afternoon and swinging the lamp in the evening!

The course was as always in fine condition, manicured fairways and smooth fast greens; everyone expressed their pleasure in playing, regardless of the good or bad scores they finally produced.

Winners were as follows; Seagoing Staff - Bob Evans, Retired Seagoing Staff/ Joe Dines Cup - Alan Edworthy, HQ Staff - Roger Cox, Guests - Duncan Stather and Lady Guests - Mrs Edworthy.

Guest of honour, Cdre Walworth presented the prizes, which were kindly supplied by Rolls Royce, sponsors of the event, Atkins Defence, Heineken International, Hemple Paints, MLS and Global Switchgear.

Dinner in the evening was well attended and the Commodore thanked the club, sponsors, RRB and the back room staff for their efforts in making the day possible.

The raffle raised £524 towards the RFA Memorial for our Service Men and Women at the National Arboretum.

For those wishing to attend in the future, the event falls on the 1st Thursday in July every year. For your diary the 48th RFA Annual Golf Competition will be on 1st Jul 2010. If you wish to have personal notification of the event send your email details to: - roger.rb@ntlworld.com

Alternatively application forms will appear on the RFA and RFA Association websites and Gunline.

Cdre Bill Walworth presents "Joe Dines Cup" to Alan Edworthy (retired Chief Engineer).

The Richard Jones Award 2008-2009

Congratulations to 3/O(X) Stuart Smith who was the recipient of the Richard Jones award for an outstanding Cadetship. The award is presented on an annual basis in memory of the late Chief Officer Richard Jones, who held the position of Cadet Training Officer from 1983 to 1985 – he maintained a keen interest and enthusiasm for the training of RFA Cadets throughout his career.

Stuart was selected for the Richard Jones award following excellent performance at college combined with first-class sea going reports. He consistently demonstrated drive and determination and became an excellent asset to the Bridge Team wherever he served.

His college reports were time and again outstanding which culminated in him being awarded the Sword of Honour by Warsash Maritime Academy for dedication during his cadetship. He is no doubt a very worthy recipient of the Richard Jones Award.

During his training Stuart served on RFA Fort Austin, Black Rover, Fort Victoria and Diligence.

Stuart took up his first appointment as 3/O(X) on RFA Argus in December 2008.

Pictured from left to right: Third Officer (X) Stuart Smith receiving the Richard Jones Award for 2008 from Commodore Bill Walworth OBE, RFA.

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What a Busy Royal Navy in the Public Eye Period for Mounts Bay

Mounts bay arrived in Falmouth on the 7th of August to continue with the Royal Navy in Public Eye (RNIPE) programme and reaffirm her affiliation with the town. The visit began on the evening of arrival with a cocktail party for local dignitaries including the lord mayor. They were all hosted on the bridge and entertained into the evening.

The following day was the start of the Henri Lloyd regatta in Falmouth with a wide range of craft on view including the traditional Cornish Yalls. The safety craft for the competitors taking part on Saturday and Sunday was professionally

assisted by Mounts Bays' RHIB crewed by SG1s Mark Bride, Steve Wallace and Nick Higgins over the two days, who were highly commended on the assistance they provided.

The ship was open to visitors in the afternoon and having been highly publicised in the local press and on the local radio, the ship became a magnet for tourists and locals alike. Over four hundred visitors came on board the ship, and more than half of those took the opportunity to go on guided tours. The ships tours were especially well received with many visitors commenting on how clean the ship was kept with such a small number of personnel.

Sunday was a quieter day with just a few selected guests invited for lunch in the officers' mess. With the second day of the regatta well underway, Mounts Bay afforded the guests the best vantage

point in Falmouth to view the exciting end to the traditional Gig race.

With all the guests disembarked it was time to head to Belfast for our visit to coincide with the end of the tall ships race. This visit proved to be eventful from the very arrival with the bridge team having to navigate up a very narrow channel to a tight berth which saw us having to reverse out for nearly two miles.

The tall ships race has not ended in Belfast since 1991 and since then a rejuvenated Belfast has emerged. This was reflected in the number of tall ships that were berthed and the fact that included in the celebrations were a number of military vessels including The Mighty Mounts Bay.

The weather was changeable throughout the period alongside, and the numbers of visiting public varied each day, with the amount of visitors increasing until the final day when the sun finally break through and people could actually see who was the tallest kid on the block! With the event bus stop posted right outside the gate to the ship, and the Royal Marine Band entertaining the massed crowds, Mounts Bay saw over 1400 visitors come aboard with over 600 being given guided tours. This saw the end of a busy time for the crew with over 2800 visitors and over 1000 shown around on guided tours. The evening ended with a grand fireworks display.

Sunday saw a short rest period with the ship being prepared for the next period of RNIPE, on to the Bournemouth air show and Devonport Navy Days 2009.

BRING IT ON!

Ready ***F***or ***A***nything

PO(CK) Peter Seddon Celebrates 20 Glorious Years

On the 2nd July 2009 onboard RFA Mounts Bay, whilst on route to Den Helder in the Netherlands, PO(CK) Peter Seddon was presented with his exemplary conduct and long service medal by the commanding officer Captain K Rimell.

Peter attended the Nautical Sea Training College in Gravesend in 1987. His first RFA vessel was the ammunition ship Resource, which he joined in 1988. His first foreign port was Eemshaven coincidently also in the Netherlands.

Peter has had a varied sea career which has seen him serve in ships taking part in a wide and varied range of operations in different locations, from the Arctic Ocean to the South China Sea and the Indian Ocean to the Pacific. He has been through the Panama and Suez canals, and rounded both Capes.

Peter's career has also seen him being part of supporting multi national forces on operations such as hurricane relief in Central America, tsunami relief in Sri Lanka and counter narcotics operations in the Caribbean.

In a wide and varied career, the conflicts around the world seem to have been ever present. Counter terrorism in the Arabian Gulf, both gulf wars and Sierra Leone. He must be one of the few people to have been part of all four UN initiatives in the Balkans.

Peter's last two appointments have seen him in the Arabian Gulf training Iraqi forces and off Yemen and Somalia on anti piracy operations.

Peter has been awarded eleven medals for his service on these various operations. This is just a brief outline of his RFA career, there is much in-between!

Peter tells us that of all the places worldwide that he has been lucky enough to visit and they are numerous, his trip to Liverpool on Mounts Bay rates as his favourite.....to date!!

RFA FORT ROSALIE VISITS CHERBOURG

RFA FORT ROSALIE recently enjoyed a port visit to Cherbourg after supporting HMS ILLUSTRIOUS in the North Sea (see our previous news article). We arrived in Cherbourg harbour on the morning of the 14th July 2009 to be greeted by a large crowd of local residents on the jetty and berthed on the passenger jetty where, earlier in the week, the cruise ship Queen Mary II had berthed. A large firework display was put on in the town centre that evening which was enjoyed by all and although we'd like to think it was in honour of our visit, it was more likely to have been in celebration of Bastille Day!

During our stay in Cherbourg the ship's company took the opportunity to visit the Maritime Museum which was only a couple of hundred yards from the ship and a number visited the Normandy beaches and the vast military cemeteries, which were only a short drive away. Local hostelries and

restaurants benefited from our custom and entente cordiale was reinforced with both military and friendly civilian local interaction.

Many local residents came to see RFA FORT ROSALIE during her stay. Even though on this occasion, we were not open to the general public, but a good view of the ship could be had not only from the jetty but also by those visiting the Maritime Museum. A number of newspaper articles were published during our visit, one of which has been added to our 'Photo Gallery' for those of you who can speak French!

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Fort Rosalie re-visited by her makers

RFA FORT ROSALIE recently hosted a party for the shipyard that built RFA FORT GRANGE and RFA FORT AUSTIN, Scotts' Shipbuilding and Engineering Company Ltd of Greenock. FORT GRANGE as she was then, entered service in 1978, but had her name changed and became FORT ROSALIE in 1998 and the rest is history, as they say! The party, comprising a mix of senior management from the three main disciplines of ship building, construction, engineering and electrical, visited RFA FORT ROSALIE alongside in Glen Mallan, near Faslane. In addition to the former Scottish employees, there were also three retired Clyde river pilots who had piloted both vessels on their sea trials.

On arrival the, noticeably quiet, party was greeted by representatives from each of the ship's departments. They later admitted that, having stepped on board, "the reality of what we produced 32 years ago suddenly struck us into silence". Over refreshments it was fascinating listening to stories of the ship in build and the very subtle differences between ourselves and our sister ship FORT AUSTIN, which would only be known by those involved in the build. A brief, given by Second Officer Scott Lyall followed, outlining the history and role of the Royal Fleet Auxiliary and the achievements of RFA FORT ROSALIE over the past 32 years. Then, following lunch, a guided tour of the ship was given, where on a number of occasions the shipbuilders knew more about RFA FORT ROSALIE than their guides!

On completion of the tour a presentation was made by our visitors from Scotts' Shipbuilding Company, of a very rare book entitled "Two Hundred & Fifty Years of Shipbuilding, by The Scotts at Greenock". The book had been brought up to date with the inclusion of a CD containing further details and the last ships to be built in the yard. Captain Ferris responded by

presenting a FORT ROSALIE crest and a, not so rare, book of the 100 year history of the Royal Fleet Auxiliary, bringing to an end a most memorable and enjoyable visit. To quote Andy Gunn, the team leader, "We are equally fond of the Rosalie as we were of the Grange. We arrived as strangers, and left as friends."

Fort Rosalie assists Ministry of Defence Police

The Captain, Officers and Crew aboard RFA Fort Rosalie have recently taken part in a major crime investigation exercise alongside the Ministry of Defence Police (MDP).

Detectives including Crime Scene Investigators and a HOLMES 2 team from the MDP boarded the ship at Portland Harbour, in Dorset, before it sailed to Glen Mallen in Scotland.

The exercise involved a scenario in which a member of the crew had disappeared from on-board. It was aimed at examining the issues created by running a criminal investigation and crime scene examination on board a working RFA ship at sea.

Detective Chief Inspector Gavin O'Shea of the MDP, said: "The need to carry out such enquiries is fortunately very rare, but both the MDP and RFA are keen to ensure that, should the need arise, they can be carried out as quickly and effectively as possible.

"It was a very successful five days which thoroughly tested the current MDP and RFA measures for dealing with such events. There were a number of lessons learnt and we will be looking at updating our procedures to ensure best practice is in place for dealing with any such future incidents."

Mailing List

With GUNLINE now available in electronic format on the RFA page on the www.royalnavy.mod.uk website and the RFA Community website www.rncom.mod.uk there is now the opportunity to reduce the amount of unwanted mail. If you would like to read GUNLINE on line and stop receiving it in the post please e.mail me at mark.mundy307@mod.uk

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A Light-hearted Overview Of The MARS Tanker Programme

After sailing the high seas for many years a pirate decided to join the RFA. During his recruitment interview he had to explain how he had come by all of his injuries. He had a wooden leg, a hook where his right hand should be and a patch over his right eye. "How did you get your injuries?" asked the RFA recruiter. In a booming voice the pirate replied, ooo arrr "Me and me mates were on the high seas when the boom swung round and knocked me into the sea where a shark bit off me leg and me hand." "How did you lose your eye?" asked the recruiter. The pirate replied, "Well this is a different story, I was lying on the deck one day catching some sun when this seagull flew by and dropped his duty right in me eye!" "What does that have to do with the loss of your eye?" the recruiter retorted. "It were the first day with me hook!"

It's an awful tale but there are times, when working for an RFA procurement project that you empathise with the pirate. OK, so you don't lose limbs but you can often have the stuffing knocked out of you and it would be easy to lose sight of the final goal. I am referring to the MARS tanker project, a tale of peaks and troughs, with land in sight but headway slow. At the time of writing this piece, we have a feeling that land may be getting ever closer. The MARS tanker project has a renewed vitality with a mature program. All of the building blocks are in place and we hope to steer towards a tanker procurement contract.

There is little point in dwelling upon the false starts of the past except for highlighting the opportunities that the previous attempts have afforded us. We have learnt many lessons from our experience and this has given us the confidence that we know what we are doing and what we are doing is right. Dialogue was held with Fincantieri, Hyundai, Navantia and a BVT led Consortium (including BMT Defence Services and Daewoo) up until the end of 2008 which proved the viability of the designs we were looking for.

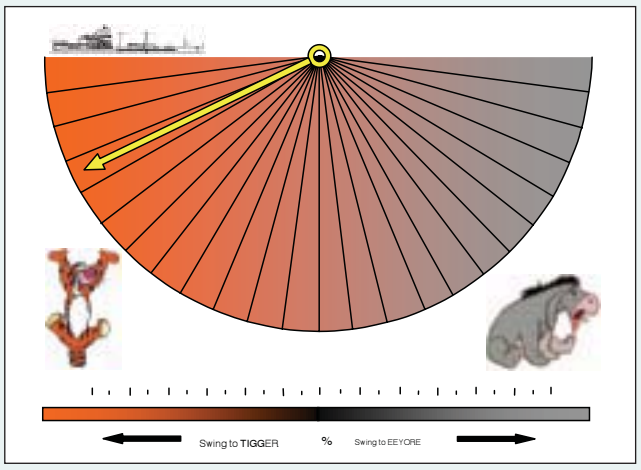
A MOD Equipment Examination towards the latter part of 2008 identified that there was scope for seeking alternatives to the procurement of the tankers which resulted in a deferral of the project.

My mother once told me that there is one sure way to make God laugh: "Tell him your plans"! She's always been right and following the deferment we were mistaken when we thought that we had all bases covered. We had fully scoped technical, support and management specifications that we were convinced would just require a light dusting prior to re-engagement with industry. Just as the deck-chairs were unfolded and the Pimms was served, change happened. Legislation changed. Policy changed. Processes changed. People changed. However, the approvals process dictated that we had to move quickly if we were still to meet the revised Planning Assumption for Service Entry date for the first MARS tanker so summer was postponed and we cracked on.

So what have we been doing and where are we going? Soon after the deferment decision, the Operational Analysis was re-run. This was undertaken to confirm whether or not our requirements were adequate and robust or indeed whether the capability could be in any way reduced. It came as some comfort that the output confirmed that we were on the right track. We re-visited the technical specification to ensure that value for money was still paramount; the lessons from the previous dialogue with industry allowed us to make some subtle changes to optimise the cost effectiveness of what we want to obtain.

The indicative design for the MARS tanker based upon the current technical specification is shown below and it has rapidly become the emblem of the project. This is where we want to go and ship designs like this do much to maintain the project's profile and to allow all to visualise what the finished product could look like.

Another useful graphic that the team developed (in their lunch time!) was the 'Tigger-o-meter'. In true Peter Snow fashion we used a swingometer to range between the optimistic view (Tigger) to the pessimistic (Eeyore) to visually gauge how we felt our progress was going on a day to day basis (reproduced below). This helped not only to measure our successes but also to drive out the 'Eeyore' mentality which can often creep into procurement projects where hurdles can at times appear to be insurmountable. Let's face it, whose camp would you rather be in: Tigger or Eeyore? "Think like Tigger" soon became our mantra.



Getting back to project progress, as this is being written, the way forward for the tanker is being reviewed by the MOD Investment Appraisal Board and we await their decision. In the meantime, we continue to prepare all of our documentation that will allow us to approach industry with an Expression of Interest in the procurement of the ships. We hope to announce the way forward later part of this year.

I don't know what became of the pirate or whether he actually got the job with the RFA but I'm sure his experience would have been invaluable. Experience teaches us an awful lot and the MARS tanker project team is no different. We firmly believe that all of the lessons learnt from recent times will help us to obtain MARS tankers of which the RFA can be proud.

Written by: Jonathan Adams, Afloat Support Head of Naval Architecture.

Congratulations go deservedly to 3/0 (X) Stuart Smith pictured here receiving the Sword of Honour from John Millican Director of Warsash Maritime Academy.

The Sword of honour is awarded annually to the Warsash Maritime Academy student who has demonstrated exceptional motivation, effort and determination in bringing their cadetship to a successful conclusion.

MM2 Steve Critchley – Engine Room Watch Rating Certificate Presentation

At a presentation on 16th June, MM2 Steve Critchley was presented with his Engine Room Watch Rating Certificate. From starting his Engineering Technician Initial Career Course at HMS SULTAN to gaining his qualification it has taken Steve only 12 months to achieve this, which is a significantly shorter period than that of previous RFA trainees. Since training moved to HMS Sultan, his is the first certificate to be awarded on behalf of the Maritime Coastguard Agency and was presented by Captain Graham Watts, the Commanding Officer of the Royal Naval School of Marine Engineering. Also present on the day were Steveís wife Helen, First Officer Roy Sturrock and Chief Officer Russ Farquhar, RFA Head of Training. On presenting the certificate Captain Watts congratulated Steve on his achievement saying, 'This is a great day for both Royal Naval and Royal Fleet Auxiliary training. To have gained this award in such a short timescale is a tremendous achievement by Steve'.

Steve, aged 40, came to the RFA after a career in tool-making which he started at the age of 16. He was prompted to join the RFA after attending Navy Days and listening to his daughter Stephanie Collins' experiences in the Navy. Having decided he had in his own words, 'missed a trick' by not joining the Navy earlier, he decided to take the plunge, supported by wife Helen, and applied to join the RFA. During his training he even managed to find himself moored up alongside HMS Ocean in which Stephanie was serving at the time.

Justly proud of his achievement, Steve acknowledged that it was not all plain sailing, 'The biggest challenge was to complete all the work in my own time and not to be afraid to approach other people for help. You've got to have some get up and go.' Steve joined RFA Fort Austin after completing additional training courses and plans to return to HMS Sultan next year to undertake the Leading Engineering Technicians course.

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RFA CARDIGAN BAY WEDGWOOD BOWL CITATION 2008

Throughout 2008 RFA CARDIGAN BAY provided stability in presence, capability and professionalism in supporting all aspects of OPERATION TELIC. Within this challenging environment the ship is now viewed as the keeper of the Operations jewels and the ideal venue from which multi national efforts to ensure harmonious relations and the peaceful transition of the defence of Iraqi waters are conducted.

The primary inherited role was support to the Naval Transition Team (NATT) effort to train Iraqi Naval personnel and Iraqi Marines (IQN/IQM) in their defence of oil the exporting infrastructure and surrounding territorial water space. As experience was gained in this role additional training courses for Iraqi personnel were formulated upon recommendation of ships staff. Latterly ships staff have taken on the direct training of IQN IQM in Fire Fighting, Damage Control and First Aid in addition to their normal duties. Equally the ship has taken on the role of the theatre primary casualty reception and triage unit. To date medical emergencies from American and Iraqi platforms have regularly been recovered, assessed, stabilised, and evacuated to Medical Facilities ashore.

Being a more capable platform than her predecessor CARDIGAN BAY has continuously been exploring and exploiting opportunities which further bond and integrate not only the nations of the region but also within the Multi National Coalition force. Latterly it is common to witness up to 100 additional multinational embarked personnel all working to the common aim of advancing the Iraqi capability within their water space and prepare them for manning their new ships. To achieve this, the ships company maintain a flexible and committed approach to the demands of culture and cuisine of many nations.

Daily the ship logistically supports all units in theatre being the hub for stores, mail and personnel movements and is regularly praised for its flexible hospitality in accommodating all transit personnel into and out of theatre. The ship regularly hosts Senior visitors providing a platform from which an overview of the theatre operations is gained.

During the year a longstanding disagreement between Kuwait and Iraq over disputed territorial waters was settled at a high level diplomatic meeting with the ship in International waters. Whilst not directly engaged in the debate, the ship facilitated the environment which was conducive to an atmosphere within which agreements were reached.

In summation; CARDIGAN BAY is now recognised as the backbone of the OP TELIC theatre. Her flexibility is well recognised and respected as the conduit for training, uniting and supporting multinational forces.

Other contenders for the award this year were:

a. RFA WAVE RULER for the provision of humanitarian assistance to Cayman Brac the in the wake of Hurricane Palomar, Hurricane Omar, Hurricane Ike and Hurricane Gustav.

b. RFA LYME BAY for the vital support to the world's remotest island, Tristan da Cunha, during the rebuild of the harbour jetty.

Commanding Officers who consider their ship has contributed substantially towards Humanitarian Aid and International Relations are to submit their nominations for 2009 to reach Commodore RFA (ACOS Afloat

2009 Calendar proceeds towards the RFA Benevolent Fund

The 2010 calendar has again been produced by Aonix and details on how to purchase it in time for Christmas are in this edition of GUNLINE. Everybody who purchased the calendar last year will have noticed that the design underwent a complete makeover both in content and quality. The calendar's first year in the new format proved to be a great success and this was reflected when Graham Burton from Aonix, recently made a visit to Naval Command to present a cheque to Cdre Walworth for £200 in favour of the RFA Central Benevolent Fund. We are keen to increase the figure this year and look forward to being able to report an increase in sales later next year.

THE ROYAL FLEET AUXILIARY CALENDAR 2010

THE LAUNCH OF THE ROYAL FLEET AUXILIARY CALENDAR FOR 2009, IN ITS HIGHER QUALITY FORMAT, PROVED TO BE A GREAT SUCCESS, WITH BOTH SERVING PERSONNEL AND OUR RETIRED COLLEAGUES. COPIES OF THE CALENDAR WERE AVAILABLE TO BE PURCHASED FROM A VARIETY OF SOURCES.

This year the calendar depicts some of the activities the Royal Fleet Auxiliary have been involved in around the world.

Once again the calendar which has been produced provides, through high quality photography and explanatory text, an overview of the Royal Fleet Auxiliary's roles, operations and activities during the past 12 months. This includes training exercises, both within the UK and overseas, the Taurus Deployment, our part in displays and ceremonies around the world, and our commitments in the Caribbean and the North Arabian Gulf.

The calendar is in full colour, and lists key dates throughout the year.

Our thanks go to our many members who have helped in collecting material for the calendar, who are unfortunately, too numerous to mention.

WE HOPE YOU ENJOY THE CALENDAR THROUGHOUT 2010

HOW TO ORDER YOUR CALENDAR

Each calendar is priced at £12.99. Price includes VAT & UK postage

You can order your calendar(s) by one of the following methods:

Phone: 0845 61 26647 (09:00 - 17:00, Monday to Friday)

Web Site: www.theroyalfleetauxiliary.com

Email: sales.desk@aonixlimited.com

Post: Complete the coupon opposite and return it in an envelope with payment to: Aonix Limited, Suite 70, 44-46 Morningside Road, Edinburgh, EH10 4BF, Scotland.

Name: .....

Address .....

..... Postcode .....

Daytime Telephone No. .....

Please send me ..... **Royal Fleet Auxiliary 2010 Calendar(s) @ £12.99 each** (including VAT & UK postage). Please add a further £3.50 per calendar for overseas postage.

I wish to pay by cheque/postal order(s) made payable to **Calendar Offer**

Value ..... Number .....

I wish to pay by credit card/Maestro please debit my account by £.....

Card No.

Name on card .....

Start date ..... Expiry date .....

3 Digit security code Issue No. (Switch) .....

FORT GEORGE VISITS GUANTANAMO BAY TO LOAD FUEL CARGO AND RE-PROVISION

RFA Fort George visited Guantanamo Bay from 21 – 25 August 2009. The main purpose of the visit was to load fuel cargo and re-provision the ship.

The visit also provided an opportunity for the ship to host a Fish & Chip supper for Base Officers and their wives which proved to be a great success. The ship's company were also able to make full use of the Base Naval Exchange Shopping Facility for discounted American Designer goods and the extensive recreational facilities.

The ship fielded a team who had a great Saturday afternoon with the local league winning softball team and a large contingent went to the newly refurbished paintball arena on the Sunday for a skirmish. The bruises displayed afterwards were testament to the ferocity of the battles.

The ship's diving club went on a wreck dive on the Saturday and a beach dive spear fishing expedition on the Sunday – the highlight being the one metre long Barracuda cooked later on the BBQ.

The ship has now sailed again poised for the next Hurricane to roll across the Atlantic and ready to help any British overseas territory or Commonwealth Island that requires assistance.

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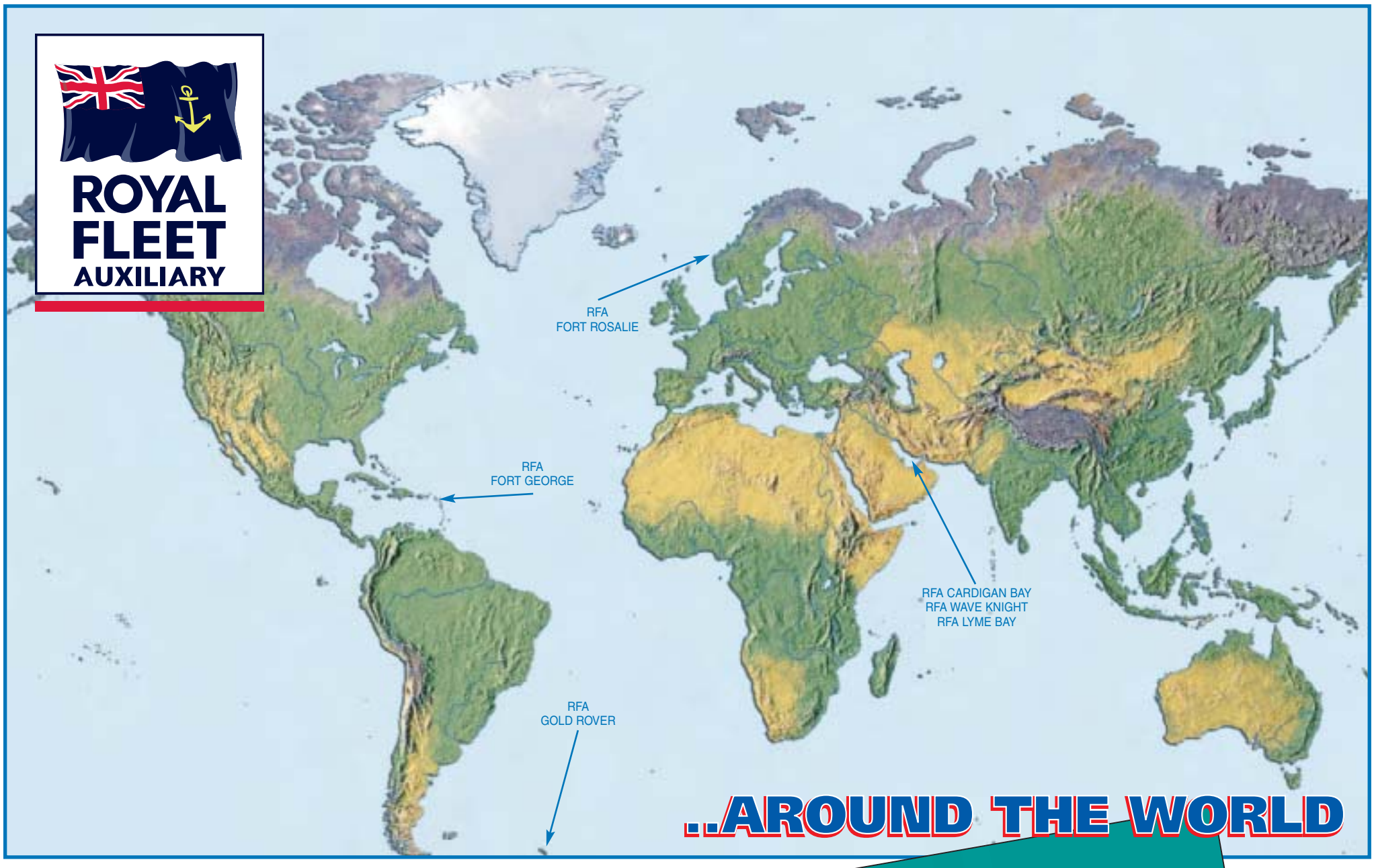

RFA ARGUS:
Refit in Falmouth

RFA BAYLEAF:
FOST training.

RFA BLACK ROVER:
Refit in Birkenhead.

RFA CARDIGAN BAY:
Conducting OP TELIC tasking.

RFA DILIGENCE:
Refit in Birkenhead.

RFA FORT AUSTIN:
Alongside in Portsmouth.

RFA FORT GEORGE:
APT North.

RFA FORT ROSALIE:
Off Norway supporting UK forces.

RFA FORT VICTORIA:
Refit in Birkenhead.

RFA GOLD ROVER:
APT South.

RFA LARGS BAY:
Alongside in Portsmouth.

RFA LYME BAY:
In Gulf as part of Op Telic.

RFA MOUNTS BAY:
Alongside in Portland.

RFA ORANGELEAF:
Refit in Birkenhead.

RFA WAVE KNIGHT:
Currently Gulf Tanker.

RFA WAVE RULER:
Fost tanker.

Provided courtesy of The U.K. Hydrographic Office

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Fort George in Port of Spain

Fort George visited Port of Spain Trinidad 7-10 Sep as part of her APT(N) Caribbean Deployment. The visit presented an opportunity for the High Commissioner and Staff to meet with the Commanding Officer, Captain Paul Kehoe, and the ship's Senior Officers for briefings and discussions about RFA FORT GEORGE'S capabilities. Training exercises were conducted with local Disaster Relief Forces to improve understanding of the procedures to be implemented in the event of a disaster and to provide an understanding of what the ship had to offer should an emergency or natural disaster occur.

The deployment of RFA FORT GEORGE along with HMS IRON DUKE to the region is part of the UK Government's continued support in developing the Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster relief programme for British Overseas Territories as well as continuing regional engagement with the Commonwealth countries in the Caribbean. In addition the ship worked closely with Counter Narcotic Agencies in the region supporting Her Majesties Government counter drugs policies.

During the visit a World Cup Qualifier between Trinidad and USA provided an excellent evening's entertainment even if the crowds were thin on the ground. As can be seen from the photos, members of the ship's company who attended had a FUN evening. SG2 Steve Betts seen photographed with Trinidadian Ex Manchester United player Dwight Yorke.

SG2 Betts with Carib Beer Girls.

Ship's Team who attended football Left to Right: CR1 Bruce Coldwell, L/H(Ck) Paul Brown, CR1 Colin Farn, NA Jay Grant, AET Ian Bowen, 3/O(X) Simon Fox, SA1 Ryan Smallridge, L/H(C) Tony Freer, 2/O(C) Tony Bryce.

SG2 Betts with Dwight Yorke.

Cardigan Bay up the NAG

Usually remaining 'on station' for up to 5 weeks, CARDIGAN BAY's deployment in the Arabian Gulf was cut short due to technical difficulties and she headed back towards Bahrain in order to complete a period of defect rectification. En-route to Bahrain, CARDIGAN BAY conducted a number of rendezvous', exchanging stores with WAVE KNIGHT and embarking a RIB from HMS RICHMOND in order to enable necessary repairs.

CARDIGAN BAY made her approach to Bahrain on yet another beautiful although somewhat humid day and after a short delay, entered the shipyard to take her berth opposite her sister ship LYME BAY, who was also alongside conducting a short refit period.

While the period in port was primarily to repair a number of defects to the ship, the opportunity was also taken to exchange a large number of personnel. In addition to the exchange of RFA personnel, the last two weeks has seen a change over in the USN MESF (United States Navy - Maritime Expeditionary Security Force) crews who are currently embarked on board. The departing team had been with the ship for several months and had become an integral part of the ship's capability, usually operating at short notice to conduct emergency runs or last minute passenger transfers. To mark their departure a plaque was presented to the Captain and crew of CARDIGAN BAY by Lt Rodrigue USN and IT1 Riner.

CARDIGAN BAY remains in Bahrain as final repairs are made to ship's systems so she will be fully capable of continued operations in the Arabian Gulf. While the ship's exact programme remains uncertain, the ship and her crew remain ever flexible.

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RFA Community Website

The Royal Fleet Auxiliary's Community Website rfacom.mod.uk is for RFA personnel, our families and friends and offers a wide range of information on RFA and family matters.

Connecting and supporting the RFA community worldwide 24 hours a day, 365 days a year, this internet based Community Support Facility is for all of us in the Royal Fleet Auxiliary community. If you are, or were, a member of the RFA, a family member or friend - this site is for you. It began as the way to fill the information gap when we are on leave but it has become so much more.

This service is not intended to replace or duplicate the Deployment News that units currently publish on their official pages of the Royal Fleet Auxiliary website rfa.mod.uk, which is aimed at a much wider audience, including the general public, potential recruits and journalists.

The RFA Community Website has 1108 registered users (up to and including September 2009), broken down as follows:

Relation to RFA Member	Number of online users
Child	7
Friend	7
Grandparent	1
Husband	3
Other Family	1
Parent	46
Partner	38
Serving Person	831
Sibling	5
Wife	169

The member's area is only open to personnel and their families who have registered to use this facility. This is a protected area, however, only information of an unclassified nature can be published and this strictly forbids the inclusion of information such as forthcoming port visits and other aspects of a ship's programme.

The current topics being discussed on the website include: Breaking News, Social Networking, Long Service Medals, RFA Partners, RFA Morale and a Lighter Side of RFA life.

Only available to those who have registered for an account:

- Crew Lists (updated monthly)
- Frequently Asked Questions (covering almost everything that is going on, if it is not there, just ask to have the answer included)
- Emergency Contact Details
- BFPO and UIN numbers
- Liberty Boat routines
- Appointers contact details
- MOD Forms 305 and 306 (Expense Claim and Cash Advance Forms)
- Promotion Notices
- Gunline and Cascade Briefs (Note the Gunline is available to view on the RFA Community Website as it goes to the distributor – you can read it here first).

More information and views are appearing all the time and this service is expanding rapidly. The comments tend to be candid, generally balanced and overall supportive of the RFA Community. Registration couldn't be easier; follow the instructions on the opening page. Register today for an account and keep up to date.

Presentation of Courtney Bilkey and Keith Rice Memorial Shields

The annual Defence Maritime Logistics School Awards Ceremony was held at HMS Raleigh on 16th July.

This event is held annually to present the Courtney Bilkey Shield to the trainee cook and the Keith Rice Memorial Shield presented to the trainee steward who achieve the highest results in their exams throughout their training.

The awards were attended by Commodore W M Walworth OBE, Captain John Hood and Fleet Catering Officer 1/O Pat Prunty.

The winner of the Courtney Bilkey Memorial Shield was CA (Cook) Alex Gaynor and The Keith Rice Memorial Shield was awarded to CA (Steward) Dawn Macfarland. They have both been appointed to their respective jobs in ships of the RFA fleet.

Captain John Hood presenting CPO (LS) Joe Brown with CA (Steward) Dawn McFarland's award in her absence.

Commodore W M Walworth presenting CA (Cook) Alex Gaynor with his award

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RFA ASSOCIATION

Chairman's Dit.

Can't put it off any longer, must put pen to paper and write the Chairman's Dit. Now you might wonder, why have I put it off at all? Speak to any journalist and they will probably tell you that nothing ever happens in August other than, perhaps, a few extra broken windows resulting from "Back Street Footie" because the schools are on holiday, and nobody is going to get a Pulitzer Prize for reporting such an event. Think about it, they, the journalists, are dead right (for a change). So what can I talk about in this issue.....

The latest update to the RFA Association Website is as good a place as any to start. We now have an e-shop and have actually made our first sale, now there's a "Dear Diary Moment". It is very easy to use and you can pay using your credit/debit card via Paypal. Have a look on the website, www.rfa-association.org and see if we can tempt you with some of the wondrous items on display in this Aladdin's Cave or cornucopia even of goodies, with more to come in, hopefully, the not too distant future (more of that in a moment). There are some books, RFA Association Ties and some jumpers emblazoned with the RFA logo. The latter are very good value (£7.50 including postage and packing) but are in quite limited supply and once gone will be gone forever unless our secret benefactor, and I have promised COMRFA never to reveal who it was (oops what a giveaway) can come up with some more. I also intend to produce a flyer to post out with mailings showing what we have for sale, this will be particularly important for members not on the internet.

Very soon to appear in the e-shop will be the RFA Association's own beret badge, see picture. This hand embroidered wire and silk badge with an overall height of 1.75 inches/4.5cm will retail for £8.50 including postage and packing and is just the thing for the smart marcher about town. It will be available in the e-shop and also from Bellingham and Plymouth.

Our first Lady Trustee has now joined us, Pam Axworthy, wife of Graham Axworthy has survived her first telephone conference based meeting of Trustees unbowed and unbloodied and looking forward to the next one to be held in London, probably at the Marine Society HQ in Lambeth, in November.

A topic that, like a bad penny, keeps coming back to haunt, is the Pingat Jasa Malasia Medal and I am sorry to say I don't think we are any further forward than we were the last time this item fell under the spotlight. I spoke a little while ago to the co-ordinator of applications for the medal to the Malaysian authorities and he tells me that all the appropriate actions have been done from this end, we will just have to be patient and await developments. Not entirely satisfactory but that's the current status quo.

Christmas is a coming in and this year's RFA Association Christmas Cards will soon be available. The competition for the picture was fierce, I think we managed four entries, but the winner, the well deserved winner was Chris Locke with his fabulous picture of Grey Rover and the locals. I look forward to buying him a glass of his favourite tipple in Plymouth at the 2010 Reunion in Plymouth next year. These

Chris Locke's fabulous picture of 'Grey Rover and the locals'

cards will be available from Bellingham, Plymouth and of course from the e-shop on the website as soon as they are ready, I do not know what the price will be but it will be kept down to a minimum.

Dawn and I recently undertook an audit of the membership and found that a number of members were in various levels of subscription arrears for various reasons, the main one being the increase in subscriptions around 2 years ago. The problem was mostly one of communication and I take the hit there and offer my apologies for not doing better in this respect. Apart from a very few deservedly (by me) grumpy letters the problem is well on its way to being resolved.

Now for some good news, the Association, through the generosity of its members, has achieved the £1800 target for the RFA Memorial at the National Arboretum well done and thank you all for the response. We are however still collecting on behalf of COMRFA and the total fund is now in the region of £2500. I would hope to make an announcement in the not too distant future on the design of the Memorial.

Remaining on the topic of good news we are fast reaching the marching season, Merchant Navy Day (over by the time this is read), but then there are various other events where we can parade our standards and raise the profile of our parent service and the Association. One of the most important being Remembrance Sunday (although standards are not paraded then) on the 8th November in Whitehall. If last year is anything to go by we will be allocated 40 tickets and if you are not participating locally come and represent both the RFA Association

Just as you can't get enough photographs of "O'Boats" the Association cannot get enough members. Membership is open to all serving and retired RFA personnel and others who can demonstrate a link to the RFA: RNSTS/Stonnery, RCT/RLC from the Port Regiment and RN/RM/FAA for instance. Membership is £15 per annum and £150 for life membership. We welcome all applications from shipmates, colleagues, friends and family, Board of Trade Acquaintances, in fact anyone who has a connection with the RFA that fulfils our criteria for membership. A copy of the membership application form is available to download from the website at www.rfa-association.org.

Finally, and for now, I must of course offer my thanks to the contributors to our part of Gunline. George Mortimore, who has supported me since I started writing these pages; John Littlechild, a new and hopefully a regular in waiting; Captain David Parsons from the Merchant Navy Welfare Board and Dave Gerrard for his photographs. My final thought is - do you have a tale to tell of your time in the RFA, because if you have and if you wouldn't mind your Mum or Grannie reading it (if you get my drift) I can think of a load of former shipmates, Board of Trade Acquaintances etc (That's right the same chaps and chapessess I mentioned in the last paragraph) who would love to read it. All you have to do is get out the Basildon Bond and Lazlo Biro's contribution to civilisation, jot it down, stick it in an envelope or preferably email and send it off to me.

Fair Winds and Following Seas

Pat Thompson

National Memorial Arboretum - Merchant Navy Convoy

The July edition of Gunline covered in detail, the proposal to mount an anchor within the National Memorial Arboretum in Alrewas, Staffordshire, as a memorial to those lost in service with the RFA. I thought that your readers might be interested to learn more of the history of the Merchant Navy contribution to this important site.

The Arboretum itself largely came about thanks to the vision, drive and determination of two men, the late Sir Leonard Cheshire VC and Cdr David Childs RN. Both wanted to provide a living memorial to all those people who had suffered or died in the conflicts of the 20th Century. Following the untimely death of Sir Leonard in 1992, David identified an ideal site on the banks of the River Trent and sought suitable organisations to contribute memorials. When we were approached our response was to ask if there was room for a copse of 2,535 trees - one for every British merchant and fishing vessel lost in Word War II. This, we felt, would help raise awareness of the importance of the Merchant Navy and fishing fleet and the ongoing need for them today. The answer was an emphatic yes and the initiative clearly found favour with both the maritime sector and general public, both of whom donated generously. Each donation secured an entry in a Book of Dedication. Today the Convoy of oaks remains the largest single plot on the site and is quite properly bordered by the Royal Navy's Flotilla of trees acting, as it should, as an escort.

Of course the Convoy is not just about WWII. It is dedicated to over 47,000 British men and women who sacrificed their lives at sea in the numerous conflicts of the 20th Century. It was inaugurated on 1st October 1998 in a moving ceremony by Mrs Carrie Hailwood, widow of one "Sir Galahad's" engineering officers, Christopher Hailwood, lost during the Falkland's Campaign. Quite properly it also remembers those lost in other war zones where British merchant vessels, going about their lawful business, such as during the Vietnam

and Iran Iraq wars, came under fire - sometimes fatally.

The Arboretum is, as was intended, a place of peace and quiet reflection. Today the Convoy is a beautiful grove of young trees incorporating several memorials including a large sundial over a map of the world and a shelter with a narrative covering the Merchant Navy's efforts. The Board has been attempting, for some time, to include an anchor from a suitable ship that has seen action - almost certainly nowadays this could only be an RFA. This initiative is therefore hugely welcome as it will provide another poignant reminder to this and future generations, of the ongoing maritime contribution to our nation.

Captain David Parsons (RFA !971-77)
Chief Executive Merchant Navy Welfare Board

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Plymouth Branch
www.rfaaplymouth.org

Solent Branch
www.
freewebs.com/rfaasolentbranch/

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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

MUSES FROM THE FAR FLUNG - MEMORIES OF SINGAPORE

Take me somewhere east of Suez;
where the best is like the worst;
And there ain't no Ten Commandments;
And a man can raise a thirst.

(Rudyard Kipling, and he made exceedingly good cakes too)

Good Morning again (well, it is here!). I'll pretend it's the Safety Committee minutes, and type it out again, as I'm not good at "attachments" and I'll split it into two segments - do hope it will cause a snigger or two!

Time was, I used to swear, that when approaching the Straits of Johore, you could smell Singapore before you could even see it. That heady mixture of woodsmoke, spices, rotting vegetation,kerosene and monsoon drains! Years later, I speak of course, of the late sixties and early seventies, when arriving at RFA Changi en route to joining a ship, when the aircraft door (all flying backwards of course) opened it felt as if you had been smacked in the gob with a hot, wet dish towel. An immaculately clad Agent there to meet you, and you were whisked away in the ubiquitous Pussers Dormobile tilley, and dumped unceremoniously at Chequers Hotel because the vessel had yet to arrive, and nobody knew when or where!

After a short period of time it seemed appropriate to go in search of a cold beer or two, so one would clamber into a much battered Morris Oxford taxi, and instruct the gi-normous, bearded and turbanned Sikh driver to convey us to Sembawang village - upon which instruction he would propel us up the Thomson Road at terrifying speed. Hasty and thankful exit from taxi and wobble into the Sembawang/Golden Hind/Melbourne bar where one was immediately surrounded by comely Ladies of the Evening (otherwise known as Seamstresses) clamouring to be bought sticky greens etc. I select one Juicy Lucy and enquire if she knew when RFA Wave Goodbye would arrive, and where she would dock. No Plobleem - 10.00 on Thursday, Stores Basin 7, and would then recite the names of the Captain, Chief Engineer and the majority of the members of the Officers Mess. The Agent, of course, would not come by this information for quite a time later!

Finally the vessel arrives at the duly appointed time and place, and I present myself on board, only to find that the guy I am relieving has already gone ashore, and knows nothing of my arrival - no surprise there then - the Mad House strikes again. So, I find

myself a cabin and start to unpack. Oh Dear (or something like that) it seems that I have overlooked some vital item of uniform, which means a quick trip back down the village to Toothy Wong's tailoring emporium, which doubles as bar, bank and Avis Rentacar. Beer is produced, tape measure flourished, and with much sucking of teeth when my latest girth is revealed and entered into one of those huge tomes which must rival the Magna Carta for historical content, but all of which were sadly destroyed when the establishment was burnt to the ground back in the eighties I think (probably by some fat git who was going for his ENG1!!!).

During the next few months one could subsist on a diet of Tiger Tops, Nasi Goreng and egg banjos. Peaceful afternoons relaxing at the Terror Club, presided over by Mr Wong who used to terrify the Rodneys, but who had a soft spot for the young RFA Officers who, unlike the Senior Service, did not have such things as married accompanied appointments to the Far East. Remember those awful chit-books? Who did NOT have a drawer full of ten cent coupons unused, and that peculiar smell in your cabin caused by the dozen or so Wanchai Burberrys (Those was paper umbrellas that you NEVER took ashore with you, just bought another when it rained (most afternoons) 'cos they only cost 50 cents! Who does NOT wax lyrical about watching the sun rise over Bugis Street, with the rats playing tag around your feet - the kids who would ALWAYS hammer you at noughts and crosses, and the Tamil street vendor selling "genuine imitation Dunhill lighters" - this in 1968!

I am sure that most of us have, secreted in a corner of a wardrobe somewhere, that treasured item of clothing, subtly tagged Wong Kwee Yong Tailor, long since unwearable due to shrinkage (But one of these days!!!!!!), but not the heart to bin it. That battered old pewter beer tankard from C.T.Hoo, and the Noritake tea service which has probably never seen the light of day.

Memories are made of this, and must remain what they are. It is rarely wise to revisit the scene of old crimes. Modern Singapore is now so very different, and perhaps we may speak of this another time.

John Littlechild
Picture courtesy David Gerrard

RFA Baptism

In December 1959 I was Third Officer in RFA Fort Dunvegan. The ship was in Chatham for a month or so and my fiancè decided that it would be a good time to get married.

She had organised all the important things - Reception (swift half at the White Hart) and Honeymoon (a weekend in Shanklin); fixed the day and time and all I had to do was present myself to the Vicar to arrange the details.

Now the Vicar of St Johns at that time was what we called "high church" in that he wanted everything by the book. This meant proof of residence in the parish, three weeks reading of the banns and written evidence that I was a fully baptised and card carrying member of the C of E. My Mum said I had been baptised but due to several house moves and a couple of Nazi bombings during the war, could not produce a certificate.

The Vicar said "no certificate - no wedding - go and get yourself baptised - I'll do it during Sunday service if you like" I said "no chance - I'm 27 years old, I not going to stand up in front of the whole village to be made fun of".

So, back on the ship I contacted the Padre at the Dockyard Church and asked him if he could do it "on the quiet". He said "certainly - I'll do it after matins on Sunday". Once again I protested that that would be far too public so after the promise of a couple of pints at the pub afterwards he agreed to do it on Saturday morning at 1100. "Bring a couple of witnesses" he said.

That was another problem, Who could I trust? I thought Radio Officers are generally good at keeping secrets but ours was on leave. The Captain was a little too high up the scale and would probably want to make an Event of it.

In the end I reluctantly chose the Navigator Jerry Huxtable and the Purser Dave Corbett, neither of whom I could trust an inch. But it all went well and the deed was done by 1115 on Saturday and on completion I was taken across the road to the Royal Marine pub to "wet the baby's head". This lasted to about 1300 when we decided to return on board for a late lunch. I told both my witnesses that if they mentioned a word about what we had been doing I would kill them. They agreed not to.

As you probably remember, the bar on the old Forts was at the bottom of a steep ladder and Jerry was the first down closely followed by Dave. They burst through the door shouting "you'll never guess where we've been!!"

The bar was very crowded - I believe a birthday RPC was in progress - and as soon as the news was out, the babies head had to be wetted all over again.

I never did kill them but they both left the RFA soon after. Jerry to Singapore and Dave to Australia.

The wedding went ahead as planned and the Golden Anniversary is coming up in seven months time.

George Mortimore
Chief Officer RFA (Retd)
May 2009

The Plymouth Branch Committee

Left to right...
Dave Gerrard, Jan Reid , Maurice Mann, Chris Locke, Tony Pitt, John Halford (Chairman) and Brian Stalley.

OBITUARIES

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

LD(D) Dave Mackey, August 09
Howden Haugh Second Officer(SE), 25 July 09. Aged 59
Terry Shaw First Officer(Supply), 25th July 09. Aged 69.
John Warren, HQ Civil Servant, August 09. Aged 66

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The Marine Society & Sea Cadets

The Marine Society: a range of services for the RFA

The Marine Society is the world's oldest seafarers' charity, serving mariners since 1756.

Today the traditional role of The Marine Society continues to be fulfilled: providing seafarers with a range of services to enhance their learning, well-being and lifestyle, and offering prospective seafarers a source of encouragement and practical guidance.

Financial support for the professional development of UK seafarers is provided through a range of scholarship schemes for both officers and ratings. Interest-free loans are also available.

Another role which brings The Marine Society to the attention of RFA seafarers is its administration of the John William Slater Scholarship Scheme for the advancement of ratings in association with Nautilus International.

An exchange library service is supplied to hundreds of ships, including those of the RFA, supplying more than 120,000 books annually.

Books - both recreational and vocational - can be purchased by individuals at discounted prices and the Society is an authorized distributor for the IMO.

The College of the Sea is part of The Marine Society and exists to serve all professional seafarers, irrespective of sea service, rank or rate, and catering for all levels of learning, ages, abilities and aspirations.

It works with a range of mainstream education and training providers to deliver seafarer-friendly opportunities for personal and professional development.

Founded as part of the Seafarers Education Service in 1938, it has encouraged, enabled and educated generations of seafarers from both the Royal Navy and the Merchant Navy.

Earlier this year Ofsted found the college's seafarer-focused provision to be outstanding in range, quality and delivery and recognised its above national average pass rates.

The college has long been a respected source of impartial advice and practical guidance to seafarers on any matter of concern to them. Recognition of this service was made in July with the award of the Matrix Standard Accreditation.

It's there to be used. Please do so, and encourage others to do likewise.

GCSE / A Levels

The College of the Sea offers an extensive range of subjects. All courses are tutor-supported and come with professionally prepared learning materials. As you might expect, all provision is seafarer-friendly, meaning it's ideally suited whether you're at sea or ashore.

And because it is an examination centre, it can also enter you for examinations and make arrangements for you to sit them either ashore or at sea in your RFA ship.

The Marine Society's Education Manager, Wendy Monaghan recently visited RFA Mounts Bay as part of the commitment to bring the attentions of the ship's company to the many services provided by The Marine Society. All part of The Marine Society's commitment to deliver first rate services to the RFA.

LHAA Andrew Doherty is one of many RFA students currently studying with The Marine Society.

Andrew is studying towards GCSE Mathematics and intends to sit his exams in the Summer of 2010.

Andrew met with Wendy and says: I'm enjoying my study as it will help me to progress. I would thoroughly recommend anyone who is considering further study to contact The Marine Society to see what they can offer".

Free Online Education From The Open University

Within The Open University's OpenLearn website, LearningSpace offers free access to Open University course materials. Here you'll find hundreds of free study units from access to postgraduate level. This is an excellent way to dip your toe into studying without committing yourself and you do not need to enrol as an Open University student to benefit from these online courses.

The Marine Society has also set up a Learning Club for the Merchant Navy, an interactive forum which enables seafarers to share study experiences and good practice as well as support fellow students.

Continuing Professional Development

A range of courses is offered by The Open University and available to seafarers at a specially discounted rate.

The Marine Society also works with other partner providers (eg Lloyds Maritime Academy) to offer a range of up-skilling programmes covering all aspects of the maritime sector. Discounts are available for serving seafarers.

Personal Development

There are courses in nutritional awareness and sports management; and we have programmes in practical areas that cover report writing, editing skills, creative writing, even web design.

Business Skills

The suite of business courses is always kept up to date. The current offering includes skills for those who may be thinking of running their own business such as marketing, bookkeeping, business start-ups, and accountancy.

For the more ambitious, there's even a Masters in Business Administration (MBA) through The Open University with a specially negotiated discount on fees for serving seafarers.

Business, Leadership & Management

To mark 40 years of partnership between The Marine Society and The Open University, the latter offers a BA/BSc Open Degree expressly put together for seafarers that focuses on Business, Leadership & Management.

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

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.

And because it comes from The Open University it can all be achieved either at sea or ashore. Ask The Marine Society for more information or visit www.ms-sc.org/rfa

Work Based Learning Degrees

By means of a partnership with the Institute for Work Based Learning at Middlesex University seafarers are offered a route through which they may top up their HND or FD (Foundation Degree) into a bachelor's degree. And senior officers can make their Class 1 CoC really count with academic equivalency: it will be recognised as being at least a third of a way to getting an academic master's degree!

These ground-breaking and seafarer-friendly programmes are entirely distance taught, can be completed in a minimum of 8 months, are tailored to individual need, fully tutor-supported, and aren't dependent on access to the internet.

Financial Support

The Marine Society continues to provide financial support for the professional development of seafarers. The support is provided through a range of scholarship schemes for both officers and ratings. Interest-free loans are also available.

There's also the John Slater Scholarship Scheme for the advancement of ratings in association with Nautilus International.

Books and Libraries

An exchange library service is supplied to hundreds of ships supplying more than 120,000 books annually.

Books - both recreational and vocational - can be purchased by individuals at discounted prices and The Marine Society is an authorized distributor for the IMO.

Its direct book-selling service covers any and every book in print, from block-busting bestsellers to vocational heavyweights.

Matrix Standard Accreditation

A first for the maritime sector, The Marine Society has achieved the Matrix Standard which is a nationally recognized quality mark for organizations which provide information, advice and guidance.

The Matrix Standard assessors described The Marine Society as "having an enduring commitment to providing a specialized and individually focused service to seafarers".

Like to know more?

Visit The Marine Society online or get in touch with this London-based not-for-profit organization today.
- it exists to help seafarers!

The Marine Society, 202 Lambeth Road, London SE1 7JW
education@ms-sc.org Tel 020 7654 7050
www.mscos.ac.uk

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TAMWORTH SEA CADETS CELEBRATE 20 YEARS AFFILIATION WITH A VISIT TO RFA FORT ROSALIE

This year marks the 20th anniversary of the affiliation between TS Fort Grange and RFA Fort Rosalie (Fort Grange as she was in 1989). Captain Ross Ferris and Third Officer Simon

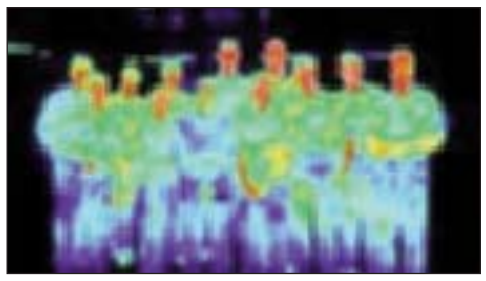
Tudor recently visited TS Fort Grange for the evening to celebrate Lieutenant (SCC) Bradbury's time in command and to witness Sub-Lieutenant (SCC) Wright assuming Command of the unit. The cadets put on a number of fantastic displays, and gave Captain Ferris and Third Officer Tudor a guided tour of the Sea Cadet Unit, including their engine room and bridge, setup in the unit for training.

RFA Fort Rosalie being alongside Glen Mallan Jetty, near Faslane, undertaking an assisted maintenance period, provided a good opportunity for 12 cadets from TS Fort Grange to visit the ship in early August. The visit started with the cadets undertaking boat work training in the ship's Fast Motor Launch and Fast Jet-Boat. Next on the programme was training in fire fighting and damage control, developing the skills which would be utilised during a cadet's

fire exercise. The exercise scenario was set, the garbage incinerator compartment had caught fire and there were persons reported missing. By utilising the smoke machine, the compartment was filled with smoke and a couple of the ship's

company acted as casualties. With the cadets wearing breathing apparatus and using thermal imaging cameras they located the casualties and guided them to safety. The cadets spent the evening searching the ship to find the answers to a Fort Rosalie quiz. One of the more difficult questions was how many miles had RFA Fort Rosalie steamed since TS Fort Grange first visited?

All the cadets commented how much they had enjoyed their short stay onboard RFA Fort Rosalie and a number even expressed an interest in joining the Royal Fleet Auxiliary.



TAMWORTH SEA CADETS (TS FORT GRANGE) VISIT RFA FORT ROSALIE

By Captain Ferris

TS Fort Grange (Tamworth Sea Cadet Unit) recently embarked RFA FORT ROSALIE on passage from Portland to Crombie. If you want to put a smile on your face read the following article by Able Cadet Jessica Else, (13yrs), which in her own words recounts her time onboard. Fantastic – but I'm not sure about the 12 hours sleep a day!!! (Cheeky monkey!)

"Tamworth and Lichfield sea cadets recently visited a trip on RFA Fort Rosalie from the 25th May 2009 till 29th May 2009.

During are stay on RFA Fort Rosalie we experienced many different activities on day to day life on a ship.

When we set out on the Monday all of us was so excited, most of us just couldn't wait to even see what the ship looked like and how big it was never mind what we were about to experience. When we arrived at Portland docks we all just looked at the ship and was amazed, it was so big but it was wonderful. Once we had got all our gear onto the ship we was greeted by these two gentleman who told us their going to be like are tour guides for the rest of the week, anyway we was shown to are rooms, we was shocked

when we got their and found out how 'little' the storage space was (well it was for the GIRLS anyway). By that time it was dinner, the food was lovely. After dinner we had a brief what we were going to be doing for the rest of our stay on the ship. By that time we were all shattered and went off to our 5 STAR LUXURY rooms just like the captains.

Now this is where we found out that we had to do watches, which we didn't realise we would only be having 3 hours sleep every night. Unlike the captain who had his full 12 hours of course. During our watches we learnt how to do chartwork and measure what the temperature and watch out for other

ships, buoys and objects and cool stuff like that really. One of the things that we all got to have a go at is driving the ship what we was all very pleased with, especially when I was driving.

First of all we will start off with the engine room. What can I say this is the biggest and noisiest engine I've ever seen in my whole entire life. We walked in the room with are ear plugs in of course. And I can't name all the parts of the engine we seen but we kept on walking all up and down these stairs we seen the pistons and the sewage compartment the boilers and most of all the steering compartment. Now that is huge, it's a big long cylinder which is connected to the propeller you would think that steering would be hard by the look of that but really we just make it look easy.

Second of all we all had our fare share of stewarding. This is where we all had to silver serve the captain. No-one wanted to do it like but there we go, we never got out of it. We first learnt how we silver serve and how we lay the table. Once we had learnt these things we would then have to silver serve the captain and the other officers. We were really nervous but once we got the hang of it, it was a doddle. But most of us said we wouldn't do it again thought.

Thirdly, the second most amazing room was where they kept all the magazine. The room was enormous I never knew how big a room could be just for storing ammunition. They store it from top to bottom full of ammunition if another ship was to blow up from up to a 10 mile radius RFA Fort Rosalie would to. That proves how much ammunition they carry onboard. When we left on the Sunday we got to see how much ammunition was being brought onboard the ship that was quite cool to see.

Finally, the greatest thing was of course the life boat and the damage control. First the life boat, I have never had such of an adrenalin rush in all my life, it was so exciting you just came to life as soon as the life boat hit the water and the engine started. It was just brilliant. Second the damage control, I have never laughed so much in one day. Basically we had to try to stop this sea water from going everywhere and had pieces of wood to stop the leak, and obviously he turned it up when the girls were on the scene. So we were just looking great when we finished as you could imagine.

I could just go on all day about our stay on RFA Fort Rosalie, but I can't unfortunately. Overall we all had a fantastic time on RFA Fort Rosalie and the memories are just unforgettable.

Thank you to 3rd Officer Tudor and the Captain for letting us stay onboard your ship, RFA Fort Rosalie." sic

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The Merchant Seamen's War Memorial Society

Springbok Farm Estate

The Merchant Seaman's War Memorial Society (MSWMS), widely known as 'Springbok', is a registered charity (207500) that exists to provide a range of services for seafarers and fishermen in need. The Society is located on a 200 acre estate set in beautiful Surrey countryside, 40 miles south of London and 30 miles north of the South Coast and primarily aims to provide and maintain a comfortable, safe and secure environment that eligible individuals are able to enjoy on either a long or short term basis.

Recognition by Mr J Havelock Wilson C.B.E., MP of the urgent need to look after the interests and health of seamen of the Mercantile Marine, who were suffering ill health and financially unable to obtain the treatment and comforts necessary to restore their health, spawned the idea of the Society. In 1917 Mr Havelock Wilson approached Mr Henry Radcliffe, a prominent ship owner, who supported the proposed scheme with great enthusiasm and subsequently offered the building that was to become the original convalescent home in Limpsfield, Surrey. The National Sailors' and Fireman's Union undertook the task of transforming the building into a properly equipped convalescent home and it was opened by His Royal Highness Prince Albert, Duke of York, K.G., in 1920 This home provided nursing care for seamen who were injured or fell ill whilst at sea. The convalescent home remained operational until 1963, when its services were transferred to the Springbok Farm Estate, Alfold, Surrey.

It was during WWII that the Executive Officers of both the Society and the National Union of Seamen realised that something had to be done for the increasing number of seafarers who, by their service, were permanently incapacitated and unable to follow the sea as a means of livelihood. The Union set about purchasing and converting their war time Headquarters, Sachel Court Estate, Alfold, Surrey into a permanent Rehabilitation and Training Centre as a

memorial to those seamen who had lost their lives, and in gratitude to those who survived but sacrificed their health whilst serving their country. At this time the people of the Union of South Africa showed their appreciation to seafarers for keeping them supplied during the conflict and through a Navy Week Campaign raised funds which were donated to the Centre. From 1947 through to 1993 the Centre re-trained seamen in either agriculture or horticulture, equipping them for employment away from the sea.

The Society has at its disposal a range of types of accommodation including sheltered housing combined with support services and holiday accommodation. This currently includes 39 accommodation units comprising its sheltered housing scheme; these are made up of 8 one bedroom bungalows, 11 one bedroom flats for independent living and another 20 flats where residents receive an enhanced service to include meals. The main building houses single accommodation, administrative and communal areas. There is a well stocked library that also boasts a computer with internet access, a small gym, launderette, licensed members club and TV lounges. A passenger lift is provided for residents located in the main house annex, whilst a stair lift serves the guest rooms.

The Society offers its services to all seafarers, fishermen, and their dependents in need. Currently there are 45 long term beneficiaries of the Society, 37 from the MN with the balance from the RN. The quality of service provided is of major importance to the Society and consequently it has little difficulty in maintaining a high level of occupancy. Of the current residents 33 have lived within the scheme for over 5 years with the longest being over 22 years, clearly demonstrating the value residents place on the service provided. The current resident group spans the age range mid 40's to mid 90's providing a diversity that cultivates and sustains an understanding, respect and community spirit within the group.

Residents have the option of benefiting from a range of support services offered to ensure they are able to live as independently as possible. To further enhance the life of the beneficiary the Society provides an advocacy service, with the support of the Seafarers Advice Information Line (SAIL), and makes small grant payments to individuals.

Transport is provided to take residents to doctor, hospital and dental appointments and also for shopping and social trips. The grounds and estate comprise beautiful gardens and woodlands that residents and guests may explore. They are likely to see a wide range of wildlife that can include deer, badgers, foxes, owls, woodpeckers and many other species.

The Society also operates a holiday scheme for seafarers and their dependents. There are eight en-suite guest rooms, comprising two family rooms, two doubles and four twins. Three of these rooms are equipped to aid those with disabilities and include easy access showers, hearing loop, and enhanced fire alarm systems. All the rooms can be accessed by a stair lift and walking aids can be provided.

In addition to the housing, support and holidays the residents and guests have access to a variety of activities that include a fishing and boating lake, garden and woodland walks. Mobility scooters are provided for anyone wishing to use them. This is helpful for those who may fall ill and need assistance with mobility. The scooters are also available to those taking a holiday on the estate.

During its 89 year existence the Society has experienced many changes and overcome a variety of problems to ensure its continued existence and ever improving levels of service. This has been possible through the charitable activities of the Society, funded mainly from self generated income. Through the prudent use of its funds and some significant additional grants from other charitable organizations such as the Merchant Navy Welfare Board and Seafarers UK, the Society has been successful in improving its properties, facilities and services. Should you wish to learn more about the MSWMS, the facilities that it provides, make a donation or organize a shipboard fundraising event more information is available by contacting the Society at;

Merchant Seaman's War Memorial Society
Springbok Farm Estate, Alfold,
Near Cranleigh, Surrey GU6 8EX
Telephone 01403 752555
Web Address www.mswmsociety.org.uk

BIKE RIDE TO GEORDIE LAND

Whilst on leave from training as a cook at HMS Raleigh, a member of our course CA COOK David Payne experienced horrific injuries following a motor accident, where he was left in a coma, believed to have been paralysed due to a shattered vertebra on his upper spine as well as other injuries. As a class we bonded really well with David and wanted to do something to show our support for and encourage him.

From left to right RN LLogs Triffitt, RN Chef Taff and RN MA Brett

We started thinking of a few ideas before settling on the idea of a sponsored cycle ride on exercise bikes. This involved cycling the equivalent distance of Torpoint to Newcastle. We felt this was a fitting tribute particularly as David had been planning some mountain biking during leave. C.A. Simpson organised the event which included exclusive use of part of the C.V. suite at HMS Raleigh gym for the duration of the event. Whilst C.A. Venus organised T-Shirts which let all know we were doing it for Dave.

MoD Security Guard Brian Kilgannan

On the day we had a lot of support from naval, civilian and RFA staff at HMS Raleigh. This included 55 year M.O.D guard Brian Kilgannan who covered 100 miles on his own, even his grandson Troy got in on the act.

In total we were able to achieve the required distance in just less than six hours reaching the required 402 miles, although some indefatigable types were suggesting adding the mileage of the nearest McDonalds.

The lesser Mortals of the group managed to acquire a few sore legs the following day, not to mention being saddle sore, but it has to be said it was worth it.

So far the class, RFA staff and cookery instructors of HMS Raleigh have collected £830 from naval recruits, the ships galley simulator (RWE), and students of other classes within the cookery school. This will be donated to the James Cook University Hospital, Spinal Unit, Middlesbrough.

There was also strong support from the leading hands mess where Dave was a volunteer barman. We have been receiving regular updates on Dave from CPO CK Etwell; however his condition has not improved significantly however we recently received a glimmer of hope when we were told Dave is now breathing without the aid of a ventilator.

We would like to thank all personnel that took part or supported us, this includes but is not limited to the Royal Fleet Auxiliary Officers at HMS Raleigh, the cookery school instructors and staff, MOD Guard Service, The base Warrant Officer, Physical Training staff, CPO COOK Etwell, and the base commander, and any others not listed many thanks also.

From left to right back row CA CK Simpson, MA Brett, Chef Taff CA CK McKenna, LLogs Triffitt, 1/O(LS) Struthers, CPO Lees PO Spencer.
From left to right front row Mr Kilgannan, CA CK Martin and Security Guard Kilgannan.

Printed by Holbrooks Printers Ltd, Portsmouth PO3 5HX