Gunline - The First Point of Contact | Published by the Royal Fleet Auxiliary Service | Autumn 2011 | www.rfa.mod.uk

ROSALIE'S KEY ROLE IN UK'S LIBYAN OPS

The Royal Fleet Auxiliary's support to Royal Naval operations off Libya is being sustained by Fort Rosalie and her ship's company. As street fighting continues in Tripoli between Free Libya Forces and members of Colonel Gaddafi's former regime, British and NATO military forces including the RFA are maintaining a presence in the region. In the lead up to Free Libya Forces entering Tripoli the RAF continued to strike at key Colonel Gaddafi targets within the city as part of NATO's Operation Unified Protector.

RFA Fort Rosalie initially sailed from the UK in April as part of the Response Force Task Group (RFTG) to conduct a series of pre-planned amphibious exercises in the Mediterranean, known as Cougar 11. However, the last five months have arguably seen the busiest period of maritime operations since Op Telic in 2003. With the escalating events in Libya, the UK Government took the opportunity in May to re-task HMS Ocean and her embarked helicopters, along with her support ship Fort Rosalie, to assist in the enforcement of the United Nations Security Council Resolution to protect Libyan citizens. Since then Fort Rosalie has been a key enabler for force projection and has provided sustained support to some six British warships, key amongst which have been HMS Ocean, HMS Liverpool and HMS Bangor.

Fort Rosalie departed Crombie on the 24 April 2011 laden with 6000m3 of stores and joined with the other RFTG units early in May. Since then she has provided 2,191 pallets of various types of stores with a total weight of 800 tonnes through 29 separate heavy jackstay transfers together with 9 VERTREPS.

Op Ellamy has, though, provided some unique sustainability challenges for Fort Rosalie given the deployment of Apache attack helicopters onboard HMS Ocean. With limited storage space in the magazines of HMS Ocean, additional ammunition stowage has been provided by Rosalie, requiring the reconfiguration of munitions store rooms on board

Fort Rosalie conducts a double RAS with HMS Albion and HMS Ocean.
Photograph by LA(Phot) Guy Pool.

and the loading of weapons from the UK through a forward logistics site in Crete. Concurrent with this, an additional Apache helicopter was flown on board the ship, a first for the RFA, which was subsequently transferred to HMS Ocean.

General stores to support the Task Group have been brought from the UK by road and air via a Forward Logistic Site located in southern Italy. These have then been transferred to Rosalie for delivery to the ships in the Task Group but the seamanship challenges of loading cargo stores both alongside and at anchor in a very short timescale shouldn't be underestimated. Port visits to collect cargo have been of short 24 to 48 hour duration as part of a highly flexible and responsive programme to ensure logistic support to the other ships has been optimised. The high tempo of logistic operations involved with supporting Op Ellamy has required a close level of co-operation between all departments on board Rosalie to achieve the common objective.

In addition, Rosalie has also moved Royal Navy, Royal Marine and Army Air Corps personnel as well as journalists to and from Theatre with over 200 personnel having been transferred so far. This regular transfer of mail and personnel has undoubtedly helped to enhance the morale of the ships on operations.

One of the most important elements of sustaining the deployment has been the support given to the Naval Fire Support missions conducted at various times by HM Ships, Liverpool, Sutherland and Iron Duke. The changes on the ground and the dynamic operational situation in Libya has several times required ammunition replenishments to be programmed at very short notice but the ship has been able to rise to the challenge to meet this requirement.

Looking ahead, the port visit to Malta in September for a maintenance period will ensure the ship remains fully operational for continued operational tasking and will allow the crew a welcome stand down from a highly intensive operational programme; without doubt this has been one of the most challenging and rewarding deployments for an AFSH since Op Telic.

The Commander of the Task Group, Commodore John Kingwell said: "Fort Rosalie has played a key part in supporting operations in the Mediterranean. Her people have done a first class job and demonstrated the importance of the Royal Fleet Auxiliary in the Response Force Task Group."

Major General Nick Pope, the Chief of the Defence Staff's Communications Officer, said:

The naval capability would not have been possible without the support of RFA Fort Rosalie in her delivery of military operations.

The Cougar 11 deployment demonstrated the Response Force Task Group (RFTG) concept.

The RFTG is a new initiative announced in last year's Strategic Defence and Security Review and is the heart of the UK's maritime contingent capability, held at very high readiness to respond to unexpected global events. It highlights the enduring need for the armed forces to plan and train for unforeseen events that may occur in parallel with the defence main effort of current operations.

The role of RFA Fort Rosalie is to replenish Royal Navy warships with dry stores such as food, spare parts and ammunition whilst at sea. This complex task is carried out by both ships steaming along side-by-side and transferring stores along a cable rigged between them or by using helicopters to transfer loads. With extensive storage areas for the stowage of everything from food to weapons and the ability to rearm and resupply the Royal Navy while underway, coupled to her capacity to carry extra helicopters, makes Fort Rosalie a highly flexible and important part of any naval task group.

Commodore Bill Walworth

The editor of Gunline has to make the front page eye catching. The spring edition certainly was, although my headline suggestion 'RFA - All at Sea' was firmly rejected! Most of our ships and people were on high tempo operations and the commitments continued at that pace throughout the summer. There are some great stories submitted by individuals in this edition. If you are part of the "RFA family" be proud of the way we continue to perform, whether you are at sea or part of the supporting team ashore, at home or deployed.

While we've been focused on operations we have also been implementing the painful process of reducing our manpower, the details of which I have previously explained. This is a sad event and in part softened by the fact that everyone so far has left under the voluntary scheme. I hope we will have concluded this process by next spring.

It is now almost eighteen months since Largs Bay sailed to deliver critical humanitarian support to the people of Haiti. In recognition of the excellent work that the ship's company and embarked forces delivered in the region, I am delighted to report that the ship has had her outstanding achievements recognised by the wider audience and been awarded The Firmin Sword of Peace. Many congratulations to all those who ensured the ship was able to deliver the aid in what were difficult conditions and circumstances.

Over the summer I visited HMS Raleigh and Britannia Royal Naval College, Dartmouth, to meet the RFA staff and trainees. Raleigh offers excellent training for the logistics and seamanship recruits in well equipped and realistic galleys, storerooms, RAS rigs, seamanship equipment as well as boats on the river. The heavy RAS test rig for the future solid support ships to supply the Queen Elizabeth class aircraft carriers is under construction and will become the training rig for all RAS training in the future. During my visit to Dartmouth I witnessed an RFA team passing out with their naval colleagues, before heading off to nautical colleges. To say I am very proud of all the RFA people I met at both places is an understatement and I left feeling really confident for the future. I am planning autumn visits to HMS Collingwood and Sultan to see our communicators, deck officers, engineer officers and ratings. The demanding entry process and induction courses are paying off as well trained, informed and motivated people take up appointments. Needless to say individual training has to be pulled together in the ship, as part of its daily life, and by our diligent team down at Flag Officer Sea Training (FOST). Recently I inspected Gold Rover at the end of her FOST training. Work Ups are gruelling but give the ship tailored training for their future tasks. Captain Ray Bennett and his ship's company were outstanding and assessed as Very Satisfactory, an excellent result.

Captain Hood and his team in Pers Ops will issue the personnel plans for the future over the next few months, including getting promotion boards back on track. Top of his list is a more efficient appointing scheme to meet the new schemes of complement. We can continue to look forward to a professionally challenging and well-rewarded career as we develop our stride, but we will have to restructure in a number of areas to meet operational and financial demands. We are consulting widely and everyone in the RFA needs to be involved. Some of the ideas from the Flotilla on efficiency and cost effectiveness have been excellent and show we are all working towards the same ends.

Enjoy this edition of Gunline. Together let's see the RFA moving forward. Keep it up and well done everyone.

ARGUS ASSISTS IN EVACUATION OFF LIBYA

RFA ARGUS who returned to Falmouth in July has recently been involved in no fewer than three separate tasking. The ship which can operate as both primary casualty reception facility, and a helicopter landing platform has taken part in Operations Deference and Hunt in the four and a half months she was away; supporting operations in the Mediterranean and the Gulf of Aden.

ARGUS sailed at less than twenty four hours notice to assist in the operation to evacuate civilians from Libya. Having successfully completed this mission, she then passed through the Suez Canal; spending a further ten weeks at high readiness to conduct an evacuation of civilians from Yemen if called upon. Throughout this time ARGUS was also making a significant contribution to the maritime security of the area by mounting anti-piracy patrols in the Gulf of Aden. Her presence, combined with the ability to search large areas of the busy sea lanes in this area using her three embarked Merlin Helicopters ensured that no ships were pirated in her patrol area throughout this phase of the deployment.

Commanding Officer Capt. Paul Kehoe said:

"The short notice deployment to the Mediterranean and the Gulf of Aden demonstrated once again the flexibility and readiness of the Royal Navy and the Royal Fleet Auxiliary to react almost instantaneously to world events. The ship's company, 820 Naval Air Squadron and A Company 40 Commando Royal Marines quickly integrated into a cohesive team ready to undertake all the tasks the ship was given. I am proud of how all on board performed throughout the last few months, not least in their efforts in raising money for various charities during this busy deployment. All on board are looking forward to getting back to the UK and seeing their families again."

Along the way RN and RFA crew members, as well as embarked personnel from 820 Naval Air Squadron and 40 Commando RM found time to raise over £3000 for charity. A host of events were arranged during the deployment to raise money, including "horse racing" and a village fete on the flight deck, a 30km gym challenge, a simulated cycle from Lands End to John O'Groats, and a run up the Rock of Gibraltar in a fire suit!

By the time she returned to Falmouth for a well earned maintenance period, ARGUS had steamed over 21,000 nautical miles, consumed nearly 40 tons of potatoes, two tons of bacon and 40,000 eggs. Her embarked aircraft have flown for over 250 hours, and conducted well over 350 deck landings. Reflecting on another successful deployment, in which ARGUS once again demonstrated her ability to adapt to tasking at very short notice.

Commander CTF 151 R-Adm. Chan said:

I would like to express my thanks for your invaluable contributions to the counter-piracy efforts in the Gulf of Aden over the past months. Since 16 Mar 11, RFA ARGUS has been providing support to CTF 151 and your willingness to accept a wide sector coverage in the IRTC during these months, being the only ship to cover six sectors, is indeed commendable. I know that the presence of your ship, as one with Level 2/ 3 medical facilities, is also reassuring to the many coalition ships in the area. Furthermore, your willingness to make ad hoc changes to accommodate CTF 151 requirements on many occasions is something that I deeply appreciate. Lastly, on a personal note, I would like to thank you once again for the kind and warm hospitality shown to my delegation and I when we visited your ship on 22 Apr 11. Please accept my heartfelt thanks and congratulations for the many missions well accomplished. I look forward to continuing our close cooperation with the other UK ships performing CP operations in the area.

FACTS/FIGURES

OP HUNT – 110 Days duration,
with 285 personnel on board.

Basic foodstuffs consumed:-

Bacon	1997.6 kg
Sausages	3995.2 kg
Eggs	3300 dozen
Baked Beans	114 x 2.72 kg tins
Potatoes	37500 kg
Cabbage	980 kg
Milk	6600 ltr
Fruit Juice	1980 ltr
Toilet Roll	8580 Rolls

Flying Stats

Deck Landings
March - 151
April - 111
May - 88

Total flying hours
March – 88.34
April – 91.33
May – 60.17

LIVERPOOL YOUNG OFFICERS GET ACQUAINTED WITH LIFE ON BOARD RFA FORT ROSALIE

Two trainee Warfare officers from HMS Liverpool have recently spent a week on board RFA Fort Rosalie whilst both ships have been deployed to the Mediterranean as part of the ongoing Libyan operation.

During their Fleet Time Young Officers of the Warfare specialisation are required to learn all aspects of bridge watch-keeping and so with their ship alongside for maintenance it provided an ideal opportunity for them to gain an insight into the Royal Fleet Auxiliary Service and the logistic support available to the Task Group.

Sub Lieutenant Tom Stanford said: "This period has been very valuable to our training, as not only did it provide us with an excellent opportunity to practice astro-navigation, but also, perhaps more importantly, it allowed us to gain an insight into the operational life of an RFA vessel undertaking its core business."

Sub Lieutenant Harry Ebbitt said: "This should be of great use in our future careers as it will provide an understanding of the processes that go on 'behind the scenes' in order to conduct a successful Replenishment At Sea. We will remember our time onboard fondly."

RFA SUPPORTS COUGAR DEPLOYMENT

Seven Royal Navy warships and auxiliary vessels, with embarked Royal Marines and helicopters, converged in waters off Cyprus for exercises as part of the Cougar 11 deployment.

Three ships - HMS Albion, HMS Sutherland, and Royal Fleet Auxiliary (RFA) vessel Cardigan Bay left the UK with elements of the commando force at the beginning of April, and visited Cyprus for a series of amphibious exercises.

For Exercise Cypriot Lion, they were joined by a second group of ships - the helicopter carrier HMS Ocean, landing ship RFA Mounts Bay, fast fleet tanker RFA Wave Knight, and supply ship RFA Fort Rosalie, between them having the personnel, supplies and equipment which would enable her to deliver logistical support of Amphibious Training in Cyprus and Albania.

The RFA has yet again demonstrated its capability by delivering maritime support to Op Cougar, the major UK deployment for 2011. The ships were put through their paces and have again demonstrated the ships unique capabilities of delivering support to a deployed task group by undertaking a wide range of tasking in support of operations.

Mounts Bay joined the Flagship, HMS Albion in Crete and became an integrated part of the UK's Responsive Force Task Group (RFTG). She was actively involved in Exercise Cypriot Lion, the initial exercise off Cyprus with embarked forces from 30 and 40 Commando Royal Marines (RM) part of 3 Commando Brigade. In addition to the RM contingent, other attached units, included the Royal Navy's Fleet Diving Unit and personnel from Royal Naval Air Squadron (RNAS) Culdrose, who were actively engaged in the exercise.

Photo Credit: 1/O Alistair Clack

Exercise Cypriot Lion, was designed to demonstrate the versatile capabilities and high readiness of the Royal Navy's new RFTG, combined air defence exercises and live firings out at sea with amphibious exercises in coastal waters involving Royal Marines of 3 Commando Brigade. It was the first major exercise of the complete RFTG in the Cougar 11 deployment.

To ensure the deployed forces had all the necessary support and capabilities to deliver on its objectives, a detachment from the Royal Logistic Corps (RLC), based at the Sea Mounting Centre in Marchwood, were integrated with the other ships of the RFTG. The team from the RLC worked with the ship's company and RMs to ensure that all the necessary equipment was maintained and operational throughout the deployment and in the correct location to ensure integrated support with all the units.

In addition to the Royal Marines and elements of 3 Commando Brigade Headquarters, the Task Group also included marines from the Royal Netherlands Marine Corps, with whom the UK has a long-standing association.

Mounts Bay, who had been joined by her sister ship Cardigan Bay, embarked the Dutch Marines to partake in Exercise Albanian Lion, further demonstrating the RFA's integrated capabilities. Both countries have a history of co-operation in the field of amphibious warfare that dates back to the Siege of Gibraltar in 1704, a relationship cemented through the creation of a joint UK-Netherlands Landing Force in 1973.

Mounts Bay then embarked two Sea Kings from 846 NAS, Yeovilton to conduct a week long exercise off the Vlore Peninsula. This exercise was the first UK major amphibious training exercise with the Albanian Forces (AL). Albania joined NATO in 2009 and the importance of this inaugural AL/UK exercise was of such importance that the Albanian President, Bamir Topi, along with senior military and ministerial figures from Albania attended the event and were hosted by the British and Dutch Ambassadors throughout.

Mounts Bay as the lead ship in this section of the deployed Amphibious Task Force was able to demonstrate to the presidential party the ship's capabilities before the presidential entourage mover ashore to witness the amphibious assault. The embarked RMs, who were exercising ashore on unusual terrain, overlooking the Strait of Otranto linking the Adriatic and Ionian Seas, found the training opportunity very beneficial. The region for many years had been used as a base for Soviet Forces.

Commodore John Kingwell, Commander UK Task Group, commanded the Task Group from the fleet flagship, HMS Albion said:

"Consisting of ships, helicopters and Royal Marines held at high readiness, the Responsive Force Task Group enables the Royal Navy to respond at short notice to unforeseen events in an unpredictable and fast-moving world.

"Naval forces are ideally placed to respond to a range of missions central to UK defence and security. The involvement of marines from the Netherlands underlines the role that the RFTG can play alongside our international partners in support of wider maritime security and regional stability."

The RFTG is a new initiative announced in last year's Strategic Defence and Security Review and is at the heart of the UK's maritime contingent capability, held at very high readiness to respond to unexpected global events. It highlights the enduring need for the Armed Forces to plan and train for unforeseen events

that may occur in parallel with ongoing high priority, resource intensive, military operations. Initially, the Task Group demonstrated its amphibious capabilities through multinational exercises in the Mediterranean, before conducting further exercises in the Indian Ocean and the Gulf.

Mounts Bay's Commanding Officer, Captain Peter Farmer, said: "Op Cougar allowed the ship's company along with the Embarked Military Force to reinvigorate the core skills of Amphibious Warfare and demonstrated the benefits of the Responsive Force Task Group and the versatility of the RFA. The integration of our UK forces with those of Albania showed the value of working together within NATO and with our new NATO ally. The importance of this relationship was emphasised by the visit of the Albanian President, and opened up the potential for a most interesting and very useful training opportunity for the Royal Marines. Our Albanian allies were very keen to host us and most welcoming throughout the visit. This exercise proved again the versatility and utility of the LSDA Class of the Royal Fleet Auxiliary to support an amphibious force worldwide."

Mounts Bay on having completed her support to the RM's continued her programme and made a call in Valletta, Malta and then on to Souda Bay, Crete, both visits enabling the ship to partake in regional engagement before returning to the UK on 21 June.

MAJOR AMPHIBIOUS TASK GROUP COME HOME

Cardigan Bay has returned to the UK arriving into Marchwood, Southampton on Friday 5th August after a four month operational deployment as part of the UK's Responsive Force Task Group (RFTG) supporting maritime security operations. The deployment was codenamed Cougar 11 and was the first deployment of the UK'S maritime quick reaction force. Whilst on the deployment RFA Cardigan Bay was tasked to support NATO operations to protect civilians in Libya and to increase pressure on the Gaddafi regime.

The ship's Commanding Officer Captain Paul Minter RFA said, "Since sailing from the UK at the beginning of April, the ship has had a very busy period operating as part of the Responsive Force Task Group (RFTG) on Operation Cougar 11. The ever changing demands placed upon the ship and her embarked Royal Marines has resulted in a varied and demanding programme. Highlights have included a valuable exercise with the Saudi Arabian armed forces. Throughout the deployment, the ship has again demonstrated the versatility of the LSDA, and the valued part the RFA can play in support of British interests around the world."

Highlights of the trip included exercising with the Saudi Arabian armed forces strengthening the UK's relationships, influence and ability to work with other countries in the Middle East.

Cougar 11 has successfully demonstrated our ability to respond at short notice to unforeseen circumstances and enhanced our co-operation with partner nations and support capacity building.

Photo Credit: 1/O Alistair Clack

RFA WAVE KNIGHT DEMONSTRATES CAPABILITY IN SUPPORT OF OPERATIONS

Wave Knight sailed from Portland on 26 April as part of the Op Cougar deployment to the Eastern Mediterranean.

RFA Wave Knight has operated as the Arabian Gulf Ready Tanker (AGRT) after transferring Operational Control from the Responsive Force Task Group (RFTG). The ship has demonstrated the self sufficiency

of the task force for prolonged periods at sea by continually replenishing the Royal Navy and foreign national warships.

As real world events in the region developed the ship detached from the main task group for a high speed passage to rendezvous with HMS Liverpool and SPS Menedez Nunez, 60 miles off Misrata, Libya. Successful Replenishments At Sea (RAS) were conducted with both ships, which were operating under NATO and conducting military operations in defence of the Libyan civilian personnel.

Contingency Operations didn't end there. Wave Knight was again tasked for fast passage to both Malta and Crete to consolidate cargo and transfer essential stores and equipment. Returning to the task group

Wave Knight conducted an impressive 11 RAS evolutions issuing a total of 9516cz of Diesel and 205cz of Aviation Fuel.

Before departing the Mediterranean, Wave Knight again returned to Crete for another busy period of consolidating Cargo, Crew roulement and uplifting stores and food levels sailing 72 hours later for the Suez Canal.

Wave Knight entered the Red Sea on 16 June as part of Op Cougar and again proved her worth by replenishing UK and foreign warships before heading north to the Gulf.

Wave Knight spent 67 out of 74 days at sea after leaving UK, an impressive task which demonstrates the ship's and ship's capabilities demonstrating versatile integrated support and value for money. All on board saw the work as a logistical challenge that the professional seafarers of the RFA service took in their stride.

Commanding Officer Vernon Ramsay-Smith said.

"OP COUGAR proved to be a huge success for Wave Knight. We conducted a number of fuel replenishments, supporting the COUGAR task group as well as units operating under the NATO banner. As well as fuel Wave Knight delivered essential stores support to ship's operating in defence of the Libyan people".

"It's was hard work for the ship's company, but they are all very proud of their achievements, as indeed am I."

"The hard work continues with a welcome Assisted Maintenance Period in Dubai before again putting to sea in support of UKMCC operations in the Middle East region."

FORT ROSALIE'S AH FIRST

Fort Rosalie was able to lay claim to the first Army Air Corps Attack Helicopter (AH) Landing.

The ship has recently seen, as part of the activity in the Mediterranean, the first single spot landing of an Apache aircraft in the RN/RFA.

Captain Ross Ferris' Intrigue with AH

The AH was secured for her time in Fort Rosalie and then transferred to HMS Ocean at the next programmed replenishment.

This represented a highly successful evolution with a lot of prior planning involved. Aviation standard

operating procedures reviews had to be reviewed, risk assessments conducted on all aspects of the evolution and Fort Rosalie's flight deck team receiving AH familiarisation on board HMS Ocean.

WAVE RULER CALLS INTO GRAND TURK

RFA Wave Ruler made a Regional Engagement Visit to Grand Turk, from the 16th to 20th June 2011. This was the third time the ship has visited the Turks and Caicos Islands, for regional engagement with the first visit in July 2008 to Providenciales.

Wave Ruler has previously been stationed in the Far East, Persian Gulf and as APT(S) (Atlantic Patrol Task (South) in the South Atlantic, supporting the Falkland Islands as well as working in territorial waters around the UK.

A significant part of the Royal Navy's presence is, patrolling the North Atlantic and Caribbean. RFA Wave Ruler's primary role is to provide support to the UK Overseas territories and strengthen the UK Government's commitment in the region. This role includes providing regional support in the event of natural disasters such as hurricanes.

A prime example is in September 2008 when Wave Ruler assisted Grand Turk when hurricane Ike caused major damage through the island. Teams where deployed on various tasks, which included restoring power to the islands reverse osmosis plant; providing temporary roofing and restoring power to the health clinic as well as distributing bottled water and food.

With an extensive range of disaster relief stores, Wave Ruler is capable of providing food, water and shelter where required. Additionally the ship and her crew can provide medical and humanitarian aid, search and request facilities utilising the Lynx helicopter onboard, together with technical assistance utilising their training, skills, knowledge and experience.

Whilst at sea working in support of local defence and police forces, from a host of Caribbean nations, together with United States Coast Guard, Wave Ruler conducts maritime patrols.

During the visit to Grand Turk Wave Ruler will be conducting Humanitarian Aid and Disaster Relief visits to enhance awareness of facilities available on Grand Turk, and assist Wave Ruler in preparing to provide future humanitarian aid assistance should the island require it.

The Captain was quoted as saying "We are delighted to be in Grand Turk. Our visit confirms the UK's close relationship with Grand Turk. Wave Ruler is in the Region to support UK Overseas Territories provide regional support in the event of natural disasters and contribute to Law Enforcement. The Ship's Company is looking forward to the visit and the opportunity to experience Grand Turk".

RFA FORT ROSALIE COMMEMORATES WWII SIEGE OF MALTA

During her recent visit to Malta, Fort Rosalie took part in commemorations for the 69th anniversary of Op Pedestal, the Second World War convoy to relieve Malta.

The British High Commissioner in Malta invited representatives from both Fort Rosalie and HMS Ocean to attend official ceremonies to commemorate the 69th Anniversary of Operation Pedestal, the key convoy to relieve the siege of 'Fortress Malta' during the Second World War, known locally as the Santa Marija Convoy. Captain Phillip T Hanton RFA laid a wreath on behalf of the Royal Fleet Auxiliary at two official ceremonies to mark this historic event.

'At the going down of the sun and in the morning we will remember them'

The ceremony on the evening of the 12 August consisted of an open air service at Barriera Wharf in Valletta's Grand Harbour. The solemnity of the occasion was enhanced by the choir, the World War Two Living History Group, who fired a salute, and the presence of veterans involved with the Operation. The event concluded with a wreath laying ceremony at sea, a moving tribute to those who had sacrificed their lives in bringing valuable supplies to the island.

Wreath laying on board the wooden sailing vessel "Gulet"

The ceremony on the evening of the 15 August was an annual event organised by the Royal Naval Officers' Association supported by their Patron, Her Excellency Ms Louise Stanton the British High Commissioner in Malta. The evening consisted of a cruise of the Grand Harbour in Valletta, departing from Sliema seafront on a wooden sailing Gulet, a wreath laying ceremony and buffet meal. As well as officers from Fort Rosalie and HMS Ocean, the event was supported by representatives from the Royal Air Force, the Merchant Navy and the United States Navy.

Fort Rosalie and HMS Ocean left the UK in April, forming part of the UK's Response Force Task Group to conduct a series of pre-planned amphibious exercises in the Mediterranean, known as Cougar 11. With the escalating events in Libya, the UK Government took the opportunity in May to re-task HMS Ocean and her embarked helicopters, along with her support ship Fort Rosalie, to assist in the enforcement of the United Nations Security Council Resolution to protect Libyan citizens.

Fort Rosalie and HMS Ocean have been visiting Malta in order to embark vital stores and conduct maintenance that could not be done at sea, as well as to ensure that both ships' companies were rested and refreshed. Their short absence from operations was coordinated with other NATO units in order to ensure that the pressure was maintained on the Libyan regime.

A retired RFA Radio Officer laying a wreath on behalf of the RFA Service supported by Captain Phillip Hanton, Commanding Officer RFA Fort Rosalie

Since her last port visit to Malta in early July, HMS Ocean has had an intensive period at sea launching her Apache Attack Helicopters from 656 Squadron Army Air Corps into Libya in support of the NATO led operation. The Apaches have been ably assisted by other helicopters embarked in HMS Ocean namely Sea King Mk 7s of 857 Naval Air Squadron providing maritime surveillance and Lynx Mk 7s of 847 Naval Air Squadron providing force protection and logistic support.

RFA WAVE KNIGHT AND THE LYNN RIVAL

Some of our readers may recall the incident last year involving Paul and Rachel Chandler and their yacht – the 'Lynn Rival'. The couple were kidnapped in the Indian Ocean during Oct 2009. RFA Wave Knight became involved in the incident, inaccurate details of which subsequently appeared in the press. The Chandler's wrote to the Prime Ministers' Office late last year and said:

'... We would be grateful if you could pass our thanks to the Royal Navy for recovering Lynn Rival and transporting her to Britain. It was wonderful to be reunited with her...'

The Prime Minister replied and agreed to pass on their sincere appreciation to the 1st Sea Lord, Admiral Sir Mark Stanhope so that he could communicate the kind words to those involved in the recovery.

Those involved on Wave Knight know exactly what occurred and what they tried to achieve on behalf of the Chandlers. They should be proud of their actions.

It seems a long time since the Wave Knight team of 2009 were involved in the piracy incident concerning Paul and Rachel Chandler and their yacht 'Lynn Rival'. As a reminder, they were captured by Somali pirates 50 miles off the Seychelles toward the end of Oct 2009 and subsequently endured an horrendous journey of captivity in Somalia. They were released over a year later.

Wave Knight was briefly involved in the operation to delay or prevent their transfer to a pirated container ship – the 'Kota Wajur'. We were unfortunately unsuccessful – but not for the want of trying and exposure to risk as many onboard will recall. Many will be unaware of the following night's activity too – equally fraught and interesting – but wholly unconnected to the Paul and Rachel piece.

Paul and Rachel subsequently wrote a letter of appreciation to the Prime Ministers' Office for the Government's assistance and specifically requested that thanks be passed to the First Sea Lord and to those under his command who were involved in the operation. I pass these thanks to you now.

Paul and Rachel Chandler with Lynn Rival at Bucklers Hard after hull renovation work and prior to transportation to Dartmouth

On the request of 1SL / CINC, I met Paul and Rachel Chandler in person back in June. I met them in Paul's late fathers' house in Dartmouth, he passed away during their captivity. They both looked very well and showed no signs of any psychological trauma albeit Paul had not fully recovered his physical fitness. Refreshingly, they have not lost any enthusiasm whatsoever to return to sea in 'Lynn Rival' – except they'll probably go 'west-about' next time around..!! Amusingly, they thought that the MoD would 'bill' them for bringing their yacht home. Sorry people – no salvage!

Paul and Rachel have spent much of their time since late 2010 writing memoirs of their experiences. The book is now with the publishers and should be available in the not too distant future. I have little knowledge of what it will say about Wave Knight's involvement – especially as the text was submitted before I met them. So we shall see if it is an accurate representation from our perspective. If it is not, don't be too surprised, as I found out that they were kept 'below decks' for the vast majority of their time on the yacht and thus could not see what we were about.

The funds from the book will be ploughed into the renovation of 'Lynn Rival' – a passion which is as strong now as it was back in 2009. I sense therefore, that anyone who decides to purchase the book will be helping them in that endeavour.

For those serving onboard at the time – you know how proud I was of your breath-taking professionalism and courage; I now add Paul and Rachel's thanks to you too. For information, it was later confirmed that the subsequent press leaks did not emanate from any RFA person onboard. BZ.

Capt Chris Clarke

RFA ORANGELEAF BONDS WITH TS EASTBOURNE

Whilst taking advantage of a quieter period as Flag Officer Sea Training (FOST) station tanker RFA Orangeleaf was able to welcome TS Eastbourne onboard for a day at sea off Portland during the Easter holidays. The cadets travelled to Portland for their exciting day at sea, bright and early ready to embark onboard Orangeleaf. After their initial safety briefs and shipboard tour they were ready and all stationed on the bridge deck to watch the ship sail into Weymouth Bay.

With a proportion of the ship's company having changed over and gone on leave whilst alongside the next task for the cadets was a Whole Ship Emergency Stations Muster and Lifeboat Muster. On completion of the muster the cadets spent an interesting morning spilt into three groups

learning some basic first aid, exploring the gigantic engine room and learning a little more about replenishment operations.

After a well deserved and very welcome lunch the cadets then threw themselves into the afternoon's activities – literally in the case of poor 'Manoverboard Fred' who was repeatedly thrown overboard by very enthusiastic cadets – thankfully it was

for training purposes to enable the crash boat crew to maintain their capability. The PO(Q) and engine room team also gave the team chance to learn about Thermal Imaging Camera's and fire fighting equipment with a large show of hands from cadets wanting to try a BA Set on. Not to be left out the LSO was able to show the cadets the galley were their lunch had come from and the fridges and freezers onboard.

Then it was time for the highlight of the day for many of the cadets – a

Winchex, courtesy of the Search and Rescue Helicopter from Portland. The cadets standing on the bridge wing were suddenly silenced and spellbound as they watched the helicopter crew go through their paces – followed by some frantic cheering as the aircraft crew enjoyed their moment of glory whilst flying abeam to the bridge.

All too soon it was time to depart the ship, although not before a final chance to ask questions of the Navigator and the Captain. Indeed Captain Worthington took the opportunity to turn the tables on the cadets, asking some questions to see who had paid the most attention during the day! The two lucky cadets proudly receiving baseball caps the ship had recently received from some Canadian "customers".

The cadets had a wonderful time onboard, certainly it was a pleasure to continue the relationship between RFA Orangeleaf and TS Eastbourne – the final words came from the smallest of the group 'My Mum's never going to believe this!'

MISSING DIVER OFF LYME REGIS - GOLD ROVER TEAMS UP WITH RNLI

In April, RFA Gold Rover and the crew of an RNLI lifeboat were alerted to an incident involving two individuals who had been diving off the Blue Turtle boat off the Dorset coast. Gold Rover in conjunction with the RNLI lifeboat carried out a search for two divers which went on into the nigh. The search was eventually called off at 2100 with one of the two divers being airlifted to hospital after getting into difficulties off Lyme Regis.

The initial alarm was raised at about 1730 when one of the divers became ill after a rapid ascent. The man was airlifted to a specialist unit in Poole while a search began to find the other male diver about three miles off Lyme Regis.

Andrew Jenkins, coastguard watch manager, said: "Although prompt search and rescue action has resulted in one diver receiving timely medical treatment... the missing diver has not been located.

"At this stage, it would be wrong to speculate about the cause of this particular incident.

"But this is the second serious diving accident to have occurred off the Dorset coast already this season and I would like to take this opportunity to remind all divers to make sure they are well prepared, fully trained for the level of dive they are about to undertake and their equipment is properly maintained."

A spokesman for the RNLI said: "It was a widespread search by at least eight vessels.

"Our lifeboat was joined by other vessels including Weymouth RNLI lifeboat, the Sidmouth rescue boat and the RFA Gold Rover."

COMMENDED FOR COMMANDER IN CHIEF COMMENDATION

This year the Naval Secretary was pleased to learn that the Commander-in-Chief Fleet has awarded a CINCFLEET's Commendation to Steward James Britchford for outstanding service to the Royal Fleet Auxiliary. Congratulations to James from all in the RFA on his achievement.

James along with two guests was invited to the presentation in front of all the families and friends at Admiralty House, Northwood on 3 June where Admiral Soar held a formal presentation ceremony for all the recipients.

The citation read,

"On behalf of Admiral Sir Trevor Soar KCB OBE, I would like to congratulate you on your award of a Commander-in-Chief Fleet Commendation for outstanding performance in the Royal Fleet Auxiliary. Only a small number of Commendations are awarded annually and you can take immense satisfaction in knowing that your outstanding contribution has been recognised.

RFA BENEVOLENT FUND BENEFITS FROM CALENDAR SALES

A big thank you to all those who bought a 2011 RFA Calendar, as a result of this year's calendar sales, which totalled 287, the RFA Benevolent Society has benefited to the tune of £300 to go towards supporting a suitable event in the future. Details of next year's calendar and how to purchase your copy can be found in this edition of Gunline and let's try and surpass last year's sales and beat the £300 contribution in 2012.

49TH RFA CHARITY GOLF EVENT

The RFA annual golf tournament was again an excellent event at Waterlooville Golf Club and well attended. After an overcast start the weather improved becoming warm and sunny with many excellent scores. It was evident that the standard of golf continues to increase!

The evening dinner was excellent and saw the Joe Dines Trophy presented to Fred Roberts by Capt Duncan Lamb. In total £1302 was raised for The RFA Association including £240 in gift aid.

I would like to say a big thank you to our supporters and to those who ensured the day went with a swing including Louise, Elaine, Julie and Colin Stokes, Robin and The Club. Another successful event with next year being the events golden jubilee!

Roger Robinson Brown

LIFE AT SEA THROUGH THE EYES OF A FIRST PHASE CADET

As a first phase RFA deck cadet you join your first ship after almost five months at Nautical College where a basic understanding of navigation, meteorology, cargo and ship construction is achieved. The aim of our first phase at sea is to develop our knowledge and gain an increased amount of additional knowledge along the way. It is a steep learning curve but at the same time there are a lot of interesting and fun things to get involved in during our time in the ship.

Not long in to my time onboard RFA Cardigan Bay, the ship began to prepare to take on her role as amphibious support during OP Cougar based in the Mediterranean. The preparation period was a busy time for all onboard RFA Cardigan Bay and as a cadet it gave me a great opportunity to see how much planning and organisation has to go in to

the preparation for a deployment. During the preparation phase I was able to get involved in everything from craning boats on to the deck, to loading the ship with vehicles, loading ammunition and winching a Mexeflote (machinery propelled floating platform) on to the side of the ship. The final stage was to embark the military force that for the duration of OP Cougar was to be part of the ship. Having just got used to a relatively small crew onboard, it was quite a daunting prospect to suddenly have over three hundred additional personnel onboard and what a sight it was to see that amount of people arrive on the jetty.

RFA Cardigan Bay is specially designed for amphibious support and her main features allowing this capability is her floodable stern dock and her vast vehicle deck. The dock is capable of taking a wide range of amphibious craft. During OP Cougar the dock has been used for loading and unloading personnel and equipment as well as vehicles both to and from various types of landing craft. For each different craft that enters the stern dock different procedures take

The Dock fully flooded and crew preparing to lower the stern door

place, for example the stern door needs to be lowered to different levels depending on the type of vessel and its draught. I was able to get involved in lowering and raising the stern door for vessels entering and leaving the dock as well as getting involved in securing them in the dock if they stayed for any prolonged period of time. There are three ships left in the RFA with this capability and I am glad that I have had the chance to experience the ship working at its full operational capability so early in my career.

OP Cougar comprised of a busy programme comprising amphibious drills, flying serials and other ship

Part offload of the Cargo by MexiFlote. There is now room to move for the first time in weeks

evolutions. Despite this incredibly busy period there has still been the occasional moment which has enabled me to get involved in a slightly less intense side of the exercises and drills. During a less intense period of the programme I was able to get out in one of the landing craft air cushions and go for a spin. I have never been in a hovercraft before and it was amazing to experience their capabilities and how they manoeuvre on the water as it is very different to a conventional boat. One of the main advantages of the hovercrafts is that they do not have to worry about the depth of water they are in and can land troops right up on to the beach unlike the raiding craft which have to be wary of not running the boat aground. The speed that each of the landing craft can achieve and their manoeuvrability is what makes them quite spectacular to watch on the water conducting their amphibious assault serials.

It is not very often that you get to see Royal Navy helicopters in action transporting troops, equipment and stores

A LCVP arriving in the dock to take away members of 40Cdo to assault "red beach"

but during OP Cougar RFA Cardigan Bay has been used as a landing platform on numerous occasions both during the day and at night. I have been lucky enough to witness the flying serials from the bridge as well as see how the deck crews work when they have an aircraft landing and taking off. The most important factor is constant communication between the bridge, the flight deck, the helicopter controller and the aircraft. Without effective communication the safety of the aircraft could be jeopardized. It has been an eye opener to see how hard the officer of the watch has to work to continuously monitor all the environmental factors that could affect the flight safety as well as constantly communicating with the different areas and not forgetting to maintain a safe navigational watch at all times.

At the minute the role of the officer of the watch seems daunting, however being able to observe and take an active role in the process has given me more

Sea King Mk 4 on deck preparing to launch having just loaded 11 Royal Marines

confidence that in the future when I am qualified I will be able to successfully undertake the challenge.

As I mentioned before it was quite a daunting prospect going from being on a ship which has an average crew of eighty personnel to having over four hundred and fifty personnel onboard. However, my initial worries were unfounded and the wide range or ranks and rates from a variety of specialisations, has given me the opportunity to learn skills from people who I would not usually get a chance to work alongside or integrate with. Everyone has had experiences that have taught them something and by working with such a vast range of people and by talking to them I have been able to learn how and why they complete tasks in a certain way. Learning from a wide range of people means that I will be able to take the best from everyone and can use their ideas and experiences to develop a way of working which best suits me.

OP Cougar was based in the Mediterranean so immediately it fulfilled my desire to travel with the RFA, allowing me to spend time in Gibraltar for some well earned time ashore. I look forward to being able to visit more countries throughout my RFA career.

RFA COM UPDATE - AUGUST 2011

The RFA's Community Website www.rfacom.mod.uk is for RFA Personnel, families and friends and offers a wide range of information on a wide range of topics covering RFA matters.

Connecting and supporting the RFA Community worldwide every day, this internet based Community Support facility is for all of us in the Royal Fleet Auxiliary Community. If you are, or were, a member of the RFA, a family member or friend, this site may be of interest to you.

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

The RFA Community website has 1787 registered users up to and including August 2011.

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

The current topics being discussed on the website include: 'Where to save 10 % within the RFA', 'The RFA 18 Review Team', 'Queen Diamond Jubilee Medal', 'VERS deadline' and 'Breaking News'.

The following information is available to those who have registered for an account:

Crew Lists (updated monthly)
Frequently Asked Questions
Emergency Contact Details
BFPO and UIN numbers
Liberty Boat routines
Appointers contact details
MOD Forms 305 and 306
Promotion Notices
Pay, Policy and Conditions Bulletins
Gunline and Cascade Briefs

More information and views are appearing all the time, and the service is rapidly expanding.

Register for an account today and keep up to date!

THE RFA MEMORIAL CAMPAIGN: TO REMEMBER THE PAST AND LOOK TO THE FUTURE

We are all aware of the RFA's contribution to global maritime security and humanitarian support that we have delivered for our country for over a hundred years. The RFA has been in the thick of things, supporting and delivering in conflicts, environmental disasters, peacekeeping and humanitarian relief. Regrettably, when undertaking this work we have suffered casualties and loss of life. The tasks undertaken in the past and in the future, by their very nature carry varying degrees of risk.

We have a unique opportunity to remember and contribute to the past and look to the future by donating Ten Pounds towards the RFA Memorial Fund. Our target is to purchase a plot at the National Arboretum and build an RFA memorial. The cost is expected to be of the order of Thirty Thousand Pounds, and if we all make a donation we can build a lasting memorial to the memory of those RFA seafarers who have made the ultimate sacrifice. The memorial would also be a tribute to our heritage, reflecting on our past and looking to the future.

Please send a cheque for Ten Pounds or more to the RFA Association memorial Fund, PO Box 52, Barnard Castle, County Durham DL12 2 BA. Or log onto: www.rfa-association.org and make a donation through the Virgin money giving page.

Thank you

Bill Walworth

RFA MEMORIAL CAMPAIGN

National Arboretum

TO REMEMBER THE PAST AND LOOK TO THE FUTURE

Can you make a donation to the RFA Memorial to be built at the National Memorial Arboretum, Alrewas, Staffordshire to honour the men and women of the RFA Service?

All donations no matter how large or small will be gratefully received. A donation of £10 or more will assist in the build and maintenance of the Memorial.

Making a donation is easy, log on to: www.RFA-ASSOCIATION.ORG

fleetgraphicscentre 11/129

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

MOUNTS BAY STRENGTHENS TIES WITH AFFILIATED LIVERY COMPANIES

Mounts Bay recently hosted the first meeting of the three Livery Companies who hold affiliations with RFA ships. The Worshipful Company of Fuellers, affiliated to Wave Knight and Wave Ruler; the Honourable Company of Master Mariners affiliated to Cardigan Bay and Largs Bay, until 14 October when she departs the service and the Worshipful Company of Carmen affiliated to Fort Victoria. The intention is to hold an annual reunion and details will be announced about future events as details are confirmed.

The visit by the Livery Companies to Mounts Bay was as an opportunity to strengthen the links with the RFA and build on raising the awareness of the unique capabilities of the service and our work to a wide range of professional organisations.

A total of 46 guests embarked the ship from the three companies and the visit commenced with a buffet lunch, which was served on the bridge. On completion, the guests were invited to the officer's lounge and Cdre Bill Walworth welcomed everybody to the ship and by way of reply the Chairman of the Worshipful Company of Fuellers thanked the Commodore and demonstrated the strength of the affiliation with the RFA by announcing that through Husband's Shipyard in Marchwood and the yard's past association with the service they would be making an annual presentation to a member of the service in recognition of an individual's commitment. The presentation comprises of a medal and a rose bowl, the rose bowl will be retained by the recipient for a year. This year's award goes to CPO(D) Peter Quirk.

Captain Rob Dorey, the recently appointed DACOS AFSUP, delivered an overview on current ship's tasking and the wider effect on defence and Captain David Buck outlined Mounts Bay's capabilities and deliverables in support of the Royal Navy, Royal Marines and host nations.

Two of the affiliated ships were represented by their commanding officers and Captains David Buck and Shaun Jones Commanding Officers of Mounts Bay and Fort Victoria respectively were present to talk about the ship's previous activities and to answer questions from members of the audience.

On completion of the presentations the guests were divided into three groups and taken on tours of the ship. Despite there being numerous seafarers amongst the group, it was evident that many of those on the tour were intrigued and often surprised at the ships' versatility.

We look forward to developing the bond between the Livery Companies and are keen to receive the thoughts and ideas of their members to consider for future events.

WAVE RULER VISITS THE PEOPLE OF ANGUILLA

Wave Ruler and her Commanding Officer, Captain Norris hosted VIPs at an official reception on July 1 in Anguilla. The ship's company participated in a disaster relief training exercise and provide guided tours of the ship for local school children.

Captain Norris said: "We are delighted to be in Anguilla. Our visit confirms the UK's close relationship with Anguilla. Wave Ruler is in the region to support UK Overseas Territories, provide regional support in the event of natural disasters and contribute to law enforcement. The ship's company looks forward to the visit and the opportunity to experience Anguilla."

Wave Ruler has been stationed in the Caribbean for over a year. It was previously deployed in the Far East, Persian Gulf and as an Atlantic Patrol Task vessel in the South Atlantic, supporting the Falkland Islands as well as working in territorial waters around the UK.

A significant part of the Royal Navy's presence is patrolling the North Atlantic and Caribbean. RFA Wave Ruler's primary role is to provide support to the UK Overseas Territories and strengthen the UK Government's commitment to the region.

The role includes providing regional support in the event of natural disasters such as hurricanes. With an extensive range of disaster relief stores, Wave Ruler is capable of providing food, water and shelter where required. Additionally, the ship and her crew can provide medical and humanitarian aid, together with technical assistance utilising their training, skills, knowledge and experience.

While at sea working in support of local defence and police forces, from a number of Caribbean nations, together with the US Coast Guard, the ship conducts marine patrols.

The Royal Navy will continue to provide a permanent presence in the Caribbean, able to respond to the full range of foreseeable contingencies. In the event of a humanitarian disaster, it will deliver initial military assistance. During 2011 this will be provided by a Royal Fleet Auxiliary ship enhanced with a naval party and helicopter during the hurricane season which runs from June 1 until November 30. This will provide a broadly comparable capability to previous years, albeit with one ship rather than two.

WAVE KNIGHT
Deployed as the Arabian Gulf Ready Tanker (AGRT).

WAVE RULER
Conducting duties as ATP(N) in support of allied nations and UK dependant territories in the Caribbean.

GOLD ROVER
ATP(S) tanker duties currently escorting fleet assets in the operational theatre.

BLACK ROVER
Returning to the UK after ATP(S) duties,

ORANGELEAF
FOST Tanker duties in support of operational training.

FORT VICTORIA
Undergoing a period of maintenance in Dubai.

FORT AUSTIN
Alongside in Birkenhead prior to commencing refit.

FORT ROSALIE
In Valetta, Malta undergoing a period of maintenance.

CARDIGAN BAY
Undergoing a refit in Falmouth.

MOUNTS BAY
Operating in the south coast exercise areas in support of naval assets.

LYME BAY
At sea in support of naval assets east of Suez.

ARGUS
In UK territorial waters conducting continuation training.

DILIGENCE
In Bahrain continuing in support of coalition assets.

Provided courtesy of The U.K. Hydrographic Office

HOLLYWOOD COMES TO ARGUS

As you may or may not know, ARGUS has recently been the setting for a major upcoming Paramount Pictures movie starring Brad Pitt.

The 'filmies' as the ship's crew have dubbed the film crew spent an intense 12 days of filming onboard. When I say intense, I mean intense. The first calls for the extras and crew was at 0430 most mornings and arrival onboard normally between 0600 and 0700 for filming to commence between 0730 and 0830. Despite the long days which were required by certain members of the ship's company, all aboard appeared to have had a great time taking part in what must be one of the most unusual taskings undertaken by an RFA to date.

It all began a little over six weeks ago with what was thought to be a wind up pipe by the CO; 'the ship is to be used as a location for an upcoming Paramount Pictures movie starring Brad Pitt!' But sure enough, on arrival to Gibraltar post OP HUNT, there were three gents from the film company waiting to scout around the ship for potential locations.

A few days later, we got the news that the Director was very impressed and definitely wanted to utilise ARGUS. More meetings were set up and as the finer details of what would be required began to emerge, we very quickly realised that the scale of the operation would be beyond initial expectations. In the usual RFA way, we met the task head on and quickly came up with a deliverable plan.

The film is based on the book, World War Z by Max Brookes. It is set in the near future where a virus has broken out which kills people and causes their bodies to re-animate. The story follows a UN representative travelling the world to find out how various countries are managing the effects and ultimately to find a solution. The last of mankind has taken to sea in a huge fleet of ships to flee from the zombies and that is where ARGUS makes her filming debut!

The first stage of filming began when we embarked the 'Second Unit' consisting of 11 men at Portland. This team go around with their own director, cameraman etc and film the various ancillary scenes and background footage to be edited into the film later or layered onto the main action using CGI graphics.

As we sailed, we were joined by a fleet of four small catamarans which were being used as markers for the cameras so that warships could be added in with CGI at a later stage. I took great pleasure in calling for the 'Zombie Fleet' to close up over VHF! Our 'Fleet' in place, we sailed out beyond Portland Bill and headed for clear water in order to allow the cameras to capture some unbroken horizon shots from the deck.

By mid-afternoon, we were joined by the film company's Dauphin, which had been re-painted to look like a US military helo and the camera helo. Unfortunately, a combination of serviceability and weather conditions at Culdrose prevented the 820 NAS Merlins from joining us so they will be added via CGI during editing! The helos were flown by two of Hollywood's best stunt pilots and some of the manoeuvres were simply breathtaking to watch. They filmed various sequences of the Dauphin lifting and landing and in between shots, they filmed our deck crew dressed as US flight deck personnel behaving as if a Merlin was landing in order to make it more realistic when they add them in later.

Once all of the aircraft sequences were shot, the crew moved to the starboard pilot door to film the 'body bag' scene. It's exactly as it sounds, cameramen on the ship and an airborne camera helo filmed as body bags with dummies in them were dropped from the ship. The bags all had a hole cut in the bottom and a piece of rope tied around the ankle of the dummy to enable recovery, however, the last one was so water logged that the extra weight caused the ankle to snap off- the first we knew of it on the bridge was one of the watch keepers stating, "severed foot off the starboard bow!" On completion of the body bag scene, the last of the light was used to capture more background horizon shots whilst we made our way to Falmouth.

2/O(X) Steve McMenemy the Enemy; Mr Brad Pitt; and Captain Paul Kehoe

On the pilotage into Falmouth the next day, we were greeted by the sight of the SD Salmoor, converted into a Russian refugee ship and with none other then Mr Brad Pitt watching our arrival from the bridge wing. The Salmoor was sailing to film some shots at sea for a day whilst we in earnest got ARGUS ready for filming in onboard.

Ass Ck Cameron Simpson, PO(LOGS) Joe Dwyer, Actor David Andrews (total legend of a guy- incredibly funny!!), 2/O(C) Gary Barrowcliffe, Stwd Eric Bourne

After mooring and getting rid of the Second Unit, the real work began. The next two days were spent loading the film crew gear and dressing the various sets. This ranged from scaffolding and rigs for the lighting of the hangars, to major electric gear to facilitate all of the cameras and sound equipment, to pallets full of empty suitcases to be used as props for the refugees, to fake barrels of oil for the background scenes. We loaded some twenty to thirty containers worth of gear between Friday afternoon and Saturday night. The Hangars were absolutely full and the set dressers spent the whole day on Saturday and Sunday building the sets and getting things in place for filming to begin in earnest on the Monday.

One of the biggest disruptions to the ship's routine was the requirement to use both the galley and the crew cafeteria for filming. This resulted in five days of the galley being shut down during which, the ship's company were catered for by the film company caterers. After the first day there were few complaints due to both the quality and quantity of food provided, it was an American catering company after all. Eating whilst rubbing shoulders with various actors, movers and shakers from Hollywood also took the sting out of the walk to the catering tent!

"So what did we do with the Galley staff whilst the galley was out of action?" I hear you ask. Well we put them to good use as extras for the Galley scene! If you watch the movie when it comes out, you may recognise a few individuals. The galley staff were not the only extras used; the flight deck crew were used in scenes with the helicopters, even thought they are dressed as American flight deck crew, I'm sure a few faces will be recognised!

Without doubt though, the stars from ARGUS, who were used in almost every scene filmed onboard were: 2/O(C) Gary Barrowcliffe; PO(LOGS) Joe Dwyer; Ass/Ck Cameron Simpson; and Stwd Eric Bourne; all chosen for their particular American marine look. They will be seen in background shots as both Navy Seals and US Marines in no less than six of the scenes!

The ship itself did not escape the transforming effects of Hollywood. Initially, the plan was to CGI out all of the accommodation and turn ARGUS into USS HARRY S TRUMAN. However, the film makers ended up using scenes of extras pouring down the external stairwells and decided that the ship would become a LPH named USS MADISON. This involved stencilling a new pennant number, 19, onto the ship's funnel as well as adding all the little 'Americanisms' to the superstructure. The quote of the week though, came from the Set Director, who had an extra radome craned onto the ship to make it 'look more shippy'!!

With transformations of both ship and crew complete, sets dressed, extras in place and principle actors onboard, minus Brad who would not arrive until required midweek, the filming commenced. The first scene was the revised 'body bag' scene. No longer taking place at the pilot door, it was now to be dropped from between the lifeboats on the starboard side. There was hush amongst the crew and cast; the call 'Rolling!' rang out, then, 'Standby…and…ACTION!' And with that, filming had begun.

At this point it is worth noting who the major actors are. Firstly there is, of course, Brad Pitt. The leading lady is Mireille Enos of CSI: Miami and The Killing fame. Matthew Fox, best known as Jack in the series, Lost; Casualty's Elyes Gabel, better known as Dr Guppy Sandhu; David Andrews, probably best known for JAG and Terminator 3; and John Gordon Sinclair from the

Scottish classic, Gregory's Girl were also onboard.

There were also a few notable names amongst the film crew themselves with the double Oscar winning Director, Marc Forster of James Bond: Quantum of Solace, Monsters Ball, The Kite Runner at the helm and Bob Richardson, Director of Photography, again double Oscar winner known for Platoon, The Aviator, JFK, Kill Bill, and many more. Amongst the other talent were the people responsible for the Harry Potter Series, Gladiator, Avatar, Titanic and many more blockbusters. The best thing was that not a single one amongst them carried any airs or graces and a good rapport quickly built up between ship's staff and film crew.

The day finally came when Brad Pitt appeared onboard and started filming. The bizarre thing was that once he'd walked by a few times, everyone became very relaxed about it and he was just another actor walking back and forth. Regrettably, due to his schedule we were unable to arrange a whole ship photo with Brad. He did meet with Captain Paul Kehoe in passing to wish him a happy retirement what a task to end your career with! The CO, in return, presented Mr Pitt with a ship's crest to hang in his production company's office as a reminder of his time in ARGUS.

As midday on Friday approached, the de-riggers were poised and waiting until finally the call rang out,

From left to right, Stwd Eric Bourne, PO(LOGS) Joe Dwyer, 2/O(C) Gary Barrowcliffe, and Ass/Ck Cameron Simpson

"That's a wrap!" The extras poured off the ship, the actors were whisked away and the crew weren't far behind which left the ship and the de-rigging crews to get on with the offloading. The ship's company made a commendable effort, working through the weekend to have the ship back in working order and ready to commence AMP on the Monday morning.

And now the film crew are gone, the early morning madness is over and the ship feels like an empty house. As anyone who has been onboard in the lead up to and during filming will tell you, nothing that FOST, AMP, or even Navy Days has thrown at us in the past will come close to the chaos that is the film industry.

So in finest Hollywood tradition, I'd like to thank God, the little people, etc etc…But in all seriousness, special recognition has to be given to our 'Zombie Watch' which were supplementing duty watch throughout to look after the film crew. Also the Engineering Department for bringing the flight deck lift back online ahead of schedule and generally being available to move the lift as required and damped machinery noise for the sound people. And lastly the Bosun and his men for being available at all sorts of random times to forklift this or crane that!

The film company have now moved north to descend on Glasgow and Grangemouth and later on to Aldershot as filming continues into the New Year. The film, WW Z is currently due in a cinema near you in December 2012.

A SUCCESSFUL VISIT TO KINGSTON JAMAICA

Wave Ruler continued her busy programme of regional engagement in company with HMS York when they both made a successful visit to Kingston, Jamaica. The visit began with local Jamaican television and radio stations undertaking a tour of HMS York where crew members were interviewed together with the Public Relations Officer from both ships and the I/C of the dedicated Humanitarian Aid and Disaster Relief Team onboard Wave Ruler, Lt Cdr Atkinson.

Whilst here, Captain Norris and the Commanding Officer of HMS York, Commander Simon Staley gave two brief yet comprehensive live television interviews. The first interview took place at TV Jamaica the number one and oldest television station on the island with 80% of the viewing population. They appeared on Smile Jamaica a morning programme hosted by Neville and Simon, two sports presenters.

The second television interview took place on Live 7 at CVM the second largest station in Jamaica. Initial reports from the Foreign and Commonwealth Office reported that the interviews were well received by the people of Jamaica.

During the visit Wave Ruler hosted 40 personnel from the Jamaican Defence Force and 20 cadets from the Caribbean Maritime Institute. Both visits proved to be informative with all enjoying Wave Ruler's hospitality.

HMS YORK and RFA WAVE RULER football teams in action

Meanwhile a football competition organised by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office enabled teams from Wave Ruler and HMS York to test their skills against each other and the Jamaican Defence Force. The games concluded in victory to the Jamaican Defence Force and Wave Ruler beating HMS York 7-3.

On departing Jamaica a disaster relief brief and lunch were held onboard Wave Ruler with the Chief of Defence Staff and Major General Anderson. This was well received and provided an opportunity for them to experience a replenishment at sea.

In all it proved a very successful visit delivering a busy; wide reaching regional engagement event that continues to strengthen the Royal Navy's and Royal Fleet Auxiliary's relationship with Jamaica.

Seafarer SUPPORT

0800 121 4765

www.seafarersupport.org

Seafarer Support, a confidential **Freephone** service (operated by the Merchant Navy Welfare Board,) has successfully assisted over 600 Seafarers or their families with welfare enquiries, since its launch in 2009.

The referral service, much like directory enquiries, puts callers in touch with organisation(s) that can provide specialist support and guidance.

With over 100 maritime charities offering assistance, knowing where to start can be challenging, so let

Seafarer Support do the hard work for you!

Sally, our Welfare Officer, is on hand to answer your queries, so why not give her a call on: 0800 121 4765 or visit: www.seafarersupport.org to see how Seafarer Support can help you.

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

RFA ASSOCIATION

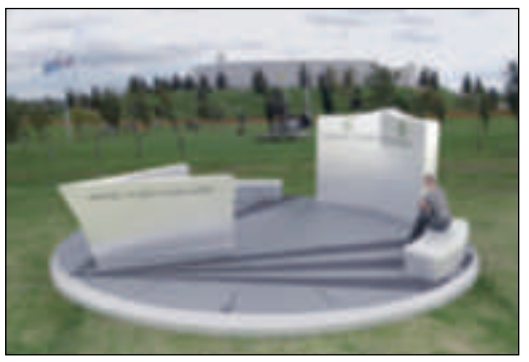
Chairman's Dit

Lots to talk about in this issue, the AGM, the next AGM,the RFA Memorial, the recent Reunion, the next Reunion and last, but by no means least, the way forward with the Association.

The last AGM in Nottingham just before the Reunion saw some changes to the Board of Trustees. Brian Waters and David Bass both stood down having completed their constitutionally allotted period, Brian is however continuing as Chairman of the Solent Branch. On behalf of the Association, I offer our thanks for all their efforts during their period of Trusteeship. I am hoping that some new blood will be forthcoming very soon to replace them on the Board.

The line up of trustees now stands at :-
Pat Thompson Chairman,
Alan Roach (Northern Ireland),
Mike Day (London),
Richard Fernley (London)
George Mason (S&N)
Frank Andrews (North West)
Pam Axworthy (Midlands)
Chris Locke (Plymouth)

The RFA Memorial Fund continues to grow albeit very slowly, at the time of writing it stands at £4863 which is not as much as we would have hoped. There are a couple of sponsorship deals in the offing but more about those when the deals are struck and we do have a few substantial promises from members. The design has been agreed and the masons have put their work in hand. By late summer we hope to have a life-sized mock-up on site. This will



coincide with a site visit from RFA, RFAA and the Memorial Arboretum (NMA) to confirm the entire project meets all the criteria. The target date for completion and dedication of the Memorial is September 2012...sooner than you might think. Please have a long hard look in your piggy bank and see if you can help the appeal as we have a very long way to go yet and all contributions will gratefully received (except perhaps the ancient shrapnel so tarnished you cannot identify the country of origin lurking at the bottom of your piggybank that has not seen the light of day since Nelson was a lad...although I don't know).

The recent Reunion, held at the Crowne Plaza Nottingham, is highlighted elsewhere in this issue, with some of the photographs. The next Reunion will be hosted by the Solent Branch on Saturday 19th May 2012 and held at the De-Vere Grand Harbour Hotel Southampton, have a look at their website-http://www.devere.co.uk/our-locations/grand-harbour.html. It does look 'dead posh' (exclam). Rumour has it that entertainment will include a performance by the entire cast of the latest West End smash hit 'Das Boot, the Musical' singing a selection of their greatest hit...'Underneath the Oceans' and 'I've got that sinking feeling'. More details in the next Gunline and of course on our website.

The way forward. I have made it very clear that I intend to stand down next year (2012) in both my 2009 and 2010 Chairman's Annual Report, and as a consequence I will not offer myself for re-election at the next AGM. So the search for my relief is on. The Chairman/lady.ship is open to all members of the Association. The procedure involves short listing by the Board of Trustees and then election (if there is more than one candidate) or endorsement (if not) at the AGM by the membership. If you reckon you are up for this demanding and rewarding job now is the time to put yourself forward.

Other news from HQ. It has been clear for some while that whilst Bellingham has served us very well as an Association since our formation years, it is time that we looked for alternative accommodation for the HQ and also the archive. To this end I have had discussions with the Trustees on the options open to us. Obviously remaining at Bellingham is one option. A second is the concept of a Virtual Office with the Archive deposited with a University perhaps. The third option is to relocate the whole organisation to new premises that are more accessible to the membership as a whole. The Semaphore Tower Building in Portsmouth Dockyard is, in my opinion, a suitable candidate as it is co-located with, but totally independent of, the Royal Naval Association. It is at the other end of the distance

line if you like, but it is where we did most of our business when we were at sea. On the 19th August I will be meeting the Chairman of the RNA to discuss the possibilities.

This is not a merger with or takeover by the RNA but an exercise in co-location in order to reduce overheads and make the archive more accessible.

I hear from my 'Moles in the Madhouse' (I will get rocks for that) that Gunline is to revert to 3 issues per year; bit of a bummer but that is all they are funded for. So this issue, which would have been the 'Summer 2011' will now be the 'Summer/Autumn' edition.

From a purely selfish point of view and given my need to fill two pages each quarter this leads me to my usual 'Cri de Coeur' (That's your actual French doncha know, that last wasn't), so do have a look in the loft, the shoebox under the bed, the suitcase in the garage unpacked since you retired, or even the one in the back bedroom under the bed that never made it to loft, you know the one, the one the missus continually drips about....'What it we have visitors, if you don't sort that out today I'm going to my mothers' etc etc. Perhaps I should wind my neck in here as I think I might be getting into seriously shallow water (2 metres (6 feet, nay a fathom in real money...(If the good lord had wanted us to be metric he would only have had 10 apostles)) under the keel at all time whilst underway (BR875 Vol 3 Part 1 Chapter 8 Page 8 refers)). Incidentally when I retired I took medical advice with a view to having BR875 surgically removed but was told that the operation was not available on the NHS and I should try Prozac. Again I approached the NHS and was told that the dose rates necessary to totally obliterate all references to BR875 would be fatal. So come on Chaps, and of course, Chapesses, you must have a tale to tell, as ever one that your Granny would smile over as she sips her cup of tea and well dunked Bourbon Cream and contemplates a slice of her special Victoria Sponge. So here's the deal, I will send you a 'Bic' (Please specify left or right handed) biro and a pad of Basildon Bond if you get in touch and threaten me with a suitable dit, somewhere around 250-500 words(ish), for publication preferably with photos. (This epistle is running at 1154 words) (No it isn't, it's 1183 so far!! - Malcolm) so it is not as onerous as you might think.

Enough for now or I will have Malcolm (Dawn's dad), our tame typesetter, snapping around my ankles and muttering about quarts into pint pots yet again.

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 659942
E-mail:
plymouth@rfa-association.org

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

LONDON BRANCH
Lt Cdr James Wyatt
Richard Fernley (Vice Chairman)
07778 780872
E-mail
richardfernley@hotmail.com

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

MIDLANDS BRANCH
John Sail
01476 594034
mnasail@gmail.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/

London Branch
www.rfaa-london.org.uk/

STOP PRESS

I am delighted to announce the receipt of a very generous donation of £5000 from the Royal Navy Royal Marines Charity and a further very generous donation of £250 from the Worshipfull Company of Fuellers. These donations bring the fund up to £10,113. Further donations are still needed and having made a donation already is not a bar to making another one.

SITUATION VACANT

National Chairman.

I will be standing down at the next AGM and we are looking for someone to take my place.

Trustee.

We are always looking for new blood on the Board of TrusteesBoth National Chairman and Trustee positions are open to all paid up members of the Association. If you feel you have something to offer please get in touch with me at:
chairman@rfa-association.org
or at home on 01833 640045

OBITUARIES

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

Tom Dunn Naval Architect 4th January aged 68
Captain(E) James (Joe) Davis
27th Feb 2011 aged 74
Signalman TE Wright 8th April 2011 aged 80
CPO (Plumber) Arthur Brewster
8th May 2011 aged 78
Vicky Barton PA 25th June 2011 aged 86
Captain(E) Srikrishna (Kris) Awati
13th July 2011 aged 85
James Wilson In Pensioner Aged 85
First Officer Peter Homan
10th August 2011 aged 75
PO Deck(DSK) Frank Armiger
21 August 2011 aged 73

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

REUNION AT NOTTINGHAM

This year's Reunion was held at the Crowne Plaza Hotel, Nottingham hosted by the Midlands Branch. Despite a lower than usual turnout the attendees had a terrific evening with the usual pre, inter and post prandial lantern swinging.

Nottingham Sea Cadets from RS Orion organised coats, sold raffle tickets and entertained us with a demonstration of Hornpipe Dancing and Indian Club Swinging.

The Master (or should it be Mistress) of Ceremonies was Alison Thomas, a first for both her and us and what a splendid job she did too, it can't be easy keeping a load of lantern swinging retired RFAs in tow (exclam).

The raffle was drawn by the Sea Cadets and the winners were as follows:-

Tickets for Southampton Boat Show–
Gil Forth (S&N)
Tickets for Royal Ascot–
Alex Redpath (Plymouth)
Tickets for the Eden Project–
Rev Peter McCarthy (S&N)
Hotel Vouchers (£200)–
Alasdhair Silcock (S&N)
The Nottingham Book–
John Wilkins (Solent)
Robin Hood's Bow and Arrow–
David Pevier (London)
Tickets to Goodwood Revival–
Ian Thompson (North West)
Teatowels–
Alison Thomas (North West)
Hamper–
Tony Holmes (Midlands)

The following morning there was a coach trip to the National Memorial Arboretum at Alrewas to view the site for the RFA National Memorial and also the RFA Sir Percivale Anchor that would be dedicated in the Merchant Nave Convoy Area, there are some pictures of the dedication ceremony elsewhere on our pages.

Scottish & Newcastle Branch

For our first meeting of 2011 and in almost sub-Tropical conditions, on 10th April over thirty members enjoyed a splendid Sunday lunch at the Riverdale Hall Hotel at Bellingham, Northumberland.

Again we were given the Hotel's conservatory overlooking a picturesque stretch of the River Tyne, which passes through spectacular countryside on its way to becoming the River we all know from past Refit visits!

Encouraged by the weather forecast a few made it an excuse to stay over the weekend to explore the Northumberland National Park and all it has to offer.

Our next planned event will be on Sunday 14th August when we return to The

Roxburghe Hotel for lunch. Set in idyllic surroundings of the Duke of Roxburghe's Estate, near Kelso, the hotel was formerly the home of the Duke's Eldest Son, the present Duke being its last family occupant.

Tastefully adapted, it retains its Ducal splendour and is well worth a visit. Included

with the cost of lunch are a complimentary visit to Floors Castle and use of the Garden Games at the hotel. Other activities, such as fishing, golf, mountain bikes to hot air ballooning (POA!) are available. If this tempts you to join us let me know at sandn@rfa-association.org or on 01786-821379. Details will be sent to members on our mailing list in June.

Best wishes to all.

John Roddis

RFA 'Sir Percivale's Anchor' Memorial

This Memorial was consecrated on the 8th June 2011 in the Merchant Navy Convoy Wood at the National Memorial Arboretum not far where the RFA National Memorial will be built. During the short ceremony two plaques were unveiled by Captain Tony Pitt and Captain Phil Roberts and the date of the consecration maked the date on which RFA Sir Percivale's sister ships, Sir Galahad and Sir Tristram were hit at Bluf Cove during the Falklands Conflict.The Merchant Navy Wood consists of 2535 Oak Trees representing the 2535 Merchant Ships sunk during the Second World War.

Further memories of the War Tankers -'RFA War Sudra' 1945

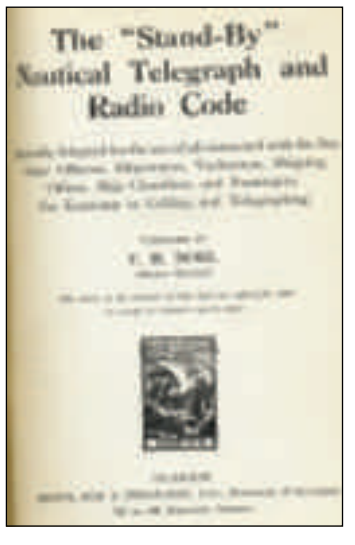
After leaving the RFA War Brahmin and warmer climates, I was posted to the RFA War Sudra in Scapa Flow as Third Officer. When I joined, she was at anchored in the sound close to the remains of the scuttled German Navy from the 1914 war. A few days after joining her, VE day was declared and our Captain, Captain C.H. Noel presented me with one of his books that he had published and signed as attached. The War Sudra was later transferred to the Faeroe Islands to be stationed in a fiord near to the town of Thorshaven, here we were to refuel escort ships from Atlantic and Artic convoys that were still operating.

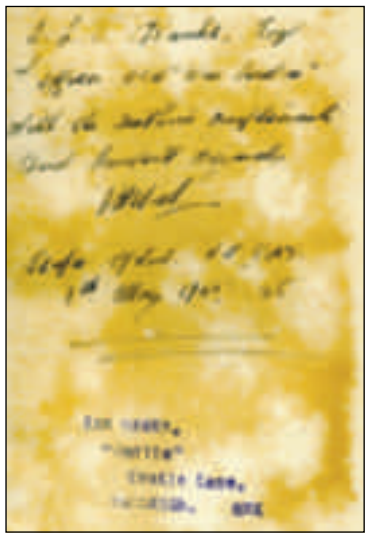
Ian [L] & Second Officer

Collecting pots

It was a very cold and bleak area but we amused ourselvesby taking one of the lifeboats ashore and doing a bit of mountain climbing, we also laid lobster pots out, which our Chippy had made, so enjoyed many a supper of fresh lobsters. Unfortunately one day I developed tooth ache and had to go ashore for treatment at an army camp and was treated by the dentist using a pedal operated drill. Later we were transferred to Rosyth for oiling duties and where I was given a weeks leave. After the leave I was posted to the RFA Airsprite as Second Officer, which is another, and last, story of my time in the RFA.

Ian Hawkes





The Marine Society: a one-stop shop for personal and professional development

No organization has more experience of delivering learning at sea.

The Marine Society provides a range of well-managed services exclusively to seafarers to enhance learning and well being, and to facilitate professional development.

The London-based charity has encouraged, enabled and educated many generations of RFA personnel and is a recommended first point of contact for all matters relating to personal and professional progression.

The Society 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, and accommodates 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 recognized qualifications in preparation for coming ashore, The Marine Society will have something to offer.

GCSE/A Level

A reminder to all who need to improve their GCSE and/or A Level grade that the Marine Society ought to be your first choice to provide first class tutor-supported study programmes.

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 commitments with the RFA.

As a registered exam centre for GCSE and A Levels, the Marine Society can enter and register students for their exams and arrange for them to take place at sea if necessary. The next available opportunity to sit GCSE and A Level examinations will be November 2011 and January 2012. Contact the Marine Society to find out more or visit **marine-society.org/rfa**

Work Based Learning

On 14 July a well-attended early evening event in London attended by *Gunline* demonstrated how seafarers and shore-based maritime professionals could get a degree in short order which did not cost the earth and allowed academic credit for professional qualifications, skills and competencies and which could be completed without the need to even step ashore.

The event was hosted by the Marine Society in association with the Institute for Work Based Learning (IWBL) at Middlesex University.

The focus was a re-launch of the partnership between the world's most experienced seafarers' charity and the IWBL and to showcase the possibilities of the work-based learning route that has already bestowed graduate status upon well over 500 maritime professionals.

Each is now the proud possessor of a qualification that's widely recognised and transferable within and beyond the maritime sector.

In his address Marine Society director Brian Thomas told representatives from all sections of the maritime industry that work-based learning offered two attractive pathways to graduate status, each offering an opportunity to gain academic equivalency for seafarers' vocational qualifications and accrued competencies.

An HND or FD can be topped up to a Bachelors degree with honours or, for seafarers holding a Class 1 CoC, there's a pathway to get a Masters degree. Either route is achievable in under a year, but typically takes around 15 months.

Both routes are seafarer-friendly, by which is meant they don't require attendance at a college, they're fully tutor-supported, and internet access is not a precondition.

Brian emphasised that the role of Marine Society throughout is to support the individual during every aspect of the programme, from initial enquiry through to graduation.

It was therefore important that those who express interest in the programme should do so through the Marine Society. If they don't and go direct to the IWBL, they risk losing out on some Marine Society added benefits, which cannot be applied retrospectively.

Those benefits include:

- possible scholarship to reduce further very competitively priced tuition costs
- an interest free loan for remainder of the cost of tuition
- Marine Society can enrol seafarers on the programme thereby reducing the administrative burden
- provision of any reading materials or study resources
- MS acts as honest broker between the learner and the IWBL, interceding in any queries and sorting any glitches.

Professor Jonathan Garnett, Dean at Middlesex University, said: "Middlesex is pleased to be working with the Marine Society to benefit maritime professionals. Work Based Learning is a flexible and tailored learning experience combining individual aspiration with achievement delivered through work, in work and for work".

Next intake is this autumn. If you'd like to find out more email education@ms-sc.org for an information pack. Marine Society will look after all the paperwork, enabling you to focus on the learning.

Marine Society lifelong learning manager Wendy Monaghan told *Gunline*: 'Feedback received indicates seafarers rate this work-based learning pathway highly. We're pleased to have made it possible. It's what we do best: supporting seafarers and incentivising them to self-improvement.'

Maths@Sea

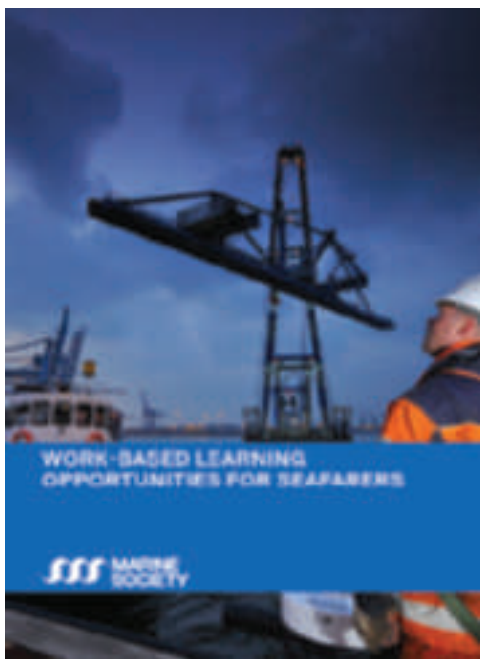
The Marine Society has just launched a new web-based Maths up-skilling programme designed to address the needs of ratings who seek advancement to first Officer of the Watch (OOW) ticket.

The Marine Society's Maths at Sea offer is at: **www.MathsatSea.com.**

This easily accessible learning package is an up-skilling programme covering the basics of Maths. Key features are that it has been designed from bottom up by specialists in nautical education and that the entire programme has been marine contextualised – in other words, it uses examples and language to which seafarers can relate.

The charity worked closely with South Tyneside Marine College to identify common areas of weakness and a specialist maritime eLearning provider to create the content and manage online registration and assessment.

The Marine Society recognises that many ratings have not been in a formal learning environment for some time and that the prospect of returning to a classroom can be daunting. Evidence shows that lack of self-confidence, particularly as far as tackling Maths is concerned, can be a formidable barrier to career progression.



With the launch in June of ratings' apprenticeship programmes that will boost the number of UK ratings in coming years, there is expected to be an increasing number of seafarers seeking advancement to their first OOW. All will benefit from this new Maths up-skilling programme.

And the Maths knowledge demanded at nautical college, with aspects of algebra, geometry and trigonometry, is becoming increasingly specialised, it being no longer a part of many GCSE syllabi. The Marine Society's programme addresses this knowledge-gap. The result will be greater self-confidence amongst learners and improved retention rates for companies and colleges.

The **MathsatSea** programme is free of charge to end users – offered as part of the Marine Society's broad range of services in support of seafarers. **www.MathsatSea.com.**

Facebook

The Marine Society has embraced social media. It now has a Facebook page and we hope *Gunline* readers will pop by and take a look at **www.facebook.com/marinesociety**

Advice

Advice on all matters of concern to RFA seafarers is free, independent and confidential.

Last year the Marine Society dealt with 6,500 queries from maritime professionals. 39% of those were about issues related to continuing professional development with a view to coming ashore.

The Marine Society remains the only maritime sector organisation to hold the coveted Matrix Standard - the national quality standard for any organisation that delivers information, advice and/or guidance on learning and work.

Visit www.marine-society.org to find out more or email education@ms-sc.org **to request a free information pack. And don't forget to check out Facebook : facebook.com/marinesociety**

THE MARINE SOCIETY PROVIDES SERVICES TO RFA SEAFARERS TO ENHANCE PERSONAL AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

We've more experience in the field of distance learning than any other maritime sector provider.

Working with education and training providers to deliver seafarer-focused opportunities for quality-assured personal and professional development.

Supporting seafarers is our strength.

Find out more at: **marine-society.org**

MARINE SOCIETY

202 Lambeth Road
London SE1 7JW
Telephone
020 7654 7050
Email
ms@ms-sc.org

A charity registered in England and Wales 313013 and in Scotland SC037808

NEW 5 TONNE HEAVY REPLENISHMENT AT SEA

Following years of design development work, the Afloat Support team at Abbey Wood has signed a £21 million contract with Rolls-Royce Power Engineering Plc based in Filton, Bristol to develop a new range of replenishment-at-sea (RAS) equipment and training facility. A land based demonstrator for the Heavy RAS system, a new 5 Tonne capacity system, will be built at HMS Raleigh as part of a new shore based seamanship school providing essential safety training for personnel. In the future, once tested and proved, the HRAS system will be fitted to ships directly supporting the future carriers.

RAS is a method of transferring fuel, munitions, and general stores from one ship to another while afloat and takes place during day or night and in all weather conditions.

On letting the contract Commodore David Preston, Head of Afloat Support team at Abbey Wood and RFA Commodore(E) said:

"We are delighted that the contract for this vital training facility has been signed. This equipment will help train Royal Navy and RFA crews in real time operational scenarios in a safe and controlled environment before undertaking it at sea."

The Heavy RAS project is collaborative across many sections of Defence; Defence Equipment & Support at Abbey Wood, including the Afloat Support and Marine Equipment teams, Navy Command at Portsmouth, Defence Estates and HMS Raleigh, RN School of Seamanship. Each will provide projects expertise and support to deliver this exciting new capability through the single contract. The contract to deliver this new capability involves the design and build of the associated civil infrastructure and the RAS equipment. Rolls Royce will contract for the design and construction for the new facility at HMS Raleigh which will feature a new classroom block and RAS systems built around a 25m steel mast and steel ship structures. The RAS equipment is being designed by RR in Newcastle and will be manufactured in sites around Europe before being assembled and factory tested in the UK. HRAS system demonstration trials are due to take place in 2012 and will be followed by the equipment's down rating from 5 tonnes to 2 tonnes in order that it forms a key part of the new RAS trainer delivery systems capability for the RFA. On current plans the trainer will hand over to the RN School of Seamanship in 2014.

HMS Raleigh's Commanding Officer, Captain Steve Murdoch, said:

"Replenishment at Sea is a vital capability that enables our ships to restore without coming back into port and therefore stay on the operational task. It is also one of the most hazardous seamanship tasks the Royal Navy engages in and so the training we provide must be of the highest standard.

"This is not only to maintain the safety of our ships' crews but to ensure that vital supplies are transferred successfully.

"This new training facility will allow us to properly and safely prepare our crews for the challenges they will face at sea particularly in our new Type 45 Destroyers and new class of aircraft carriers before they undertake the task for real."

Challenges to be met by future RAS capability for the QE Class Carriers include jackstay tensions in excess of 20T, physically larger and heavier RAS Loads and inboard RAS reception points in the QEC underneath the external aircraft lifts and day/night operations in high sea states. The demands on the parent supply vessel design have been fully recognised and will be progressed in line with future ship procurement programmes.

RFA OFFICER TURNED PC SUPPORTS COUGAR

Having worked for the RFA as a deck officer several years ago Craig Pearson left the service to join an alternative one, Hampshire Constabulary in 2006. However keen not to lose all his connections with the sea Craig decided to join the Royal Naval Reserve (RNR). Having already served in a number of RFA's in the last few years Craig couldn't resist the challenges of being part of this year's biggest deployment – OP COUGAR.

On Saturday 21st May, two days earlier than planned, just as day was breaking he left home to travel to RAF Brize Norton in time for his mid morning flight to the British base of Akritiri in Cyprus. From there he was transferred by Royal Marine landing craft to Cardigan Bay, which was to become his home for the next three weeks.

This was not a normal day in the life of a police officer, but for the next three weeks Craig wasn't doing his normal job. He had deployed in his military role as an Amphibious Warfare Officer in the RNR as part of Operation Cougar the largest deployed amphibious exercise of 2011 in the Mediterranean. He had been provided with limited details before he left but Craig was acutely aware of the number of NATO forces that had deployed to the area as part of the Libyan incident.

Prior to starting his police career Craig was a navigating officer with a cruise ship company before joining the RFA as a warfare officer. After a few more years at sea he decided to hang up his sea boots and head ashore to start a new vocation be not wanting to entirely relinquish his life at sea he joined the RNR as a way to use and maintain the years of professional training he had received and the experience he had developed.

As part of his role in the RNR Craig is usually deployed for a couple of weeks every year aboard an

amphibious ship as part of the Royal Navy's UK Task Group. Hampshire Constabulary provides him with six days of leave every year to assist in meeting that commitment.

Within the ship he now works as a watch keeper as part of the Ship to Objective Manoeuvre (STOM) cell within the Amphibious Operations Room (AOR). As part of the planning process he relives his past RFA experiences by working with a range of individuals including the ship's officers, embarked Royal Marines, embarked Royal Navy personnel and soldiers of the Army's Port and Maritime Regiment based in Marchwood. The STOM objective is to make sure the personnel and combat equipment onboard is configured correctly for the next mission or any other contingent tasking. When the ship is conducting a full amphibious landing his team co-ordinate and control all of the above elements to get the Royal Marines, their kit, weapons, vehicles and stores from the ship to the shore, in the correct priorities, using various different landing craft and helicopters.

VICKY BARTON

Vicky Barton who was PA to a number of senior RFA and Civilian officers throughout her long career, sadly passed away peacefully in her sleep on 25 June 2011 aged 86.

Vicky worked for DST(SF) and latterly COMRFA and retired about 21 years ago. Since the demise of the RNSTS and then the evolution of COMRFA it is likely that the majority of people who will remember Vicky will be retired RFA and Civilian personnel who served at Empress State building.

A memorial service was held on Monday July 11th at Mortlake Crematorium, Kew Meadow Path, Richmond.

LOOKING FOR A CHALLENGE - JUBILEE SAILING TRUST

The Jubilee Sailing Trust (JST), based in Southampton own and operate the only two square rigger tall ships in the world. The uniqueness of the ships is that they have been designed and built to enable able bodied and physically disabled people to sail alongside as each other on equal terms.

The two tall ships are both British flagged and Lloyds registered. They are MCA and ISM compliant and permanent crew consist of eight STCW certified, officers: Master, 1st Officer, 2nd Officer, Bosun (Officer of watch qualified and general seamanship duties), Chief engineer and 2nd engineer, Medical Purser and a cook.

As part of our ethos, the JST are always looking for permanent crew who share the same values of teamwork, sharing and integrity and would be delighted to consider applications for supernumerary positions for suitably qualified RFA personnel. For example voyage crew member, Barry says:

"As a visually impaired person I was refused entry to the Royal Navy 45 years ago. All these years later the JST has given me the chance to fulfil my lifelong dreams and ambitions on a 'level playing field' with other people – as well as observing others with far more serious disabilities than my own, reach their own personal goals. Thank you, JST!"

The JST 'Change Lives' by breaking down barriers between the able bodied and the physically disabled, promoting the integration of people of all physical abilities; a voyage on one of our ships is where sympathy gives way to understanding. This is done by challenging the perception of disabled people's ability, both of themselves and the perception of those around them, via the challenge of tall ship sailing with a mixed ability crew, who take responsibility for sailing the ship throughout a voyage.

The JST's tall ship voyages visit a mixture of interesting and exotic places ranging from the UK in the summer months, to the Mediterranean, Canary Islands and Caribbean in the winter.

There are opportunities for RFA personnel to sail in a professional capacity on board JST vessels as Deck Officers, Engineers, Cooks and Medical Pursers covering leave for our permanent crew, tours being between two and six weeks. Formal qualifications are a requirement in most cases but strong people skills, promoting the values of the JST, interaction with our customer's, diversity and disability awareness are also extremely important in all roles.

For more information please contact Andy Spark on t. 02380 44 3113 or e.mail andy@jst.org.uk

SEAMEN'S HOSPITAL SOCIETY PHYSIO SUPPORT

Working at sea is one of the most challenging jobs in the UK and the time spent offshore means it can be a problem getting treatment for the work-related injuries many experience. This has prompted the Seamen's Hospital Society (SHS) to fund free physiotherapy for merchant navy ratings across the country.

SHS is promoting easy-to-access physiotherapy treatment for serving merchant navy ratings who are UK residents. This follows the success of several pilot projects set up by SHS to promote physiotherapy services to fishermen in Newlyn, Kilkeel, Brixham and Peterhead.

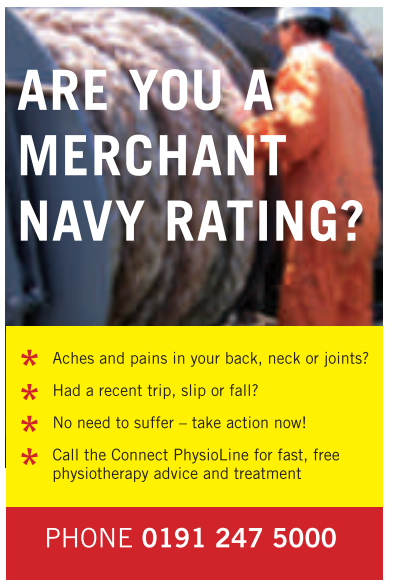
Peter Coulson, SHS General Secretary, explained: "The original pilot for fishermen in Newlyn highlighted that by raising awareness of the benefits of physiotherapy treatment, and making a service accessible, we can improve the health and wellbeing of those working at sea. Physiotherapy has already helped more than 100 Newlyn fishermen and we now want to help merchant seafarers as well."

The new physiotherapy service is being run by Connect Physical Health on behalf of the Seamen's Hospital Society. All merchant navy ratings need to do is ring 0191 247 5000 and arrange to speak to a chartered physiotherapist. Any treatment required will be provided locally.

Merchant seafarers can experience considerable physical problems doing their work. A recent questionnaire found that 20% of merchant seafarers reported a recent back or neck injury and an additional 13% had suffered a back or neck injury that was bad enough to prevent them from workingi.

SHS Health Development Manager, Sally Hampshire, said: "Because seafarers spend so much time at sea it's difficult for them to get help from the usual sources in normal working hours. That's why the Society is funding private physiotherapy for merchant seafarers; it's fast, flexible and responsive to their needs."

SHS is working in partnership with the Unions and employers to publicise the scheme to all UK merchant navy ratings. Together they hope to raise awareness of the health needs of seafarers across the country, and show that physiotherapy treatment can help them at work and in their everyday lives. RMT National Secretary Steve Todd said: "This is a positive move which is very much welcomed by RMT. It will lessen the financial loss for seafarers and enable them to get back to sea quicker than would have been the case without access to these specialist services".



FORT GEORGE DONATION TO RNLI

Captain Martyn Bunker as Commanding Officer of Fort George, having recently been taken out of service, presented the crew of the Eyemouth RNLI Lifeboat with a donation of £244.21. Eyemouth lifeboat station has been operating since 1876.

The RNLI charity saves lives at sea. Its volunteers provide a 24-hour search and rescue service around the United Kingdom and Republic of Ireland coasts. The RNLI operates over 230 lifeboat stations in the UK and Ireland and has more than 100 lifeguard units on beaches around the UK. The RNLI is independent of Coastguard and government and depends on voluntary donations and legacies to maintain its rescue service. Since the RNLI was founded in 1824 its lifeboat crews and lifeguards have saved over 137,000 lives.

The donation, from the officers and crew of Fort George, was handed over by Captain Bunker and was received on behalf of the RNLI by Eyemouth lifeboat operations manager, James Tarvit, who thanked Captain Bunker and the crew of RFA Fort George for their generous donation.

Captain Martyn Bunker presenting the cheque to James Tarvit, Operations Manager for RNLI Eyemouth

Sudoku Solution

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