Gunline July10 p1-3.qxd:Gunline 23/6/10 6:21 pm Page 1

Gunline - The First Point of Contact | Published by the Royal Fleet Auxiliary Service | July 2010 | www.rfa.mod.uk

FORT GEORGE SAILS WITH CARRIER STRIKE GROUP

Second Officer Alex Cook

RFA Fort George arrived in Crombie in February this year. Her crew were involved in an intense period of activity, with the sole aim of preparing both the ship and her crew to carry out the role of 'R2 Carrier Strike Auxiliary Oiler Replenishment (AOR) platform'.

On completion of a ten week Contract Support Period in April, Fort George slipped out of the Firth of Forth to resume operational tasking. With her freshly overhauled engines propelling the ship towards the Pentland Firth, she arrived on station to carry out her first RAS within twenty-four hours of leaving port. After a successful transfer of essential diesel and aviation fuel to our old acquaintance, HMS Ark Royal, the ship headed north westerly to fulfil her task in providing the key element of "maritime sustainability" to the assembling Joint Warrior multinational task group.

We then commenced training with FOST to regenerate the ship and her crew to the standards required for her future programme. After passing these initial tests with flying colours, it was straight into an intensive RAS programme, with Fort George satisfying the thirst of USS Barry and Vicksburg amongst a host of other ships, prior to completing a mammoth eight RAS's on the final Sunday of Exercise Joint Warrior.

Fort George then detached from the task group, making her way to Loch Striven, where she loaded essential cargo to support the forthcoming AURIGA 10 deployment, the largest joint maritime Royal Navy deployment of 2010.

Late in the evening whilst on final passage to port we heard that HMS Ark Royal was being detached from the Joint Warrior task group to assist with the evacuation of British Citizens stranded in Europe as a result of the Icelandic volcanic eruptions. Would we accompany her? As word of Ark Royal's re-tasking spread around the ship, questions were asked how this would affect our programme. Initial fears of programme changes were soon allayed, with command rapidly informing us that Fort George would now become the command platform for the initial phase of AURIGA 10.

Within hours, twenty nine personnel cross decked from Ark Royal, with the commodore's pennant proudly raised up the starboard forward yardarm, signifying RFA Fort George's Flag Ship status to the rest of the task group. The ship made a very brief stop in Loch Striven as planned, before being given instructions to lead the remainder of the task group departing on the 22 April across the Atlantic Ocean for the eastern seaboard, until the volcanic dust disruptions had lessened and Ark Royal could be released to rejoin the AURIGA 10 deployment.

Back at sea we became fully integrated with the recently embarked 814 Naval Air Squadron and their three Merlin helicopters. Known as the "Flying Tigers", 814 Naval Air Squadron (NAS), based at Culdrose, joined the "Auriga" Carrier Strike Task Group in April to take part in a multi-national long-range maritime training exercise. From the outset of Exercise Auriga 10, 814 NAS honed its Anti-Submarine Warfare (ASW) skills exercising in the South Coast Exercise Areas off Plymouth, to hounding the Dutch submarine Walrus during the Submarine Command Course off Ayrshire, to operations against the French Submarine FS Perle. Even an Icelandic Volcano could not stop them!

Not content with carrying 3 Merlin helicopters, enough diesel to fuel 166,660 cars (or sail 2.8 times around the equator!) and 100,000 man days of food, RFA Fort George also became the temporary home for Commodore Simon Ancona, RN and his Carrier Strike Group (CSG) staff whilst awaiting the return of his Flagship, HMS Ark Royal. The Carrier Strike Lead Task Group deployed from the UK comprising of a combined force of approximately 2,000 UK, US and French navy personnel in a variety of four Royal Navy and Royal Fleet Auxiliary ships, a French nuclear powered submarine, an American Destroyer along with several rotary and fixed wing aircraft.

As the cloud of volcanic dust continued to linger in northern European airspace, keeping both military and civil aircraft confined to the ground, Fort George took a southerly route across the Atlantic Ocean towards the eastern seaboard of the United States, to ensure that the embarked 814 NAS of Merlin helicopter could get airborne maximising training opportunities.

As we left the shelter of the Irish Sea and began the three thousand mile transit west, the Atlantic weather fronts began to roll in. Whilst this presented challenges to both our replenishment and aviation programmes, all of these were overcome by the skill and determination of the crews, ensuring Quadriga Chasse, an anti submarine warfare exercise run over a period of 24 hours went successfully. This

Continues on page 3

Gunline July10 p1-3.qxd:Gunline 1/7/10 3:01 pm Page 2

Commodore Bill Walworth

Welcome to the latest edition of Gunline and congratulations to the many contributors. In this edition you can read articles from ship's in every stage of the cycle, from refit, training, operating across the globe, wherever the UK has interests. We are in the early stages of a Defence and Security Review (SDSR) which will shape the future of the Department, the Armed Services and the RFA, while the Value for Money Review continues alongside it, a complex situation. We continue to put the case for the RFA and the work of our ships continues to demonstrate our operational focus and importance to Defence, however there are very serious financial challenges to overcome in the MOD, We are unlikely to hear the outcome of either before the end of September.

Recent highlights have been the trip to the Gulf to see the ships' companies of RFAs CARDIGAN BAY, LYME BAY and BAYLEAF. I enjoyed being with them and took the opportunity for longer discussions than time usually permits. The LSD(A)s regularly host politicians and senior military officers. The Secretary of State for Defence and Commander Joint Operations (CJO) being recent visitors. They all left with a good impression after being well hosted and seeing us in action. DILIGENCE has now joined them after her refit and she has also recently hosted CJO. This brings the number of ships at sea on operations and standing overseas commitments to seven, with FORT GEORGE and LARGS BAY part of the AURIGA Carrier Strike Task Group on the other side of the Atlantic. Our other running ships are in various stages of regeneration from maintenance. Nearly 40% of the RFA is deployed on operations, which bears comparison with the rest of the MOD.

The changes of the past few years have been substantial and we need to be aligned in our understanding of our modern role as an organisation. We have launched a leaflet setting out the Vision for the Future RFA,. This is the first of a sequence which will help us all to know what is expected of us and who we are. Equally important to the future of the RFA is the recent review of Sponsored Reserves (SR), which seeks to answer the questions raised by those people who have yet to sign to become SR and to receive the allowance. This will be on the streets shortly.

In May I visited the National Arboretum Memorial in Staffordshire with Pat Thompson, Chairman of the RFA Association. It is an inspiring place with eye catching and beautiful memorials celebrating civilians and servicemen. I was struck by the peace and the sense of reflection of the location and I now 'get it'. Frank Andrews, who some of you will remember, has agreed to lead a project team to give us an RFA memorial, to be ready in the Summer of 2012 and we expect the first phase will cost up to £20000 . I hope he RFA Memorial will be something we can be proud to visit and will reflect the essential qualities of the RFA and our history. We will keep you up to date with progress in Gunline and I look forward to seeing their ideas.

I hope you enjoy this Gunline and the range of articles. I hope the HQ staff get a break over the summer and return refreshed for the undoubted challenges facing us in the Autumn, and wish our seagoers on operations good luck, for the rest of our readers - enjoy the Summer.

BAY CLASS EXHAUST MODIFICATION

An Exhausting Job Not a Quick Fix Job

Back in 2008 issues were raised in relation to the original water cooled exhaust fit on the Bay Class. The issues have been with the ship since build and cover: Fumes affecting personnel when mooring or manning weapons; A history of water ingress into machinery; Premature failures of the system due to the corrosive conditions associated with the mix of exhaust and water. In 2008 A & P Falmouth Contract Support Team (CST) were tasked with redesigning the exhaust system to address the issues. A feasibility study was undertaken by BAe Systems and while on paper things appeared acceptable however several concerns were raised and had to be addressed.

Although the new design runs through various areas of the ship and prevents the risk of fire external of the ductwork utilising sealing elements and insulation, there is still a risk of an internal fire from the engine spreading through the ductwork itself. A requirement by the MCA was the fitting of a fire damper in the exhaust ducting as the exhaust transits the Diesel Generator Compartment bulkhead into the vehicle deck. This type of damper will be a first for the RFA

Spot the difference

Before

and its operation will undoubtedly feature in SoPs covering a Main DG Compartment Fire. As with the fit in general this is a bespoke damper which will undergo a Fire Test and approval before being fitted to the system.

One of the final hurdles to be overcome in the design was a Computational Fluid Dynamics (CFD) analysis to assess the affects of the relocation of the exhausts on critical areas. The analysis was carried out by BMT Fluid Mechanics at the National Physical Laboratory. This involved the production of a scaled model which was then subjected to wind tunnel tests. The data from the tests was then computer modelled and used to produce the analysis data. The computer model can be used to produce further data should minor changes be made to the design without the need to carry out further wind tunnel testing.

Work was programmed for 12 weeks and commenced on RFA Mounts Bay during her RP2010 in Falmouth. The existing exhaust fit has been removed and new accesses cut in the ships structure to accommodate the new design. The exhaust elements have been manufactured and are being fitted by Darchem Engineering.

After

The main exhaust runs are all welded austenitic stainless steel which cannot only look nice and shiny but can also accommodate high temperatures and remain ductile. The exhaust run takes its original route from the Diesel Generators up to new silencers which are located in the original positions, these are however much smaller and lighter. The run then turns on 2 Deck through the bulkhead into the Vehicle Deck and then fwd above the Line Handles Walkway. Where the ducting dips in way of the deck height change for the MCR the section of exhaust ducting goes from being round to ob-round in order to minimise the impact on headroom. The exhaust runs continues fwd before going vertical up through the Rations Store and Life Jacket Store Once the exhaust penetrates 1 deck just fwd of the Flight Deck gantry the stack is self supporting. The exhaust ducting will be insulated and clad to reduce noise and wild heat on the Vehicle Deck. On the Container/Flight Deck a protective cage will be fitted around the stacks to prevent mechanical damage

The removal of the old exhaust has provided two long void areas where the exhaust ran aft on 2 Deck. A suggestion for one of the areas has been put forward that it should be used for a Bowling Alley any suggestions for the other should be sent to the editor - further funding may need to be sought.

RFA LARGS BAY "HELP4HEROES BATTLEFIELD RIDE"

In May 1940, RFA WAR SEPOY was Dover Port Oiler, supporting the ships of OPERATION DYNAMO as they evacuated the British Army from the beaches of Dunkirk. Seventy years later, as part of the anniversary, RFA LARGS BAY found herself off the self-same coast, embarking a group of tired cyclists from Help 4 Heroes for their return to Dover.

From a grey and windswept France, the LCU's delivered 278 Charity Fundraisers after a 6 day and 350 mile bike ride around the battlefields of Belgium and northern France. Hosting such a large group of non-seafaring civilians was, to say the least, a challenging evolution but the good humour of our guests and the professionalism of the ship's company made for an effective embarkation.

The cyclists were accommodated in the ship's Troop's Dormitories, giving them an insight into the lives of Embarked Military Forces on a modern

Landing Ship Dock, an experience described as "awesome" by H4H co-founder Bryn Parry.

On Sunday morning, a wreath laying ceremony was held on the vehicle deck to mark the sacrifices of Dunkirk and beyond, accompanied by a piper and bugler. On arriving off Dover, a Spitfire performed over the iconic White Cliffs prior to the cyclists disembarking.

The ride is expected to have raised between £800,000 and £1,000,000; RFA LARGS BAY was proud to offer her assistance to such a cause.

RFA WAR SEPOY was lost to enemy action on the 19th July 1940.

Gunline July10 p1-3.qxd:Gunline 23/6/10 10:57 am Page 3

....Continued

three week period at sea also provided the perfect opportunity for Fort George to demonstrate her ability in her new role as task group command platform, displaying her capabilities in providing 24 hour logistical and tactical support to the Auriga Task Group impressing the Carrier Strike Group staff.

In addition to Anti-Submarine Warfare, the Squadron carried out other activities such as submarine transfers; a rare opportunity to winch people to and from a submarine and a most enjoyable one, unless you're the one on the end of the wire of course – which Commodore Simon Ancona was briefly! It is certainly a test of good flying and coordination between the aircraft and the submarine, as well as within the crew.

The NAS enjoyed the tactical interplay that Auriga offered, particularly against the submariners. Operating in the mid Atlantic was a first for some and certainly concentrated the mind towards the end of a long mission in the black of night. The early sorties were simply to get the squadron's deck skills up to scratch by day and night and build up good working practices with the deck crews and operations teams in HMS Ark Royal and Fort George. The maintainers have done a sterling job and kept the aircraft flying and have also provided excellent support to another Merlin operator in the group, HMS Sutherland.

The first surface and boarding exercises were conducted between USS Barry and HMS Sutherland. As part of their preparation the boarding teams' training progressed with rapid roping serials. This allows for a speedy insertion of the Boarding Team from a helicopter when time is of the essence.

On completion of Quadriga Chasse, prior to arriving in Norfolk for a three day visit, Fort George and her embarked Merlin helicopters, was in company with HMS Sutherland a Type 23 frigate, the Arleigh-Burke class destroyer USS Barry, USS Dallas and FS Perle an American and French nuclear submarine.

Once secured alongside Norfolk, all ships' departments busied themselves with the usual array of port visits. The Logistics Supply department discussed a wide range of issues with the port agents, including immigration, cash deliveries, food supplies and garbage disposal, whilst the engineers got down to business with planned maintenance. Several members of the Ships' Command Teams attended exercise pre-sail conferences, whilst others made the 'mandatory' shopping trip to the Naval Exchange Mall. This short period alongside terra firma also provided the opportunity for the budding football stars to test their mettle against US opposition. Playing against their host ship, RFA Fort George beat USS Arleigh-Burke 8-1 in a game played in testing conditions, but the best of spirits.

In early June the Amphibious Task Group set sail to join the Carrier Task Group consisting of approximately 2,000 personnel and five ships. The Amphibious Task Group will join up with the Carrier Group for the final exercise. RFA Fort George, throughout the last six weeks has been busy ensuring essential stores and equipment are in the correct place by replenishing the other units via the Logistics and Engineering Departments; this has ensured that the ships have been able to repair defects promptly. RFA Fort George is without doubt leading the way for an accolade for busy professional delivery of critical support.

The deployment is focusing on a series of US and Canadian exercises with the principal aim of enhancing our operational capability by training with our coalition partners in traditional war fighting areas of Carrier Strike, Amphibious Assault and Anti-Submarine Warfare operations. Elements of the Task Group will also participate in the International Fleet Review taking place in Halifax to celebrate the Centennial of the Canadian Navy.

After 19 lumpy days in rough seas, and with HMS Ark Royal steaming across the Atlantic after her tasking to join Operation Cunningham to assist with the repatriation of UK nationals stranded in Europe due to the Icelandic volcanic ash cloud, the weather finally abated, allowing elements of the Auriga Task Group: RFA Fort George, HMS Sutherland, FS Perle and USS Barry; joined by the American SSN submarine, USS Dallas, to come together.

On Saturday 8 May RFA Fort George in conjunction with USS Barry and HMS Sutherland both protecting the high value unit conducted a successful exercise with US Submarine Dallas.

The Auriga ships repositioned themselves at sea whilst HMS Ark Royal arrived for her short spell in which she embarked 12 AV8B Harrier jets and 143 personnel from the United States Marine Corps. HMS Liverpool continued to steam across the Atlantic Ocean ready to meet up with the Task Group in time for the keenly awaited Exercise Capella Strike which saw HMS Ark Royal's flight deck crew tested to capacity conducting over 70 deck launches per day!

Commodore Simon Ancona, Royal Navy, Commander UK Carrier Strike Group who had embarked Fort George when HMS Ark royal was tasked in support of Operation Cunningham transferred back to HMS Ark Royal. His aim during the deployment is to ensure the development of a range of maritime capabilities by maximising the value of training opportunities for all joint and coalition partners.

With the port visit seemingly over before it began, Fort George was back out at sea to take part in the second part of the exercise; CAPELLA STRIKE. Shortly after clearing the Chesapeake Pilotage area, Fort George launched one of her 814 NAS Merlin aircraft which then detached to the United States Marine Corps Air Station New River to take part in Anti-Submarine Warfare exercises with her US Navy counterparts.

With the rest of the Task Group in position and Ex Capella Strike in full swing, the Nation's Flagship, HMS Ark Royal, appeared over the horizon to take Command. As with all Task Groups, ships leave and join regularly, it was, therefore, goodbye to USS Dallas and a welcome to HMS Ark Royal and USS Boise, with HMS Liverpool set to join soon. It was not long before her crew, swelled by 143 hungry US Marines, required feeding and RFA Fort George was on hand to supply: vegetables, frozen goods, and soft drinks amongst other things, in many ways, similar to that of a (very large) weekly shop. The only difference being that of quantity; when was the last time you popped into a supermarket for ten tonnes of potatoes?

The dawning of the new week in the US East Coast Exercise Areas brought with it heavy rains, which coincided with a double RAS of HMS Sutherland and USS Barry, resulting in some extremely soggy sailors! With the Sutherland and Barry's thirst for diesel now quenched, Fort George continued on her way with a busy programme of warfare exercises.

With the CAPELLA STRIKE RAS programme now complete it was time for Fort George to take up station on the other side of the RAS hoses, in order to top up her own fuel tanks. The USNS Kanawha arrived on station and kindly issued us with over six thousand tonnes of diesel and aviation fuel, before the Navigator 'threw the sticks forward' in order for us to catch up with the rest of the task group, who were already heading for Mayport, Florida. This six day port visit provided an opportunity to conduct routine maintenance whilst also enabling participation in recreational activities in the Mayport area. Whilst some of the crew took the opportunity to make the short trip to Orlando, many also attended the hugely successful Sports Day and Barbeque, hosted by the PT department on board HMS Ark Royal. Several sporting tournaments were held throughout the day, including rugby, football and volleyball. Fort George entered the football tournament in typically high spirits, putting in a highly credible performance to reach the semi finals, only to be beaten by the eventual tournament winners, HMS Ark Royal.

On departure from Mayport, Fort George headed back out into Atlantic Ocean to support the third phase of AURIGA 10; Exercise SEASWITI. Day one saw us getting back to our core business of providing copious amounts of diesel and aviation fuel to HMS Ark Royal and Liverpool, prior to embarking upon a busy period of internal training, involving crash on deck and State 1 exercises.

Apart from military support to a front line Task Group, we also have a major role to play in providing disaster relief to stricken communities, such as after the effects of hurricanes. We carry emergency relief stores and can provide field first aid assistance, backed up by our own 6 berth hospital and medical staff assistance from within the Task Group.

At the time of writing, FORT GEORGE is continuing to provide much needed logistical support to the AURIGA task group, prior to high profile port visits to Norfolk, Virginia and Halifax, Nova Scotia, where she will take part in an International Fleet Review to celebrate the 100th anniversary of the Canadian Navy.

Captain Dale Worthington OBE RFA, Commanding Officer, stated "Fort George is one of the most capable ships in the RFA's arsenal. Her presence within the AURIGA task group provides extended range and endurance to the Carrier Strike Group in terms of fuel, ammunition and food. Replenishment at sea (RAS) is achieved underway via the heavy jackstay stores rigs and fuel rigs, which can service a ship each side, simultaneously. Another string to our bow is the embarked Merlin squadron, whose three highly capable helicopters represent the major anti-submarine asset within the Task Group. These helicopters can also conduct load lifting of stores between ships. The ship's company of 250 men and women are a well trained combination of Royal Fleet Auxiliary, Royal Navy and Stores civilians who meet the demands of the Task Group Commander around the clock. We also have a fair measure of self defence which includes two Phalanx automated anti aircraft/missile Gatling guns; conventional 20mm cannons, general purpose machine guns and anti-missile decoy rockets. I am immensely proud to be in Command of Fort George and her professional men and women who deliver a punch well above their weight!"

Gunline July10 p4-5.qxd:Gunline 23/6/10 10:33 Page 4

FORT GEORGE AND THE FLYING TIGERS – 814 NAS

RFA Fort George, from the very beginnings of Exercise Auriga has been host to 814 Naval Air Squadron, in company with HMS Ark Royal.. The "Flying Tigers" have been honing their Anti-Submarine Warfare (ASW) skills, exercising in the South Coast Exercise Areas off Plymouth, to hounding the Dutch submarine Walrus during the Submarine Command Course off Ayrshire Scotland, and now to operations against the French Submarine FS PERLE. "The Hunt for Rouge October" as the ship's company nicknamed it, or "The Curse of the Black Perle" to others – even an Icelandic Volcano could not stop us.

The Squadron has been operating its Merlin helicopters from RFA Fort George and HMS Ark

Royal, enjoying the tactical interplay that Auriga has offered so far, particularly against our nemesis the submariner. Operating mid Atlantic was a first for some and certainly concentrated the mind towards the end of a long mission in the black of night. The early sorties were simply to get our deck skills up to scratch by day and night and build up good working practices with the deck crews and operations teams in HMS Ark Royal and Fort George. The aircraft themselves have tested the ships patience on a few occasions, but the maintainers have done a sterling job and kept the cabs flying.

Beyond ASW, the Squadron has carried out other activities such as submarine transfers; a rare opportunity to winch people to and from a submarine and a most enjoyable one, unless you're the one on the end of the wire of course – which Commodore Simon Ancona (Commander Strike Group)was briefly! It is certainly a test of good flying, and coordination between the aircraft and the submarine as well as within the crew.

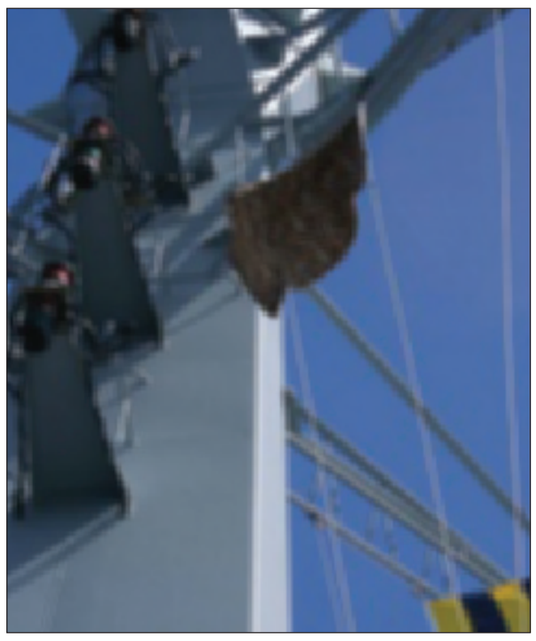
Once safely onboard, Commodore Ancona said:

"...Thoroughly enjoyed it – took me back to Cliff Winching although I can't recall landing astride a periscope while walking down a Cornish Cliff all those years ago. The US don't do these transfers unless it's an emergency. They don't know what they are missing - what doesn't kill you merely makes you greyer."

Two of 814 NAS; Lieutenant Keith Esliger (our Canadian Exchange Observer) and Leading Aircrewman 'Final' Furlong spent 72 hours on the FS Perle. As devoted aviators, they both exclaimed: "It was an interesting experience but neither of us are keen to spend a 73rd hour onboard."

Other missions have included an "encounterex" which is a task to find and destroy the enemy (the American surface forces in this case) before they do the same to you; can't tell you the result – but we didn't lose!

Back on board RFA Fort George, Squadron fitness has been run by Chief Petty Officer Stu Nanson who maintains a gruelling regime not for the faint-hearted but he will give you a T Shirt after your 21st session, although oxygen may be a more welcome present.



RFA Fort George's main task as part of the Auriga Group is to Replenish At Sea (RAS) the warships of the task group. Tradition dictates that a RAS flag should be hoisted during this manoeuvre so the Squadron decided to donate one. The Tiger Print Duvet perhaps wasn't quite what the Captain was expecting but it flew anyway.

Seafarer SUPPORT

Mrs Jenny Smith (not her real name) contacted Seafarer Support after her seafaring husband began suffering from post traumatic stress. His behavioural symptoms were placing a huge strain on their marriage. Jenny had contacted 40 organisations, as well as her GP and MP, to seek help for herself and her husband, all to no avail. Although her husband was receiving treatment, it seemed that no organisation she had tried was able to help her family.

Seafarer Support was able to put Jenny directly in touch with a consultant psychiatrist outreach worker. The Smiths are now in the process of obtaining proper specialist help and are fully committed to resolving their difficulties.

Jenny said "I cannot thank Seafarer Support enough for all your assistance. This has enabled us to find the help we, as a family, really need".

Seafarer Support is a confidential referral service that can direct you to the organisation best placed to assist you in your time of need. For more information or to discuss your situation in confidence please call 0800 121 4765 or visit www.seafarersupport.org.

RFA COOKS 0902 CLASS PASSING OUT 26/03/10

RFA Class 0902 joined HMS Raleigh in September 2009 for a six month course to gain their NVQ Level 2 in cooking. The class was made up of a wide range of ages, from the youngest who was 19 to the more mature students in their 50's. Through their course they studied for and attained basic food hygiene, health & safety, key skills and catering certificates and their NVQ qualification.

The class of eight passed out on the 26th March 2010 with 5 Distinctions and 3 Credits which is a testimony to the way these students applied themselves during their time in HMS RALEIGH.

Congratulations!

M.A.ETWELL CPO (CK)

L-R - CA(Cook) O'Connor, CA(CK) Wheeler, CA(CK) Devereaux, CA(CK) Brason, CPO(CK) Etwell -INSTRUCTOR, CA(CK) Howell, CA(CK) Crompton, CA(CK) Whorlow, CA(CK) Morris

THE AWARD OF THE JORDAN TROPHY

The Winner of the Jordan Trophy for the period covering October 2009 – May 2010 is RFA BAYLEAF.

The Command Safety Team, Weapon Crews and Maintainers acquitted themselves well during CT in the Gulf. The ship conducted 7 Gunnery Serials, 1 Surfex 421, culminating in an Advanced Surfex 421, proving the ships Quick Draw Organisation, including Medical and Fire Repair aspects incorporating a live fire Gunnery Serial with Mk 44, GPMG and SA80.

A very well done to all concerned.

Gunline July10 p4-5.qxd:Gunline 22/6/10 08:41 Page 5

CAMMELL LAIRD'S TRIBUTE TO LARGS BAY

A FRAMED photograph of thanks has been unveiled at Cammell Laird after they sponsored Largs Bay's charity challenge as they sailed to Haiti on a vital aid mission.

The Birkenhead-based shipyard sponsored the crew of Largs Bay in their fundraising initiative 'Race the Ship to Haiti', while en route to deliver emergency food aid and supplies.

Instead of putting their feet up on the outward journey, the crew and embarked forces onboard "raced" the ship across the Atlantic Ocean by rowing, running and cycling in the gym to raise money for the disaster appeal. After two weeks and 4,283 nautical miles the crew "made it to Haiti", beating the ship with time to spare.

Thousands of pounds were raised which will go to the Disasters Emergency Committee Haiti Appeal to help rebuild the country.

Hundreds of thousands of people on the Caribbean island were killed, injured or made homeless by the devastating earthquakes which hit the island in January. Thanks to a co-ordinated international aid response many lives were also saved in the aftermath of the disaster.

Pictured are Cdre Preston Head of Afloat Support and John Syvret, managing director of Cammell Laird.

To say thank you for Cammell Laird's contribution, Commodore David Preston, RFA Director of Afloat Support, visited the famous Wirral shipyard to present a collage of photographs of the Haiti mission to Chief Executive John Syvret.

Mr Syvret said:

"Cammell Laird has an excellent working relationship with the Royal Fleet Auxiliary which stems from our 25-year contract with the Ministry of Defence to maintain 11 of the RFA's ships in and around the world.

So when we heard that the crew of RFA Largs Bay was taking part in this charity challenge while sailing to deliver aid to Haiti we of course wanted to help in any way we could. The earthquake was a tragedy and it was crucial that the emergency response was fast and efficient.

The men and women of the RFA do a fantastic job and we are happy to show our support. We were also grateful to Commodore David Preston for visiting the shipyard and presenting us with a framed photograph."

RFA Largs Bay first travelled to the remote area of Gonaives, where she successfully delivered a cargo including approximately 3600 sacks of peas, 4050 sacks of rice and 7392 cartons of ready to eat meals.

From there the ship travelled to the stranded fishing village of Anse A Veau, where approximately 275,000 ready meals, 31.5T of Rice, 6.5T of beans, 210 Boxes of Corn Soya Blend, 114 Boxes of Vegetable oil and 13 bags of salt were provided to feed the surrounding community of more than 5,000.

RFA Largs Bay was deployed in support of Department for International Development (DfID) and the World Food Program (WFP) as the UK's contribution to the humanitarian aid relief effort in Haiti.

RFA IN THE PUBLIC EYE – A BUSY SUMMER SEASON

This year the RFA has a busy schedule with several ships attending high profile events around the country which are open to the public.

After undergoing a multi million pound refit Argus will have attended Toulon for French Fly Navy 100 having first been part of a multi national exercise off

France. On completion of French Fly Navy 100 she will then be partaking in Exercise Medical Endeavour, a high profile exercise taking place over a number of weeks to validate the capability of the ship and the embarked Royal Navy medical personnel. On completion of Medical Endeavour Argus will be attending Navy Days in Portsmouth,

representing the RFA where she will be open to the public for ship visits and tours. Her busy programme continues as she sails north to attend the Edinburgh Military Tattoo completing a very busy summer season in the public eye.

Largs Bay is also partaking in a packed summer season. After her excellent work in Haiti assisting with the disaster relief work caused by the earthquake which resulted in her being away for almost eight weeks, she returned to the UK to continue with a busy programme. First she underwent training at FOST and on completion of her DCT she sailed directly to Dunkirk to assist in transporting over 200 Help for Hero cyclists back to Dover. Largs Bay along with Fort George is currently involved in the Auriga deployment which is the biggest Royal Navy deployment of this year. Once she is released from Auriga Largs Bay will be attending Bournemouth Air Festival 19 – 23 August and then heading north to Largs Bay to attend the Largs Bay Viking Festival 27 – 30 August.

Fort Rosalie has also been in the public eye. In the middle of June she attended the 70th Anniversary of Lancastria to commemorate the loss of MV Lancastria on Monday 17th of June 1940. She was a requisitioned Cunard cruise liner, which came under attack from enemy aircraft. She received three direct hits from a German Junkers 88 bomber and within 20 minutes, the 16,243-ton luxury liner sank,

taking with her an estimated 4,000 victims. The sinking is the worst single disaster in British maritime history, and claimed more victims than the sinking of the Titanic and Lusitania combined. It is

also the largest single loss of life for British forces in the whole of World War 2. It is a disaster which has remained largely forgotten by the history books and that in part has led to a silence which continues to this day.

Fort Rosalie's public engagements continue in August when she visits Copenhagen as part of the Danish Navy 500th Anniversary celebrations. On sailing from Copenhagen she will be involved in an exercise with the Danish Navy before she heads back to the UK for her next event. She is to attend the commemoration of Scotts' Shipbuilders in Clydeport in early September where

there are celebrations to mark the 300th anniversary of the shipbuilder, Scotts' of Greenock. Fort Rosalie was built by Scotts in 1978. Fort Rosalie will be open to the general public on Saturday 4th September.

Mounts Bay is also partaking in a ceremony in Falmouth to mark the 150 year anniversary of the ship repair / building dockyard in Falmouth; currently owned and run by A&P. Falmouth has a long history of close links with the Royal Navy. RFA Mounts Bay was the first LSDA into service and is currently undergoing the first five year refit along with major upgrades. Falmouth is also the ships affiliated town.

ROYAL FLEET AUXILIARY - SHIP OF THE YEAR TROPHY - 2009

RFA WAVE KNIGHT CITATION

RFA WAVE KNIGHT (WVKN) left the UK for the Indian Ocean and Arabian Gulf region during Feb 2008, initially as part of the Task Group conducting Exercise ORION 08, a carrier-strike re-generation deployment. She took over as the Arabian Gulf Ready Tanker (AGRT) from RFA BAYLEAF (BAYL) at the beginning of May 2008 forming part of the pool of tanker assets under the control of the Commander in the Gulf region.

Building on the reputation for flexibility left by her predecessor the Commanding Officers and Crew of WVKN utilised the capability uplift brought to the region to operate with most forms of coalition aircraft and, using the greater speed of the platform, spread the AGRTs operational impact over a wider geographical area This was especially useful in the North Indian Ocean, where, with the capacity to carry significant extra personnel, the ability to embark aviation assets and presenting a robust Force Protection (FP) stance allowing her use as a pro-active asset against craft intent on piracy, ever-present in the Horn of Africa especially in the inter-monsoon period. On several occasions, WVKN actively intervened to help ward off pirate craft that were intent on attacking commercial shipping.

The impact of the ships presence was felt to the very end of her deployment when after being on station for seventeen months and just before handing back AGRT duties to BAYL in Nov 2009, WVKN took part in a counter-piracy surge scheduled just as the South-West Monsoon of 2009 ended. With a MERLIN helicopter and boarding teams embarked, WVKN played a full part in the operation bringing much needed flexibility and demonstrating the RFAs ability to bring 'force-multiplication'.

Gunline July10 p6-7.qxd:Gunline 17/6/10 3:03 pm Page 6

FLYING TRAINING AT FOST – LH(HC) ANDY BLAND RFA WAVE KNIGHT

LH/HC Bland has been with the RFA since joining as a Communications Rating in 2006. Having completed five trips with the communications department he decided to switch to train to become a Helicopter Controller in September 2009. After passing the RN aircrew medical he attended the Helicopter Controller (Non-Tactical) training course at RNAS Yeovilton. This is a three week intensive training course, which is subject to annual standards assessment in order to maintain the qualification.

After serving short apprenticeships on both Fort Rosalie and Wave Ruler in the south coast exercise areas, he spent five weeks in the Gulf in Lyme Bay. He was gaining experience working with American Sea Dragons and Sea Stallions, before joining Wave Knight to complete his flying requirements.

He has been gaining experience in the upkeep of the chart outfit whilst onboard, with a view to completing the Navigator's Yeoman course; the other major aspect of a LH/HC's role in an RFA. This increased involvement in operations he has found rewarding and he greatly enjoys being a part of the bridge team for harbour entry and replenishment.

The South Coast Exercise Areas are renowned throughout the world as the centre for naval training and nautical flying is no exception. With Naval Air Stations Culdrose and Yeovilton only a short flight away, plus Dauphin aircraft of the FOST Helicopter Support Unit, there is the potential for plenty of flying training. So to maximise the opportunities of RFA support to flying, three Provisional Flight Deck Officers (PFDO) embarked WAVE KNIGHT (WVKN) on Sunday 17 January, for the course Week 03-10. The goal was to achieve the 20 day and 10 night landings required for qualification. The period would also benefit the newly qualified Leading Hand Helicopter Controller; still in pursuit of the 13 Ship Controlled Approaches and Emergency Low Visibility Approaches required for his own upgrading. A win win situation for everybody.

However, a week is a long time in FOST and as the Royal Marines say "no plan survives first contact with the enemy". Monday's busy programme, including a nine hour flying serial with MERLIN from 814 and 829 Naval Air Squadrons (NAS), was to be no exception. Technical problems with 829 SQN aircraft and continuing poor weather conditions that had blighted Plymouth areas throughout January began to take their toll. Plymouth Roborough airport was soon fogged in, grounding the Dauphins and preventing FOST Staff instructors from joining. Nevertheless the PFDO's persevered and supervised by WVKN's own FDO, 814 SQN conducted numerous procedures including deck landings, ELVA, GPI failure, horizon bar failure and wave off exercises. However, colour code forecasts from Culdrose loomed over everything and the night flying was prematurely curtailed, to be replaced by a quickly arranged FLYEX for the following morning.

After another flying brief the Helicopter Controller (HC) found the arrival of Tuesday's Lynx an altogether different challenge. Tiny in size by comparison to the Merlin, the Lynx was barely a speck above the heavy seas with crashing waves. With its RRB transponder chirping away, the pilot was able to locate it's goal and a further three hours flying was achieved.

Then on Wednesday it was back to the "big birds"; six hours of flying with a MK5 Sea King from the 771 Search and Rescue Squadron and a Sea King MK4 from 848 SQN. Both squadrons were looking to achieve deck landing practice to qualify their pilots. It was an afternoon and evening of pounding the deck; trying to synchronise crew changes in the helicopters with rotors running and refuels for the flight deck. Though it was all visual circuits, the HC had a long day in the chair; his focus at its most intense when Northumberland's helicopter also arrived in the vicinity.

Thursday is of course the day for "war" down in FOST-land and although WVKN had no flying training planed, the morning and afternoon SOOTAX (Staff Officers' Transfer), transporting RFA FOST staff on/off for the "war", ensured it was a full house of helicopters for the week. By late afternoon it was all over; the HC and Flight Deck crews were just settling down with a cup of tea, when 'hands to flying stations' was once again piped. The week's training was to culminate in a real-life casualty evacuation and, despite low visibility hampering the flight deck combined with the need for VHF comms separating the HC from his beloved radar, the ship was able to work as professionally as in the training with our friends from 771 Squadron and the casualty was taken ashore safely.

By the end of the week most of the aims had been reached with 2 of the PFDOs requiring just a couple more landings and their final assessment to be qualified for solo ops. As for the HC just two approaches separate him from his full qualification, next week……..

ARGUS ATTENDS FRENCH FLY NAVY 100

Argus having completed her work up post refit visited Toulon in France, on Thursday, June 10 to help with the celebrations of Centenaire Aéronautique Navale Française. The French equivalent of the Royal Navy's, Fly Navy 100 which took place throughout last year.

Prior to the visit, Argus took part in EXERCISE SQUALE, a multi-national French-led exercise which tests anti-submarine warfare tactics and techniques. Argus acted as the air controller and provided helicopter support to two Royal Navy Merlin helicopters, from 829 Naval Air Squadron. Argus' main role is now to provide a fully-equipped, 100-bed casualty receiving facility offering services including a three bay operating theatre and intensive care unit through to physiotherapy and a pathology laboratory.

The hospital has all the necessary resources required to provide care to troops in war zones, as well as the capability to ensure wounded service personnel can quickly receive secondary medical care. The hospital is also equipped with a CT scanner, which enables scanning of trauma patients giving first class facilities which equal those of a district general hospital.

Argus' secondary role is in aviation training, providing specialist training facilities for the Royal Navy's Fleet Air Arm. At 175 metres long, over half her length is given to a flight deck which allows her to operate all types of helicopters.

Argus Commanding Officer Captain Paul Kehoe said: "It is a great honour for RFA ARGUS to participate in these celebrations of 100 years of French Naval Aviation and cement the long standing good relations with our French allies".

Visiting Toulon comes at the start of a busy six months Argus. Just coming out of the rigours of Operational Sea Training, she will shortly be exercising the full Hospital Primary Care Receiving Facility and her embarked expert Medical teams.

In between all of this activity, Argus will be hard at work fulfilling her secondary role as an Aviation Training ship for the Royal Navy.

ONLINE DISCOUNTS FOR SERVING AND EX-SERVING ROYAL FLEET AUXILLARY PERSONNEL

It's free, easy to use and can save you lots of money!

The Official Discount/Benefit Scheme for all serving and ex-serving RFA personnel can be found at – www.forcesdiscounts-mod.co.uk

This is an ideal first port of call for any service families looking for discounts, savings and special offers on a range of purchases!

THERE ARE OVER 1400 COMPANIES OFFERING THOUSANDS of DISCOUNTS ONLINE NOW!

A further bonus of this scheme is that immediate family members of serving personnel are also entitled to sign up and start taking advantage of the discounts in their own right.

Once you have registered on the website you will be given the option of receiving a free newsletter. This will enable you to enter competitions which are run regularly, giving you the chance to win fantastic prizes. You will also receive advance news of new discounts and any free offers available on a 'first come first served basis'.

If you have any suggestions about ways in which the scheme could be improved, or if you know of companies either nationally or locally that offer discounts but don't appear on the website, please use the feedback facility available on the homepage of the website.

Currently the website has over 144,000 members so there are lots of you out there who have not yet accessed the benefits you are entitled to!

So why not join up now (there's no time like the present) and see how much money you can save?

Gunline July10 p6-7.qxd:Gunline 23/6/10 11:01 am Page 7

WAVE RULER ASSISTS IN RESCUE IN THE SOUTH ATLANTIC

Wave Ruler whilst undertaking APT(S) duties was called to assist in a search and resuce operation in the South Atlantic. Battling against high seas and headwinds gusting to over 40 mph, Wave Ruler in company with the Portsmouth based destroyer HMS York assisted in enabling an RAF rescue helicopter to conduct a long-range operation to lift a seriously ill sailor from a fishing vessel in the South Atlantic.

On receipt of a mayday call from a Kiribatian trawler, 300 miles south-east of the Falkland Islands, Wave Ruler and HMS York were deployed from the islands' East Cove military port early on the morning of Monday 15 March. The Republic of Kiribati is in the Gilbert Islands in the South Pacific.

In a Joint Service operation, Wave Ruler acted as the floating service station for an RAF Sea King helicopter from 1564 Search and Rescue Flight which was launched from the Falklands to airlift the trawler man suffering from a suspected ruptured appendix.

Operating in the strong southerly head-winds on the way out and despite the heavy seas, Wave Ruler refuelled the Sea King in flight, using a tried and tested method, Helicopter In-Flight Refuelling (HIFR). With the Sea King refuelled, both ships and the helicopter continued to head south in treacherous seas until the aircraft was able to reach the trawler to winch off the sick crew member.

Once safely on board and assisted by the strong tail winds Wave Ruler headed back to the Falkland Islands and it was not long before the trawler man was being treated in Port Stanley hospital

The photographs show the 1564 Flight aircraft in its approach to RFA Wave Ruler and in the hover taking fuel during HIFR. The pictures were taken by Petty Officer "Dutchy" Holland of HMS York.

THE ROYAL FLEET AUXILIARY
OFFICIAL CALENDAR 2011

In 2009, we launched the "new look" Royal Fleet Auxiliary calendar. We began to offer a higher quality product with-pictures, accompanied with descriptions, showing a variety of the service's work from across the ships highlighting the events of the Royal Fleet Auxiliary's activities during the previous year.

The feedback we have received has been very positive and we are pleased to announce that each year, as a result of the calendar sales we have been able to make a charitable donation to the RFA Benevolent Fund.

Both retired and serving members of the service have been very supportive of the previous calendars and for 2011 we are looking to surpass previous years to make this one the best yet!!

Once again, the calendar will portray an overview of the Royal Fleet Auxiliary's roles and operational activities during 2010. This includes coverage of exercises, including Op Auriga, and Cold Response as well as our support of the Royal Navy, Royal Marines and allied nations. In addition to this we also feature our participation in displays and ceremonies around the world.

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

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

The price of the calendar is still £8.99 (+ p & p) and will be available from October 2011. You can pre-order your calendar by either:

- Calling the Calendar Sales Line on 0845 612 6647 (09.00 – 17.00, Mon – Fri)
- Visiting the website at www.theroyalfleetauxiliary.com for online ordering 24 hours a day
- E-Mailing us at sales.desk@aonixlimited.com
- Complete the attached coupon and send in an envelope, with either a cheque of credit/debit card details to: Aonix Limited, First Floor, Cecil Court, 28 – 36 Cecil Road, Hale, Cheshire, WA15 9PB, United Kingdom

We hope you enjoy the Calendar throughout 2011.

Name .....
Address .....
..... Postcode .....
Daytime Telephone No. .....
Please send me ..... **Royal Fleet Auxiliary 2011 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) .....

RFA COMMUNITY WEBSITE – JUNE 2010

The Royal Fleet Auxiliary Community website www.rfacom.mod.uk is for RFA Personnel, our families and friends, and offers a wide range of information on RFA 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 RFA community. If you are, or were, a member of the RFA, a family member or friend, this site is for you.

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

The RFA Community website now has 1402 registered users (up to and including June 2010).

The members 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 a classified nature can be published and this strictly forbids the inclusion of information such as forthcoming port visits and other aspects of a ships programme.

Current topics being discussed on the website include:

RFA BBQ
RFA Partners
New RFA 18
Reliefs
Sponsored Reserves
Merchant Seaman Home Insurance
Using BFPO

The following features are available only to those who have registered for an RFA Community Website account:

Crew Lists
Frequently Asked Questions
Emergency Contact Details
BFPO and UIN numbers
Liberty Boat routines
Appointers contact details
MOD Form 305 and 306
Promotion Notices
Gunline
Cascade Briefs

The site continues to expand rapidly as more and more individuals register for an account. To register for an account, follow the on-screen instructions at www.rfacom.mo.uk and ensure that you keep up to date!

RFA 18

The New Appraisal process goes live on 18th June 2010, everyone should have received their e-learning disk which is all you need to get started. We have already conducted 34 workshops onboard various vessels.

In addition to this training we have secured some dates for personnel on leave to attend at their local Defence Academy training facility.

DATE	VENUE	RFA
8 Jul	Portsmouth	1 Session
27-28 Jul	Devonport Satellite Centre	2 Sessions
17 Aug	Andover Satellite Centre	1 Session
24 Aug	Foxhill, Bath	1 Session
9 Sep	Portsmouth	1 Session
30 Sep	Andover Satellite Centre	1 Session
12-13 Oct	Devonport Satellite Centre	2 Sessions
1-2 Nov	Portsmouth	2 Sessions
18 Nov	Foxhill, Bath	1 Session

Due to the current constraints of T&S the course will be running from 1000 – 1400 which will allow personnel time to travel from their home address to the venue, as no over night costs will be reimbursed.

You can book the above courses either by speaking to your Line Manager onboard or your appointer if you are on leave.

The available locations will not suit everyone and we will still continue to carry on training onboard RFA ships, and of course we all have our e-learning package.

If anyone has any questions please contact either 1/O (LS) Lisa Barrett 93832 8632 or

C/O(E) Russ Farquhar 93832 8610.

Gunline July10 p8-9.qxd:Gunline 24/6/10 11:45 am Page 8

GLOBAL SUPPORT TO COMMANDER IN CHIEF FLEET'S DEPLOYED COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION SYSTEMS

Fleet Communications and Information Systems Support Unit (FCISSU)

by First Officer (SE) Steve Taylor

On 3rd July 2009 Commodore Richard Jackman FLEET N6 C4ISTAR DNIS officially opened the new home of the FLEET Communications and Information Systems Support Unit (FCISSU) in what used to be the Maritime Warfare Centre on the top of Portsdown Hill. As a milestone in the history of the Unit it was very important, in that for the first time we had a permanent home and could plan for the future with a degree of confidence.

Before I go any further it might be best if I explain what FCISSU is and does. Formed in 2006 from a number of disparate organisations the FCISSU role is to respond to Operational CIS demands in support of Military Operations and Exercises, Urgent Operational Requirements (UOR), the supply and fitting of Military Task Equipment (MTE) to meet particular Information Exchange Requirements (IER), the rectification of OPDEFs and, Quality of Service (QoS) defects and performance issues when tasked by Navy Command Headquarters or other MoD authorities. FCISSU also has a remit to support legacy IS/IT equipment outside the scope of DII(F), a short statement that describes a huge task.

From very small beginnings with a staff consisting of an RFA First Officer Systems Engineer and a Royal Marine WO2 occupying a desk within the N6 division of Navy Command HQ in Leach Building, the Unit has grown to seventy personnel drawn from the Royal Navy, Royal Marines, Royal Fleet Auxiliary, Civil Service and Contractors based in Portsdown Hill, Stonehouse Barracks and Faslane. It was realised quite quickly that Leach Building was inappropriate for the Unit and that larger premises were required. The timescale for finding a new location was short owing to the pressure on desk space in Leach Building but, in early 2007 C-Leg in the old Maritime Warfare Centre (MWC) was identified as a temporary measure for FCISSU(South) while a site for a permanent home was found. The twenty Royal Marines of the IS branch already had their home in Stonehouse which became FCISSU(South West). All that remained was to find somewhere for the small Scottish detachment who were eventually based in an office in Tyne Building, Faslane.

In the mean time FCISSU had been designated as custodian of FLEET's Defence Information Infrastructure (Future Deployed) (DII(FD)) Military Service Provider Group (Home) (MSPG(H)) for which Unit preparation was required prior to delivery and installation. One MSPG(H) would be based in the Portsmouth area supporting the Maritime Battle Staffs (MBS), the other in Stonehouse supporting 3 Commando Brigade. DII(FD) will become the primary Command and Control planning tool not only for the MBS and 3 Commando Brigade when deployed, but also for the Army and RAF, replacing amongst others; RNCSS, JOCS and RAFCIS.

The MSPG(H) requires a bespoke infrastructure. A location was quickly identified in Stonehouse but Portsmouth provided particular problems. There was a reluctance to develop the old MWC as it was listed for disposal. RN Estates had earmarked a number of alternative sites in COLLINGWOOD, EXCELLENT and Portsmouth Naval Base but the timescale and financial considerations eventually led to a decision being made to retain and develop the old MWC site. Consequently F-Leg was refurbished to provide administration and office accommodation and G-Leg was refitted to house the MSPG(H). Overcoming the difficulties at Portsdown quite often paled into insignificance in comparison with the trials and tribulations encountered in Stonehouse of installing 21st Century military equipment into a listed building in a conservation area. (It took nearly three months to obtain planning permission to install a GPS aerial). Finally, with dogged persistence and a degree of compromise both sites are ready in all respects to take delivery of DII(FD) during 2010.

As can be inferred from the title FCISSU is tasked to provide IS infrastructure and equipment to emergent and enduring operations, for example supporting COMOPS Capability Generation Priorities. The Unit is at a high state of readiness as dictated by Military Tasking, one of the highlights of which was OP HIGHBROW, the evacuation of nationals from Beirut, where the Unit deployed a mobile RNCSS to Cyprus providing situational awareness to the Theatre Commander within 24 hours of the order to move being given. Royal Marine Information Systems (RMIS) branch personnel from FCISSU(South West), deploy on operations with 3 Commando Brigade, the individual Commando units and most recently to OP HERRICK. There is a high degree of interoperability, it is not unusual to see FCISSU Royal Marines dealing with equipment on board ship and RN Senior Rates deploy to Norway with the Brigade during winter exercises. The Unit also has four people embedded with the pre-formed Very High Readiness Maritime Battle Staffs such as COMUKMARFOR, COMAMPHIBFOR, their one stars – COMUKTG, COMATG, COMCSG and the Mine Warfare Battle Staff supporting Op TELIC, plus the enduring Operational Headquarters such as UKMCC Bahrain. Three of the personnel are rotated on a regular basis to ensure that as many FCISSU personnel as possible are familiar with that environment should a personnel surge be required.

The core task of the Unit is to support RNCSS, CENTRIXs and NSWAN fitted to HM Ships, Submarines and RFAs. Our remit covers RNCSS in UKMCC Bahrain where we have also fitted a FLEET Interim Mobile System (FIMS), a deployable NavyStar, designed and supported by the Unit to provide office automation and JPA access. At the same time the Unit was tasked by PJHQ Northwood to provide, build and support IS/IT equipment for CTF152 Headquarters (now CTF IM) in Bahrain, the build of which was completed in four days. Building this HQ was a first for the Unit, a large but ultimately rewarding task.

For the installations in Bahrain the tasking and planning process taking place between Navy Command HQ and UKMCC meant that there was a reasonable amount of time for the Unit to assemble and test the equipment and ensure that it was in place in good time. However, occasionally a task will emerge from an unusual quarter. Such a task came from Navy Command HQ, in support of COMUKMARFOR. Just before Easter this year the European Union mounted its anti-piracy OP ATALANTA which required the installation of an EU LAN into the flagship provided by the Greek Navy. The tasking given to FCISSU was to provide and fit the necessary equipment, so two personnel flew to Athens straight into the riots that had just started. Having installed the equipment, the nominated ship broke down which meant everything had to be removed while the Greeks sourced a replacement ship whereupon it all had to be fitted again!

Over the past three years the growth in Unit personnel numbers has been more than matched by the number of systems and amount of equipment for which the Unit has responsibility. From installing Bowman into Pacific 24 RHIBs for boarding operations to supporting the FLEET Photo School LAN via the Armoured Support Group LAN in Yeovilton, FCISSU looks after some forty systems within the UK and overseas. As a result of the transition to DII the Unit has taken over the CSS Help Desk (now renamed the CIS Service Desk) from the CSIS IPT and considerable number of legacy systems which will not sit on DII for the foreseeable future, such as the Curriculan in Culdrose. It was initially thought that as DII was rolled out across Defence the legacy burden would diminish however this has not been the case. At one stage two or three legacy systems would be added to the FCISSU list each week although recently there has been a gradual slowing down.

A major task for which the Unit has been the Navy Command lead over the last eighteen months has been the Central Government requirement to encrypt all portable IT equipment and media. FCISSU is the central point for the delivery and despatch of all FLEET's IT which up until recently was a fairly straightforward evolution. Now however, the process has been complicated by the encryption of every item before despatch. The process can last between 3-8 hours for each item depending upon the level of encryption. This alone has required a further expansion of the Unit into E-leg to cope with the backlog of equipment held in stock caused by the encryption process. Additionally the Unit has been tasked with the encryption of all FLEET IT equipment in HM Ships, Submarines, RFAs and Establishments both at home and overseas which is not covered by DII or NavyStar.

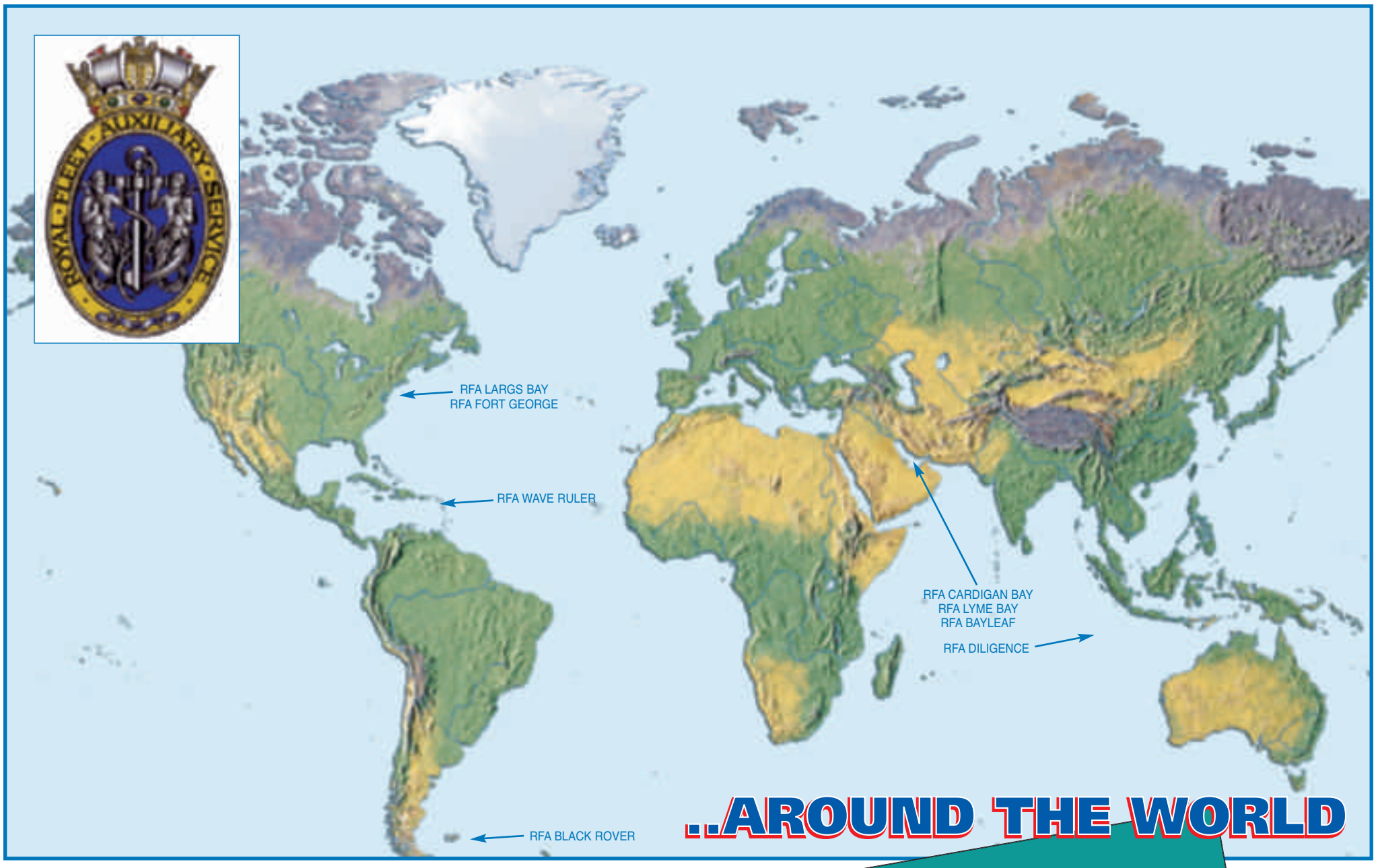
As well as supporting FLEET IT assets the Unit has also played a significant role in the development and implementation of systems that have enhanced capability such as Namesis Lite (AIS on a laptop) and adapting software to provide a maritime picture through CENTRIXS (a first for small ships). The design, provision and installation by Unit staff of major upgrades to the FIMU and FIOC servers and LAN has seen a major reduction in running costs and maintenance effort.

It would be remiss of me not to mention the sterling work put in by the RFA ESG. Comprising of two Second Officer System Engineers and based in SMC Marchwood the ESG travels the country, occasionally overseas, ensuring that RFA communications equipment planned maintenance is kept in date. More often than not they are the first port of call for OPDEF rectification. Their deep knowledge of equipment and systems architecture means that they are a valuable asset in maintaining RFA communications capability.

Being formed from a number of disparate organisations the original structure of FCISSU inevitably contained duplications and anomalies. Over the past three years a great deal of effort has gone into rationalisation and restructuring. The rapid growth of both the Unit and its responsibilities has sometimes meant that we have been following rather than leading in this process. But help is at hand, the Unit is currently undergoing a series of Continuous Improvement Events to enable us shape our organisation for the future. The result of these events could mean the Unit gains more personnel or our responsibilities may be reduced by moving some of the more tenuous supported items to other organisations.

Whatever the outcome I am sure that FCISSU, now recognised after just three years as a centre of excellence in many areas will, from a very small and uncertain beginning, expand its activities in the future to have an even greater role in the provision, development and support of FLEET's Information Technology and Information Systems.

Gunline July10 p8-9.qxd:Gunline 2/7/10 12:39 pm Page 9



WAVE KNIGHT
Working off the south west coast areas in support of FOST.

WAVE RULER
Conducting duties as APT(N). Currently in Norfolk Virginia undertaking maintenance.

GOLD ROVER
Undergoing refit in Birkenhead.

BLACK ROVER
En route to South Atlantic to take up APT(S).

BAYLEAF
In the Middle East working as the Arabian Gulf Ready Tanker.

ORANGELEAF
Undertaking a FOST package off Devonport.

FORT VICTORIA
Completing a FOST package off Devonport.

FORT GEORGE
On Auriga deployment participating in EX KEARSAGE.

FORT AUSTIN
Alongside in Portsmouth.

FORT ROSALIE
At sea off south coast exercise area in support of 848 NAS conducting OFT.

CARDIGAN BAY
Continues her work with OP TELIC Tasking in Northern Arabian Gulf region.

MOUNTS BAY
Undergoing refit in Falmouth.

LYME BAY
Alongside in Bahrain undergoing a maintenance period.

LARGS BAY
In Norfolk Virginia prior to sailing for EX KEARSAGE.

ARGUS
Conducting EX MEDICAL ENDEAVOUR off S. Coast exercise areas.

DILIGENCE
On passage to Seychelles prior to her arrival early July.

Provided courtesy of The U.K. Hydrographic Office

Gunline July10 p10-11.qxd:Gunline 21/6/10 5:49 pm Page 10

BLOGGING GUIDELINES

As part of the strategy of 'Lifting the Lid on the Royal Navy and RFA', we are keen to engage in the social networking medium.

What is a 'Blog'?

A blog is basically a personal journal that is available on the internet. Blogs cover a wide range of topics and opinions that can be very influential and can potentially have a large number of people reading them. The activity of updating a blog is 'blogging' and someone who keeps a blog is a 'blogger'.

Why are blogs important?

Blogs allow millions of people to communicate their opinions and ideas. More and more people around the globe are reading, writing and commenting on blogs which is changing the way we use the internet. Instead of using the web to gain information, there are a growing number of internet users who are actively sharing information. Blogs allow everyone to have a voice.

Why are the Navy looking for Bloggers /Diaries?

As part of the strategy of 'Lifting the Lid on the Royal Navy and RFA', we are keen to engage in the social networking medium. More and more people are communicating this way and are registered with Facebook, Flickr, Bebo etc. We want to reach out and communicate with these people in the language they understand. If we don't engage, we will get left behind.

Blogging is also a really useful way of providing back ground material to support other PR projects, i.e. recruiting campaigns, TV documentaries, shows or events.

What is 'Jack Speak'?

Jack Speak is the official Royal Navy blog. Endorsed and launched by the 1st Sea Lord in April 2008, Jack Speak is now into its third year. Based within the Royal Navy website it features serving personnel who each regularly contribute to the site, posting pictures and reports about their daily lives in the service.

Jack Speak offers the public and potentially interested RFA individuals a unique insight into life at sea. Each 'blogger' can update their profile from practically anywhere in the world, which means visitors to the site can read about life at sea as it happens. The blogs which are written can potentially become very influential if enough people read them.

These blogs are not 'staffed' before they are posted (except to check for OpSec). It really is a chance for the public to take a peek into the life of service personnel. The blog site has the facility to have online conversations with the public and also to link to existing social networking sites.

The aim of Jack Speak

The aim of Jack Speak is to generate public interest and promote the image of the Royal Navy and RFA. Jack Speak is currently expanding and it is intended that the site will host a wide range of personnel working in varying specialisations around the world.

What is the Difference between Jack Speak and the Unit Diaries on the Navy's internet site ?

The diaries are not interactive (i.e. there is no ability to engage with the person posting the diary). The diaries are also staffed prior to publishing, often at the Head of Department level. The diaries are a way of lifting the lid on how a unit operates, whereas Blogs lift the lid on an individual basis. The diaries allow personnel to 'lift the lid on the service' where OpSec means that un-staffed blogs are inappropriate.

Authorisation of all Jack Speak blogs.

All blogs by serving personnel which require authorisation iaw latest online engagement guidelines, whether on Jackspeak or for news agencies MUST be approved and logged prior to the first post being published. Before you are allowed to start your blog, SO2 Internet will ensure it is cleared by all appropriate authorities which differs depending on where you are serving. A notification will be sent to your ship and unit PROs to inform them that authorisation for the blog has been given.

If you are interested in blogging then please contact-

LT CDR Graham West RN
Directorate Media and Communications PR Navy
Ministry of Defence,
Mil: 9621 81419

Civ: 020 7218 1419
web@navypr.mod.uk

BLOGGING GUIDELINES

DO:

DO make sure your blog is authorised if required.
DO make your blog interesting and where possible use pictures (still and/or video). There is no limit to the amount of information you can post. Quality though, not quantity.
DO make sure you update your blog as regularly as possible. If you are having trouble, please contact the web team for assistance.
DO be honest. When you've had a good day, write about. If you've had a bad, explain why.
DO express your thoughts and feelings.
DO think about the following. Would your Mum approve? Will your kids approve? What about your kids friends? If in doubt – leave it out!!
DO be proud and enjoy it – this is a great way of letting the world know what you are doing.

ASK – if you are in doubt about anything…

DON'T:

OPSEC - DO NOT give away any sensitive information such as supply/equipment states or mission tasking. The content of the RN website is a useful guide about what sort of information you can give out.

DO NOT make unpleasant comments about other people (remember Code of Social Conduct).

DO NOT write about things outside your area of work, for example commenting on sport, politics etc. Stick to what you know.

DO NOT publish material you don't own, for example words, pictures or music lifted from elsewhere on the web. Respect other people's copyright.

DO NOT give away detailed personal information you wouldn't wish to be available to all internet users e.g. addresses/telephone numbers, family details. Be careful about accidentally publishing personal information belonging to other people, e.g. friends

DO NOT use swearing or offensive language/offensive picture (remember Naval Discipline Act)

DO NOT write anything that could damage the public image of the Royal Navy (remember, your blog could end up on the front page of the newspaper, make sure its for the right reason)

DO NOT use too much Navy slang or three letter abbreviations – unless you explain what they mean.

Normal commonsense should dictate what is appropriate and what is not - but if you have any doubts then it is advisable not to post it. You can get advice from your PRO or Fleet Media.

Remember, think before you blog!

MERCHANT NAVY WELFARE BOARD

A free confidential telephone referral service that supports seafarers and their families was recently launched in July, by the South West & Liverpool Port Welfare Committees. Remarkably there are nearly 150 maritime charities providing a variety of important services to UK seafarers from the Royal Navy, Merchant Navy, fishing fleets including their dependants. The confidential referral service, set up in response to a recent study in to the welfare of seafarers and their families recommended quality information on all aspects of welfare provision and support should be easily accessible and relevant to seafarers and their families who may not be aware that help is only a phone call away.

Seafarer Support (0800 121 4765) directs callers to the seafaring charity that is best placed to assist them, offers a follow up service and tracks the progress of each case to ensure the highest quality of service is offered. For more details visit www.seafarersupport.org.uk or call 0800 121 4765 (open 09:30-1630 Mon – Fri).

David Parsons, of the Merchant Navy Welfare Board and Chairman of the Maritime Charities Funding Group, emphasised that "this provides an outreach service to seafarers and their families who are looking for financial or non financial help and guidance. We have been concerned that too many within the maritime community, whether of working age or retired, are slipping through the net. This service is a means by which we can place those people in touch with the organisation best suited to help."

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

Gunline July10 p10-11.qxd:Gunline 23/6/10 11:33 Page 11

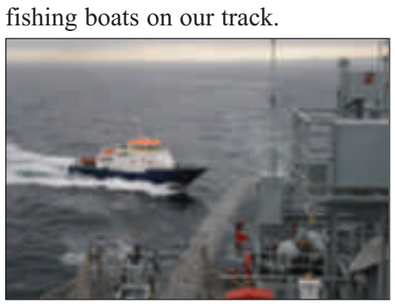
Black Rover's Visit to FOST

The week started with the ship being fogged in and we were delayed sailing due to the poor visibility.

Once underway we conducted our first serial, steering gear breakdown drills. This is where control of the steering from the bridge is lost and local control is taken via the steering gear compartment.

During the first week we undertook a number of fire exercises within the two compartments in which fire is mostly likely to break out, the galley and engine room.

The second day we embarked Navigation Staff to conduct a pilotage exercise. The bridge team had to pilot the ship through shoals, starting relatively easily with no traffic and good visibility, then the staff reduced the visibility and introduced a number of exercise fishing boats on our track.



Tuesday is the Air Defence exercise day where the ship comes under attack from Fighter Bomber and Missiles, simulated by friendly aircraft. The Point Defence Officer has to work out how to best defend the ship. The aircraft fly over RFA Black Rover at just 10 feet above the deck. This also saw our first

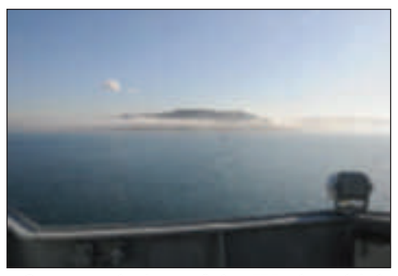
Replenishment at Sea approaches with RFA Wave Knight; this was the first time that we have conducted a RAS since last year.

Unfortunately we were unable to conduct our first day shot due to the bad weather.

And so to the highlight of the week, the "Thursday War" every Thursday there is a training war between the Brownians and Gingers, two forces which ships at Flag Officer Sea Training exercise as.

During the war the ship comes under attack from aircraft, missiles, submarines and mines. The ship was brought to action stations so we were all wearing anti flash.

As we can come under attack at any time we undertook 'action messing', where the ship's company rotate through lunch having just ten minutes to eat. The galley produced a very fine lunch of sausage roll, chips and beans with an "Action" Mars Bar for dessert.



On completion of the Week, which ended as it started with thick fog, we secured to the buoy in Plymouth Sound for the weekend.

Overall our first week of training was deemed a success even though a number of training serials had to be cancelled due to bad weather.

Next week we look forward to going to war again with Gingers and Brownian's!

Thirsty at Kirstys

On Saturday the 20th March, a cold windy day at Crombie jetty, STWD John Colligan braved the elements and set off on the some eight mile trek to Dunfermline town centre.

Had John missed the ship's transport you may ask? No the walk was done in the name of charity. John did a sterling job and he raised over £800 for the Royal British Legion and the Baby Care Unit at Newcastle's Royal Victoria Infirmary.

John received a hero's welcome when he reached his final destination from many of the ship's company at Thirsty Kirstys public house in Dunfermline.

John was overwhelmed by the response from the ship's company, the contractors who were onboard and the local people of Dunfermline.

After the event, John and many members of the ship's company enjoyed the hospitality inside Thirsty Kirstys, and the landlord and staff put on a complimentary buffet, a free juke box and free pool.

After the generosity John Thorn and his staff at Thirsty Kirstys had demonstrated, it was appropriate to acknowledge this gratitude. On Saturday 27th March, I visited the venue, armed with a ship's crest and some RFA goodies and presented them to the landlord on behalf of the Commanding Officer and Ship's Company.

John Thorn was elated and said, "As an ex naval man, PO Cook Retd., I have worked with the RFA on many occasions in the past, usually when they have RAS'd our provisions. I am delighted to be involved with John Colligan's charity event and I hope that this will cement a fruitful relationship between RFA FORT GEORGE and this establishment for years to come."

I would like to thank the CO for authorising the event, the ship's company, the contractors who supported John Colligan's charity walk and Thirsty Kirstys public house Dunfermline, for their hospitality.

I would personally like to thank STWD John Colligan for his excellent efforts of raising so much money in so little time, and for raising the profile of the Royal Fleet Auxiliary in the local area.

RFA WAVE KNIGHT RECEIVES RFA OPERATIONAL EFFICIENCY AWARD

During a recent port visit to Portsmouth 21-23 May, Commodore Walworth visited RFA WAVE KNIGHT to present Captain I N Pilling and the ship's company with their award. The opportunity was also taken to host the appointers onboard for lunch, during their visit they were given a ship's tour, conducted career interviews and also witnessed the presentation.

Sudoku by Chris White

Answers on page 16

1								8
				3	1		2	
5			8	6		1	7	3
		5			2		4	
	2		4			5		
6	5	4		7	3			1
	3		9	1				
7								2

Gunline July10 p12-13.qxd:Gunline 24/6/10 11:42 am Page 12

RFA ASSOCIATION

Chairman's Dit.

A very busy period since my last musings with the AGM and Plymouth Reunion dominating everything. More about them elsewhere on this page.

You will be pleased to know that the RFA Memorial has taken a step forward with a visit to the Arboretum by Commodore Bill and myself. We had a most productive meeting with the management of the site and mapped out a way forward. A lot has changed now, the site is owned by the Royal British Legion which has resulted in the earlier plans we had needing adjustment. Keep an eye on the RFA Association and the RFA Community websites, and of course Gunline for developments. There are a load of photographs of the Arboretum site on the RFA Association website.

The subscription saga seems to be coming to an end but could I ask that all members who pay their subscriptions by standing order please check that the correct amount (£15) is being paid. As part of the website development a new shop is about to be added I hope to put a method of paying subscriptions onto it.

Trustee Pam Axworthy has asked me to remind everybody (myself included) about the book she is writing, "S*D Off its Smoko", and her quest for amusing anecdotes to be included therein. For obvious reasons she is looking for articles that you would not be embarrassed for your, or anybody else's Granny, for that matter, to read.

The Members Handbook. Like the Ancient Mariner I too have an albatross around my neck. Suffice it to say we are further forward now than we were when this whole saga started.

Regretfully, it has been decided to not produce RFAA Christmas cards this year. They are quite expensive to produce and we are always left with quite a lot which is quite costly. We have some from previous years (undated) which will be sold off at half price and this policy will be reviewed next year.

Finally, and as ever, my thanks go to Mike Day and John Littlechild for their contributions to this edition of Gunline. I am always looking for contributions, especially to do with branch activities, so please drag out the quill and Basildon Bond and drop me a line and especially with photographs.

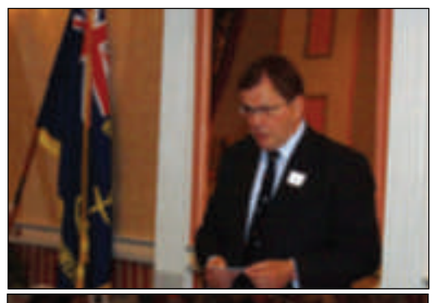
RFA Reunion • 2010 • Plymouth.

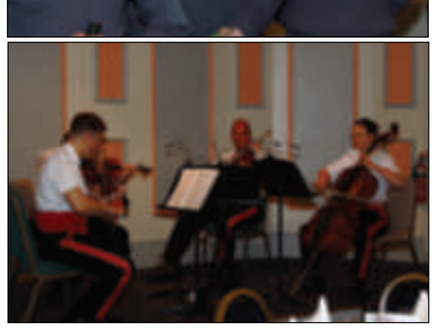
It is said if you can remember the 1960s you weren't there, the same could not be said of this year's Reunion held at the New Continental Plymouth and hosted by the Plymouth and District Branch. What a fabulous evening with some 120 members, wives, partners attending. We had three Commodores in attendance and that doesn't happen very often. Every Branch was represented as was every corner of the circular globe with Steve Oatey from Canada, Barry Lord from Australia and Roger Davies from Malta. Sadly 92 year old Roger, a keen yachtsman, informs me that he will miss next year's Reunion as he intends to sail to the Falklands and around Cape Horn but he hopes to be there in 2012 as usual.

A first for one of our gatherings was the Royal Marine Ensemble, a quartet, providing a musical accompaniment to the evening . Also the Plymouth Air Training Corps provided a squad of incredibly smart young men tasked to hijack member's wallets for the raffle which from the generosity of the members had over 90 prizes on offer. The MC/Toastmaster was Keith Escott who gave sterling service keeping a firm hand on the tiller throughout the evening.

Commodore Walworth gave his "State of the Nation" address to the assembled throng and, given the current climate, very attentive audience. The essence of the address was that whilst things were a little fraught, the RFA is held in very high esteem in the corridors of power and the achievements of the Service and their People speak for themselves.

Closing the evening and giving particular thanks to the Plymouth Branch and in particular Maurice Mann and Jan Reid for all the work that went into making such a spectacular evening the Chairman announced that the next Reunion would be held in May next year (2011) and would be hosted by the Midlands Branch. The venue has yet to be decided but it is hoped to find somewhere suitable reasonably close to the National Arboretum (Lichfield/Tamworth area) to allow attendees to visit the site of the RFA National Memorial.





OBITUARIES

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

Radio Officer John Walton died 2 May 2010 aged 69

Steward Eric (Reg) Barker died 28th April.

CONTACT INFORMATION

RFA ASSOCIATION
Headquarters
01434 220000
E-mail:
lookout@rfa-association.org

CHAIRMAN
Pat Thompson
01833 640045
07879 254168
Skype Captain.Pat
E-mail:
chairman@rfa-association.org

ADMIN
01434 220000
E-mail: admin@rfa-association.org

MEMBERSHIP
Dawn Reay
01434 220000
07522 551628
E-mail:dawn@rfa-association.org

TREASURER
Vacant

SECRETARY & FINANCIAL SECRETARY
Under consideration

PLYMOUTH BRANCH
John Halford
01752 776663
E-mail:
plymouth@rfa-association.org

SOLENT BRANCH
Brian Waters
01722 320562
E-mail :
solent@rfa-association.org

LONDON BRANCH
Lt Cdr James Wyatt
David Bolton (Acting)
01908 378360
E-mail: the-galley@btinternet.com

SCOTTISH & NEWCASTLE BRANCH
John Roddis
01786 821379
E-mail:
sandn@rfa-association.org

MIDLANDS BRANCH
John Sail
01476 594034
mnasail@googlemail.com

NORTHWEST
Frank Andrews
01722 685427
E-mail: frabaa@blueyonder.co.uk

Office Address:
3-4 Station House
Bellingham
Hexham NE48 2DG

Mailing Address
PO Box 52
Barnard Castle DL12 2BA

Web Sites:
www.rfa-association.org

Plymouth Branch
www.rfaaplymouth.org

Solent Branch
www.
freewebs.com/rfaasolentbranch/

Gunline July10 p12-13.qxd:Gunline 24/6/10 11:42 am Page 13

FOR SERVICE, SEAFARERS AND FAMILIES

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

AGM 2010

This year's AGM was held in the New Continental Hotel, Plymouth on Saturday 22 May with some 40 members attending. The Minutes of the last AGM, Accounts and Trustees Annual Report were received and the Chairman read out his annual report, Mr Peter Nicholls was elected as the independent auditor of accounts for next year.

For the election of the Chairman and Trustees John Halford, Chairman of the Plymouth Branch, assumed Chairmanship of the meeting with David Gerrard acting as Returning Officer.

During the vote counting the meeting was adjourned and a very good buffet lunch was enjoyed. Following lunch the meeting was reconvened and the results announced

The chairman and trustees were re-elected as detailed below

Chairman Pat Thompson OBE
Brian Waters OBE (Solent)
Alan Roach OBE
Mike Day (London)
David Bass
Chris Locke (Plymouth)
George Mason (S&N)
Pam Axworthy (Midlands)
Frank Andrews (North West)

Following the announcement of the ballot results Pat Thompson assumed Chairmanship of the meeting and thanked the members for their continued support for the Board of Trustees.

After a brief questions and answer period the meeting was closed.

A copy of the Chairman's Report, the Trustees Annual Report and Accounts are available on the website and on request, by post. Also available are the provisional minutes of AGM 2010, (they remain provisional until approved at the 2011 AGM).

Mystery Ship - RFA SLAVA?

I came across this photo a couple of years ago. It claims to be of a ship called RFA SLAVA. That type of name was often given to ships captured from the Russians in the White versus Red Russian confrontation at the end of the First World War.

The ship is flying two white ensigns, one of "battle stations" size at the main mast, perhaps indicating she is in a war zone. With the confused status of "ships under government contract" in those days the white ensign is not so surprising either. There were probable shortages of blue ensigns on some temporary stations and many auxiliaries had MN/RNR captains who further confused the ships' status anyway. HMO (His Majesty's Oiler) and HMT (His Majesty's Tanker) were often used as prefixes on photo postcards of RFAs in this era.

The port side "lifeboat" appears to be a 30 foot motor cutter. The MOT allowed RFAs to include various naval cutters to be included in the "lifeboat" allocation until they toughened up on their surveyors' rules at the end of WW1.

There is what appears to be a classic 4" destroyer gun on the forward tank deck - interesting! Is she a tanker?

There were many RN ships with various temporary support auxiliaries operating in Russian waters between 1917 and 1920, including on the River Don, the Black Sea and the Caspian Sea.

Any ideas on her original identity and whether she should be included on the RFA Fleet List?

Mike Day © 2010

MUSES FROM THE FAR-FLUNG - MOMBASA, QUEEN OF THE KENYA COAST

Mombasa's iconic tusks

It seemed strange, at the time, that during the almost ten years that I spent "Afore the Mast" in the Queens Navee I never actually got to set foot in the remote, mysterious, Dark Continent. Particularly after many times hanging upon the words of hoary Ancient Mariners in the shape of three badge A.B.s (Probably all of thirty years old at the time) who delighted in telling all of us O.D.s tot-time tales of dusky maidens and derring-do! It took the dear old Plumleaf, seeking repite from the rigours of the Beira Bucket to putter into Mombasa and secure to the buoys in the Port of Killindini to open those particular gates to yours truly.

I have since come to regard the Island of Mombasa as something of a bargain basement, since you can enjoy the wonders of the African bush and its game reserves, the beautiful beaches of Nyali, and last, but not least the raucus nightlife of the port city itself, all at the one port of call, provided you had the time, and the inclination to drag yourself off the "strip" of the Killindini Road (Now know as Moi Avenue I believe). Anyway, one thing at a time, we should talk a little of expeditions into the boonies, with a rented 4 x 4 if you could get one - the mini-mokes so easily available in town were not allowed into the game parks. I think probably my most successful foray was in a Volkswagen Combi (A mini-bus painted with zebra stripes, which was MOST contemporary. But you can well imagine, that after leaving the ship at 0400, and spending most of the day charging around Tsavo Park, our eventual arrival at the Kilaguni Lodge, being by this time smothered in red dust, that first icy-cold pint of Tusker beer went down rather well, soon to be followed by lots more. A wonderful way to spend a couple of days or so, and an experience that most people will never have.

Well, having done the Safari bit, it was time to take a look at Mombasa itself, and sample the renowned night life! Usually, a real must, certainly for the Senior Officers at least, was the visit to the Mombasa Club for lunch or even dinner. Some of you will remember I am sure, another of those establishments where cash was a no-no (You can't trust the staff with money), and the waiters wore white mess jackets, white gloves, and white plimsols - Yes, plimsols - remember them, before the advent of the ubiquitous trainers. You could have an excellent dinner - alfresco if you so chose, and spend the whole evening there if you wanted to. Of course, the downside to all that (Or upside, depending on your point of view) was that the bill which you had signed would often follow you around the world for months, eventually arriving on the ship two days after you had paid off! Happy Days. I remember well, being taken by a certain RFA Captain for lunch at the Club, where we, Father, Me, the Cheng and SRO dined very well, if not wisely, and finished up, as was usual, sitting on the terrace of the Castle Hotel, watching the world go by, while genteely sipping yet more Tusker, or perhaps Inde Coope and Allslops! This was a very popular pastime once you had got rid of all the buskers and comic singers, and bought the carved ebony elephants which usually cracked in two by the time you got to Port Suez on the way home. It was at this juncture that it was decided that The Command should accompany us to the Sunshine Day and Night Club (Yes, you've all been there) in order to inspect where most of his crew were spending their hard earned wages. After much protestation we duly decamped to the Sunshine (Which I swear was at least part-owned by a chinese Assistant Foreman of Stores - NO prizes for remembering his name). GT was now the order of the day, and the Master under God was having a whale of a time and refused to leave. It always reminds me of that scene in the film, Some Like It Hot, where Jack Lemon Tangos the night away with Joe E Brown. Command last seen charging up and down the dance floor with a dusky Amazon, complete with a blonde beehive wig, and Ho Chi Minh sandals. Happy days. Afficionados will also remember the New Florida Night Club - every time I hear "Swinging Safari" I think of the athletic limbo dancers who enticed the unsuspecting punters to have a try, usually resulting in a big pile of dirty laundry on the floor! Not to forget "Our Exciting Artist from Europe" who had just completed a stint in a strip joint in Redcar! The always empty swimming pool which had seen many a near nasty accident!

Mombasa club

Remember the Fontanella gardens, and the not so easily forgotten Casablanca, which still reminds me, when I think about it of a Cock Pit - you know one of those places where they get chickens to kill one another. And you know something, those great big tusks across the street, they aint real you know, just sheet aluminium and rivets - there I've spoiled it for you

I well remember that there was a very nice Missions to Seamen, right at the bottom of Killindini Road, not far from the K-Boat landing stage.

Right opposite to that was the Mercantile Marine Office, where we used to have to do all the sign-ons and payoffs. Very handy, that was, get signed on, then its over the road and your round!

In conclusion, I really should mention the magnificent beach. and the brilliant Nyali Beach Hotel. Some of us were even lucky enough to spend a weekend at the Silversands Resort, which was an R and R facility for HM Forces and run by NAAFI. There were great little beach cottages, called bandas which were right on the beach and completely self contained which could be rented for shillingis few. The food was good (If the monkies had not had time to swoop down from the rafters and nick it) and the booze was duty free - what more could you possibly ask. And for those with more intellectual interests, there were plenty of historical sites like Fort Jesus, which I dare say most folk had never heard of.

So, there we are, Mombasa (Was at one time called Port Reitz, as was the once tiny airport (Bat-Wing Daks and Fokker Friendships only), in a nut-shell. So many happy memories which I hope you have enjoyed sharing - there will be a test afterwards!

John Littlechild
First Officer Supply - Retired
Bangkok
3rd May 2010

Gunline July10 p14-15.qxd:Gunline 21/6/10 5:50 pm Page 14

The Marine Society

THE MARINE SOCIETY ~ SUPPORTING SEAFARERS IS ITS STRENGTH

The Marine Society provides a range of services for those who serve with the RFA to enhance their learning, well-being and to facilitate professional development.

It works with a range of mainstream education and training providers to deliver opportunities for personal and professional development that are seafarer-friendly and focused on the needs of the individual in the context of the maritime sector.

It caters for all levels of learning, covering all ages, abilities and aspirations. So whether you simply wish to improve those GCSE grades from school or whether you're a senior officer seeking civilian recognised qualifications in preparation for coming ashore, what better way to continue your education in this, the Year of the Seafarer, than with the world's oldest non-profit organization that's dedicated to the well-being of seafarers.

GCSE/A Level

The Marine Society has more experience in the field of distance learning than any other maritime sector provider. It's the sole method of teaching and it focuses exclusively on those who work at sea.

Marine Society learning provision delivers unmatched service levels at GCSE, IGCSE and A level. IGCSE stands for International General Certificate of Secondary Education. The qualification is recognised grade-for-grade as equivalent to GCSEs in the UK and is assessed through 100% examination which means there's no awkward coursework issues to worry about. For this reason some seafarers find IGCSEs more convenient.

The society will help you achieve the best possible examination result in the shortest possible time. As you'd expect, there is full support for email and telephone, and all staff are familiar with your work commitments.

A registered exam centre, the Marine Society can enter you for examinations. It can often arrange for you to sit them wherever you find yourself at the time - ashore or afloat.

Those thinking about continuing their learning are encouraged to contact the Marine Society before enrolling to discuss options. Advice is free, independent and confidential.

For those returning to learning after a period away, there are courses in functional skills designed to brush up on the basics. These are ideal for those seeking promotion and who require a grounding in modern Maths as part of their knowledge base.

Open University

For 40 years the Marine Society and the OU have worked together to ensure seafarers are able to take advantage of the learning opportunities on offer from Europe's biggest provider of higher level qualifications.

The Marine Society facilitates OU exams at sea and provides logistical support for OU courses. It also makes arrangements so that seafarers do not incur examination fees.

The society has successfully worked with the OU to gain academic accreditation for seafarers' professional and experiential learning. It has also negotiated special discounts and arrangements for those wishing to take advantage of the OU's continuing professional development courses as well as some higher level programmes.

There are also packages tailored for seafarers and maritime sector professionals. These include a degree in business, leadership and management, and a route to chartered status for marine engineers.

An online forum, the Merchant Navy Learning Club, hosted in the OU's Learning Space, offers an opportunity to share best practice, post ideas and try OU educational material at no cost or commitment.

OU Business & Leadership degree

The Open University BA/BSc Open Degree was put together with seafarers in mind. It focuses on Business, Leadership & Management, and is proving especially popular.

The programme has 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 120 points at Level 1 and a further 60 at Level 2. This leaves only a 60 point course at Level 2 and two 30 point courses at Level 3 to get the degree.

This makes the qualification achievable within two years and is far more affordable than would otherwise be the case. And because it comes from the OU, the degree can be achieved either at sea or ashore.

This is a distance taught programme, with the Marine Society offering underpinning support as necessary.

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

They will learn a range of analytical and problem-solving skills including management functions such as marketing, human resources and finance, and leading and influencing change. Plus gain relevant and practical skills in communication, IT, numerical interpretation, collaborative working and reflective thinking.

Online Bookshop

The Marine Society is a leading supplier of books to individual seafarers and corporate interests in the maritime sector. It has a depth of professional knowledge in this specialised book market and enjoys close links to key trade suppliers such as the International Maritime Organisation, the Nautical Institute and Lloyds Register-Fairplay.

It can supply books and other multimedia materials such as e-books and CD-Roms quickly and at competitive rates with any profits re-invested in activities that support seafarers.

The Marine Society's online bookshop is now available. So if you wish to bag yourself a bargain and at the same time help seafarers, visit **www.msbookshop.org**

Rating to Officer

If you're a rating serving with the RFA and considering career progression to officer, there is a well established process available which has already helped thousands of seafarers.

The Slater Fund, administered by the Marine Society in association with Nautilus International, offers scholarships of up to £15,500 to help ratings study for a first certificate of competency.

The scholarships can be used for funding the necessary courses at any UK nautical college, for help with accommodation, travel and subsistence. It can also be used to fund the cost of up-skilling in functional skills (eg Maths) which is offered by the Marine Society to those in need.

Matthew Tucker, now a 3/0 with the RFA, is a good example of a recent beneficiary.

Matthew, 30, is well known to staff at the Marine Society. He first approached the London-based seafarers' charity in 2002 as an SG1A, and discussed his aspirations. It was suggested to him he might like to

Matthew Tucker is one of many RFA seafarers to have made good use of the Marine Society's services.

focus on getting some GCSEs under his belt, and so he went on to achieve five good passes at GCSE and one at A level. All were completed through the Marine Society's tutor-supported distance learning scheme run specifically for those who work at sea. Throughout his studies Matthew benefited from helpful advice and encouragement, and became ever more focused on realizing his ambition to become an officer.

So the Marine Society helpfully pointed him in the direction of the Slater Fund which would provide the underpinning funding to make further study possible.

Matthew told *Gunline*: "I would say to anyone considering applying for the Slater Fund to get their first certificate of competency, that it is extremely worthwhile and satisfying.

I first decided that I wanted to become an officer after spending many trips as bridge lookout.

Since then I have been back to college and studied at every leave opportunity and I don't regret a single moment. It's been a remarkable journey and I couldn't have achieved it without the help of the Marine Society and, of course, the Slater Fund. Thank you!"

The Marine Society has recently launched its new website.

Visit **www.marine-society.org** to find out more or email **ms@ms-sc.org** to request a free information pack.

Gunline July10 p14-15.qxd:Gunline 17/6/10 3:04 pm Page 15

BLACK ROVER MAKES HISTORICAL CALL TO ST HELENA

CDT(X) ROSS THORBURN

From the Clyde to the Caribbean, Birkenhead to Brazil, the RFA BLACK ROVER has seen it all in her 36 years upon the ocean waves. However, for the first time in her decorated history she dropped anchor in Jamestown, St Helena.

On the morning of Thursday, May the 20th a mass of volcanic rock emerged over the horizon of the South Atlantic. With sharp, ugly cliff faces and grey cumulus clouds dominating the skies above, I failed to find myself energised at the prospect of spending a weekend dodging heavy rainstorms, darting from one attraction to another. However, as the pipe announcing shore leave has been granted, the clouds parted and there wasn't to be a drop of precipitation for the duration of our stay.

As the Captain departed on a call to meet the Acting Governor of St Helena (Mr Andrew Wells), several of the brave ships company took up the local challenge that is Jacob's Ladder. With 699 steps, Jacob's Ladder is a near vertical hike from Jamestown to the top of Ladder Hill, over 600 Feet above. Over the course of the weekend 26 of our ageing personnel defeated the Ladder, the majority of which have since vowed never again! However, all agreed it was worth the pain and agony for the stunning view of St Helena's capital.

Later that evening 14 of the ships company were invited to the well known Plantation House, the Governor's residence on the island, for an official reception. We were collected by mini bus and driven through Jamestown, up to Half Tree Hollow where we were shortly greeted by the spectacular Georgian country house in the heart of the island. Built in 1791, it has hosted many distinguished visitors and Royalty from around the world. It was a grand evening spent socialising with some local dignitaries including Miss St Helena and her two Runners-up, who were particularly well received by the other cadets!

On departure many of the Officers took the opportunity to sample the islands nightlife, socialising with the rest of the ships company and local residents in the popular hotspots, namely Donny's bar and The Standard. The former within eyesight of the RFA DARKDALE monument that stands with pride on the waterfront.

The following day saw the island celebrate its 508th birthday. St Helena Day was marked with a live band, church service, mini-marathon, parade as well as water sport competitions – the latter being won by the representatives of BLACK ROVER. However, not to take it away from the local Girl Guides, who came a close second!

After a round of golf on one of the world's most remote courses, as guests of Graham, in true RFA style, I and 3 others managed to take centre stage at the parade after befriending the local Rastapharions and being invited to board their float for the afternoon. We joined the back of the flotilla and slowly crawled down the high street waving to the revellers lining the streets and jamming to Bob Marley. The parade reached its climax at the glorious waterfront, where the BLACK ROVER and RMS ST HELENA, both dressed all over, dominated the back drop. The celebrations continued well into the late hours with many of the ships company mixing with locals.

On the Saturday the ship welcomed the Governor, associated guests as well as the island's Scouts and Guides onboard. Whilst the Governor and guests sat down to luncheon with Captain Bennett, the Scouts and Guides received a tour of the ship from the Navigator, our very own Bagheera. They were shown the life saving appliances and stood in anticipation as the Navigator set off a HDLJ before they were photographed firing the miniguns and GPMG's.

While ashore the BLACK ROVER's five-a-side football team took to the pitch to honour the ship. Morale was high, being undefeated post-refit after thrashing the WAVE KNIGHT in Portland prior to deploying. However, there were a few pre match butterflies having heard rumours of the GOLD ROVER's 16-1 pasting little over a year ago. After taking a two goal lead into the dressing room at half time, a combination of sportsmanship and fatigue saw the local teenagers come back and win by 4. Having destroyed the spirits of the Girl Guides the previous day, we fielded a weakened side for the last 20 minutes and watched with heads held high as the young opposition celebrated their win.

That evening 9 guests attended a barbeque hosted by the ship's agent, Liz, and her partner Graham, in the salubrious hills overlooking the South Atlantic. There we were introduced to friends and colleagues and spent the evening enjoying fine food and conversation, as well as sampling the local spirit, Tunghi, made from cactus leaves. The night in many ways summed up the reception we received throughout our time on the island, with laughter in the air all evening.

The following day it was our turn to play host and return the warm hospitality we had received during our stay. We invited twenty-four locals onboard in two groups before lifting anchor and slowly making our way round St Helena. This allowed them the opportunity to see life onboard a Royal Fleet Auxiliary vessel as well as admire their island in a way many of them had never had the luxury. They received a tour of the ship, exploring everywhere from the monkey island to the engine room, the forecastle to the poop before retiring to the flight deck to take in the breathtaking scenery. A fine time was had by all. However there was a sense of sadness within the ships company come the afternoon. The reason was clear; having to say goodbye to a picturesque place, but more significantly, the disappointment of only being able to repay the kindness shown to us to a small minority of the islands population.

Having lost the RFA DARKDALE during the Second World War to a German torpedo in Jamestown bay, it was clear throughout that St Helena has a special bond with the Royal Fleet Auxiliary.

It is hard to believe it has been a mere seven weeks since the BLACK ROVER completed her work up, ready to take over from the WAVE RULER as APT(S). The stunning views and welcoming people of St Helena made FOST seem like a distant memory. From sweating in anti-flash and fearnaughts to dinning with the Governor and Miss St Helena, it simply was just what the doctor ordered! On behalf of the BLACK ROVER, from the bottom of our hearts, THANK YOU ST HELENA!

DILIGENCE DELIVERS EX RNLI LIFEBOAT TO SEYCHELLES

DILIGENCE is no stranger to undertaking unusual tasks. During her last deployment to the Gulf she was a regular visitor to the two Iraqi oil platforms, Kaaot and Abot where she transferred 20 feet ISO containers for the coalition forces.

However, when we were asked if we could embark an ex RNLI Tyne class lifeboat this was going to be another first. The lifeboat had been in service for several years as the "Baltic Exchange II" based at Salcombe in Devon and had recently been replaced by a new Tamar Class boat. The inquiry arrived on a Friday with a request for an answer by the Monday as the Foreign and Commonwealth Office only had funding to be able to transport the boat this year. No pressure on us then.

As with all Government work the budget only runs throughout the financial year on a basis of use it or lose it. The FCO wanted to purchase the boat which was on the RNLI's disposal list but had no means of getting the boat from the UK to its intended destination. So the RFA were asked and in demonstrating a new perspective for the service's flexibility, the boat came to DILIGENCE on a Friday afternoon.
A quick email exchange to find out exactly what the boat looked like and more importantly what its dimensions were (14.3 x 4.4m for the spotters) and off we set with a measuring tape around the after decks.

Once we had established we could fit the boat onto the well deck with a bit of reorganisation of the Yokohama fenders, it was a case of trying to organise a loading slot in our very tight programme of OST before deployment.

It transpired that the boat was in Babcock's boat shed in Devonport only 100 yards from Rubble jetty where we were berthed so Chief Officer Rob Anders and CPO(D) Mick Martin were able to have a good look at the boat and discuss lifting and delivery arrangements with the yard.

Babcock's were very helpful and when we successfully emerged from FOST, I'll just repeat successfully for those who missed it, we arranged a stopover at Devonport to collect the boat.

So far so good we thought, but you know how these things go. Picking up the pilot at the breakwater on the way in to Devonport and the message arrives saying the mobile crane is broken down on the A38 and the spare part is in Wales! But fortune favours the brave - did we mention the boat's new name was FORTUNE - and the spares arrived for the crane after a short delay. With some careful slinging the boat was embarked without incident.

CPO(D) Alan Kubala and his team then rigged our 40 tonne crane to conduct a test lift to prove we could get it off at the port of delivery - always handy to know that in advance to avoid disappointment later.

We had made contact with the retired Coxn of the boat Mr Frank Smith MBE who was able to come down to Devonport to see his boat begin the next phase of her life. He kindly provided a signed photo of the boat taken during its first ever call out which we will be taking to hand over to the new operators.

So now the boat is sitting happily on the well deck painted its new grey colour with "coastguard" written down the sides. Its new role will be to provide enhanced capability for the local coastguard to conduct anti piracy patrols.

And where is it bound? The Seychelles. And who is going there to drop it off - WE ARE!! Postcards to follow.

Gunline July10 p16.qxd:Gunline 23/6/10 11:12 Page 16

BLACK ROVER - AMP TO APT SOUTH AND THE JOURNEY OF THE BELLS

JOHNATHON NICHOLLS CADET (X)

As a cadet onboard an RFA my main focus is to learn about the way in which the ship operates and to understudy the Third Mate. Black Rover has four cadets, two from the deck department and two engineering. This article describes some of a cadet's work and preparations involved as Black Rover completes her journey from AMP Portland to APT South in the Falklands. In preparation for deployment to the South Atlantic to take up APT South duties, Black Rover made her way to Portland to commence a two week AMP. After successfully completing OST the crew were very relieved to be alongside. However Black Rover's time alongside was not quite as laid back as some had hoped.

Black Rover was fully laden with 1.5 million gallons of DIESO and 500Cz of AVCAT, standard cargo for a Rover boat. However she was also going to load three bells, to be delivered to Chile. Black Rover was taking the bells on passage to the Falkland Islands where they would be picked up by HMS Portland and taken to Santiago.

The bells date from as early as 1753 and are thought to have been cast in Spain. Before being loaded onto Black Rover on 27th April they were displayed in the porch of All Saints Church, Wales. All Saints recovered the bells in the 1880's following a tragic fire at the Jesuit Church of La Campañía de Jesus. But on 22nd February this year, Oystermouth Parochial Church Council agreed that the historical bells should be returned to Santiago as a memorial to those who died in the 1863 disaster.

Black Rover was almost ready for her deployment; however, after some final inspections and exercises by Lloyds and the MCA the drama began. The breathing apparatus (BA) air compressor and the X-Band RADAR failed. Chances of her deploying on time looked slim, but a diesel compressor was ordered and the RADAR mechanics called out and it was not long before she was ready to go.

Black Rover deployed as scheduled and set off towards Ascension on the first part of her passage. A few days after deploying I was put on watch, vital practice for a first trip cadet is gained from watch duties. We made way on one engine to improve economy and stayed on at least combo 7 to make fresh water.

A week into the trip and her pool was filled up, very few were brave enough to wet their feet at first but as she continued south the weather warmed up and so did the water so the pool grew more and more popular and saw frequent use.

After 13 days at sea Black Rover reached the equator. Her company set about making the event a day to remember for the 16 of those who had not crossed the line before.

Crossing the Line

The 16 due to present themselves before King Neptune and pay for their sins were to do so at 1400 by the swimming pool. However much to the surprise of the Police, very few decided to show up. Those who did were presented to King Neptune, fed a less than delightful treat by the Barber, tried by the Judge and then if found guilty by King Neptune a food scrap slop shower would shortly follow. Funnily enough, all of the people tried were found guilty. They were then thrown into the pool for the bears to assist them with washing off the debris. Those who failed to show up were hunted down one by one by the Police. Once found the Police used their truncheons to gently persuade the victim to appear in front of the Judge. Even some of those who had crossed many times found themselves being punished. 3/O E Paul Griffin was thrown in the pool for 'looking guilty' and the XO Chris Locke was thrown in as he was due to pay off at Ascension. Later that evening a celebratory BBQ was held on the poop for all to attend. It was a fantastic evening despite the rain.

The following day the rain was behind us, the sun was out and the beautiful Ascension Islands appeared upon the horizon. Once anchored, shore leave was granted and lots of people fled the ship to explore this fantastic place. The two engineering cadets and I decided to take the ship's bikes ashore with the aim of cycling round the island to explore what it had to offer. However a few miles down the road two of us encountered punctures. Meanwhile the new CHOFF and other new joiners had arrived. The following day was Ascension Day and the locals put on a fair for us to enjoy. On the final day the two engineering cadets and I hired a car and explored the island on four wheels instead of two. This method was slightly more successful and we climbed to the top of Green Mountain and went swimming at English Bay before returning to Georgetown for a meal. All in all it was a fantastic weekend and a very nice island.

Next morning we weighed anchor and headed off to St. Helena. I was put to work with the Leading Hand Deck to work on seamanship skills and general deck maintenance. I undertook wire splicing, multi plat and maintenance to watertight doors, vents and scuppers.

During our passage from Ascension to St. Helena, Black Rover conducted two Man Overboard (MOB) drills. The other deck cadet and I got involved by assisting with the launch of the safety boat. Meanwhile the engineering cadets took station on the bridge wing to assist with the flags and lookout.

Once we had anchored off of St. Helena 14 people were chosen to go to the Governor's house for a welcome drink and to exchange crests. The following morning the deck cadets went up the main mast to change the masthead obstruction lights. We then caught the boat ashore as it was St. Helena day. Many events took place throughout the day, such as a mini marathon. SE Steve Wilson did us proud and finished in 4th place. Novelty water sports, our team of cadets plus Steve excelled at and took home the trophy. A parade of floats went through the town one of which some of Black Rover's personnel managed to board. During our visit many of the ship's personnel took on the challenge of Jacobs ladder; a staircase going up the side of a cliff with 699 steps. Unfortunately the local record of 5 minutes 11 seconds remains in place. Just before our departure we took two groups of twelve locals for a trip around their island. The other three cadets and I were their tour guides for the day; giving them a tour of the ship and keeping them entertained.

On our journey from St. Helena to Tristan De Cuhna, Black Rover's bow thrust compartment flooded! There was a leak in a recently fitted pipe on the emergency fire pump. The other deck cadet and I assisted in setting up the pump while the engineering cadets assisted in fixing it.

Once at Tristan De Cuhna I made my way ashore in a 1940s lifeboat which I did not trust, especially in the two metre swell we were experiencing. However I made it ashore safely and had a walk around Tristan's settlement Edinburgh. With a total population of 264 it was not a long walk. Unlike St. Helena and Ascension, Tristan De Cuhna is self sufficient. They have their own life stock and vegetable patches. They also export locally caught fish to make money. Some of the ship's company, including myself, went on a guided walk up the 1961 volcano while others took part in a 5 aside football game. The walk was very interesting and there were fantastic views over Edinburgh from the top. The football game however was not such a success, our guys put up a good fight but it wasn't enough to match the locals' vicious tactics. We lost 5-2.

Loading the Bells in Portland

We then left for the Falklands. During this final part of our passage we encountered some seven metre swells with 50 knot winds; rendering the forward upper decks out of bounds for a few days. Also one of the main engine fuel supply valves managed to vibrate itself shut in the middle of the night leaving the engine room in silence and the ship in complete darkness with no propulsion, steering gear or navigational equipment! About 30 seconds later the emergency generator kicked in and every engineer rushed to the scene. Soon after the problem was identified and resolved. Once the weather conditions had improved a galley fire exercise delayed from earlier took place. For emergency stations I am based at the FRPP and take the role of BA controller, the other deck cadet took the role of Water-Wall. The exercise went well with all personnel expressing high levels of enthusiasm and professionalism towards the exercise.

I am currently working on getting my last few deck tasks signed off and I hope to go on to work in the engine room for a few days and then back onto watches. I feel my first trip as a cadet has been very rewarding and look forward to what the last two months hold in store for me.

On completion of Black Rover's passage to the Falklands where APT South duties were undertaken on the 29th May, the bells will continue theirs on to Santiago, Chile where they will stand in the Jesuit Church of La Campañía de Jesus as a memorial to all those who perished in the fire.

www.oystermouthparish.com/bells-of-santiago

SUDOKU ANSWERS

1	7	3	5	2	4	6	9	8
8	9	6	7	3	1	4	2	5
5	4	2	8	6	9	1	7	3
3	6	5	1	9	2	8	4	7
4	8	7	3	5	6	2	1	9
9	2	1	4	8	7	5	3	6
6	5	4	2	7	3	9	8	1
2	3	8	9	1	5	7	6	4
7	1	9	6	4	8	3	5	2

Printed by Holbrooks Printers Ltd, Portsmouth PO3 5HX