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Gunline

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RFA Wave Knight in £9 Million Drugs Bust

Secretary of State for Defence Philip Hammond said:

"The work of the Royal Navy and Royal Fleet Auxiliary across the globe and in particular in the Caribbean on counter-narcotics operations is vital to protecting us here at home... I congratulate the ship's company for their actions in this operation."

The Royal Fleet Auxiliary Naval Support Ship RFA Wave Knight has again been in action against Caribbean narcotic traffickers resulting in another successful take-down of a suspect fishing vessel.

In a multi-agency operation involving UK and US assets, a suspected vessel, Miss Tiffany, was detected in the Central Caribbean and a decision taken to close and investigate. Soon after arrival, and upon hailing the vessel, the crew was seen jettisoning a number of suspect packages overboard. With multiple bales now being jettisoned and an urgent need to stop the fishing vessel, the decision was taken to immediately launch both ships boats – one crewed by the RFA - to help recover the weighted bales before they sank. A total of 55 bales were eventually recovered from the sea.

Subsequent onboard analysis confirmed that the bales contained Marijuana – a haul of over 2800 lb with a street value of around £6.4M. The boarding operations, preservation of evidence and detention of seven crew members will hopefully lead to a successful prosecution in court.

Captain Chris Clarke MBE, Commanding Officer of RFA Wave Knight, said:

"The entire ships company – RFA civilians, US Law Enforcement Team and Royal Navy personnel alike – as well as HQ and prosecuting staff ashore - are delighted with the result. And to be frank, I think we were deserving of this success given the quantity of effort that has been expended over the weeks and months in disrupting this challenging trade."

Although the crew of Wave Knight was unable to recover all the jettisoned bales before they sank, the total disruption was estimated as being in the region of a tonne and three quarters – a street value of approximately £9m. A joint RFA and US custody crew was subsequently embarked on the Miss Tiffany which enabled the fishing vessel to be delivered to Jamaican authorities.

RFA Wave Knight has been deployed to the Caribbean since January in support of Atlantic Patrol Tasking North (APT(N)) with HMS Lancaster. This is part of the UK's year round commitment to the region in support of the Overseas Territories, Disaster Relief and Counter Narcotic Operations. Wave Knight has been involved in several counter drug bust operations this year with over 1 tonne of drug disruptions previously attributed to her name. She is due to remain on patrol through into next year.

55 bales of Marijuana recovered by RFA Wave Knight

'Sport and runs ashore' promised an RFA student as we sat in college, 'is what you'll get if you join the RFA'. He was right. I joined in 1978 after 10 years with BP and ended up playing rugby and tennis all over the world for ships and task group teams and there seemed to be parties every time we went into port. I also joined an RFA and Royal Navy operating globally despite loss of their overseas bases, facing logistic challenges mastered and largely forgotten since 1944-45 in the Pacific. Then came the Falklands. The RFA changed, we had to. We became much more operationally aware, our ships better equipped. Look where we are now. Less fun perhaps, but great opportunities at sea and ashore for everyone to develop as individuals, and we carry out successfully a huge range of tasks, across the globe. I arrived just as this all started and have enjoyed great training and made some fantastic friends throughout my career. This Gunline is full of stories from the front line, counter piracy, counter narcotics, keeping sea, amphibious ops, keeping sea lanes clear for trade and RFA people doing great things. So I hope you will allow me a few lines of reflection as I sign off as COMRFA.

The RFA is about people. Not only sailors, but our families, the civil servants in Portsmouth and Abbeywood, our contractors, the Royal Navy and Royal Marines with whom we work, everyone, in fact, involved in getting people to sea in properly equipped and maintained ships on well planned missions.

I am frequently asked about the future for the RFA. I believe we are in a stronger position than for many years, which is not to say everything can stay the same, we have to go on seeking efficiency. We are well established in Defence, well thought of in shipping and have strategies in place to maintain that position. Challenges will return, but we have the evidence to counter them and an operational record that is hard to match.

I want to focus on the uniformed RFA for a moment, our professionalism, determination and ethos. I remember a Doc I sailed with who had worked for the World Health Organisation. A charming man, he had spent years living with isolated communities analysing their health needs. In answer to my question he told me the most complex and interesting tribe he had lived with was, you guessed it, the RFA. I shouldn't have been surprised. I reckon I've seen just about everything since getting my first command in 1994 and five years as the boss of the RFA. Underneath the success, the deep professionalism, the teamwork and humour is a maelstrom of ambition and emotions, trust and mistrust. All perfectly normal in a family. Despite these dynamics and distractions we all do the best we can, and from the outside we are seen as a very tight team. It's true, believe me.

The highlights of my job are ship visits and when I meet you in your messes it is invigorating, challenging and (almost!) always enjoyable. In the past we had some great officers, that high standard is now found across the Flotilla and many are absolutely fantastic; our senior ratings are taking on the management role we always envisaged with great success, their standards are now superb; it is amongst the ratings that I have seen the biggest change over the last few years. I am now so proud when I take people to our ships and see their professionalism and commitment. The investment in training, trust and opportunities to reach their potential, have contributed to the high calibre, way better than most of the industry. I took a senior figure in shipping to Gold Rover's FOST inspection a couple of years ago. He was completely blown away by the experience; the training, commitment and focus of everyone, from captain to junior rating and one very articulate third officer in particular. His very positive report to a minister in London certainly played a part in getting the new Tides on to contract.

The majority of people go to sea, though, to provide for our families. In my heart I know that as an organisation we could do more for them, but I also know that the most important thing we can do is to keep our side of the bargain in respect to sea time: people joining ships when their leave is up and going home when they have finished the appointment, so their families can plan ahead is what we strive for. Despite the popular view, we succeed for the majority of people. Our appointers are committed and equally professional but when it comes to deck, ME and SE officers, who take the longest to train, who's skills are most marketable and numbers fluctuate most, we sometimes struggle. We are working hard to get this right. But to return to families, when I came to sea we got mail every month or so at random ports around the world and it could be weeks old. You got one letter telling you the house had burned down, by the time you got another one it had been rebuilt and your family had moved back in. These days of e-mails, social networks, satellite phones and other techie stuff we are all accessible at sea. I'm not sure it's always an improvement. Being told about a disaster real time doesn't improve your ability to help, although perhaps sharing the load helps the stressed spouse. I don't know. I do know that we go to great lengths to get people home quickly if there is a real emergency. I can't emphasise enough my appreciation and admiration for the people at home bringing up children alone or managing the loneliness when their loved one is on the other side of the world.

A professional and committed work force doing important work, recognised in shipping and naval circles worldwide, supported by their families and a wide range of very committed shore staff is the modern RFA. I have represented you all on countless occasions over the past five years, always promoting our people, ships and success. I'm proud to have done so. I wish you all continued success, lots of fun and a great future for the RFA. Be proud.

Commodore Bill Walworth

Diligent Handling

RFA DILIGENCE, out of refit and back in the Fleet, tested her ability to support the newest class of attack submarines recently.

From Tuesday 30th April until Wednesday 1st May those in the vicinity of HMNB Clyde were treated to the impressive sight of HMS AMBUSH manoeuvring with the Forward Support Vessel on the tranquil waters of the Loch.

Speaking of the trial Captain Trevor Iles RFA, Commanding Officer of RFA DILIGENCE, said: "Manoeuvring with an ASTUTE-Class submarine securely strapped alongside was certainly challenging but Diligence proved that she was capable of the task and was able to effectively move around the allocated trial area in the Gare Loch."

Commander Peter Green RN, Commanding Officer of HMS Ambush, said: "The professionalism and expertise of the RFA is what keeps the Royal Navy moving, and this is no less true when you run on nuclear power. This trial has proven that wherever Ambush goes in the world, we can rely on unique capabilities of Diligence to keep us operational."

RFA Diligence is a multi-purpose ship fitted with a wide range of workshops for hull and machinery repairs, as well as the facilities for supplying electricity, water, fuel, air, steam, cranes and stores to other ships and submarines.

"Diligence provides essential services such as power, water and high-pressure air both at sea and alongside", said Ambush's Marine Engineering Officer Lieutenant Commander Martin 'Shades' Freeman.

The vital support that Diligence offers is essential for modern submarine operations, extending the vessel's ability to remain in

their operating area and lengthening their maritime reach. The ship is the only Forward Repair Ship in the Fleet and was deployed during both Gulf conflicts.

"She can supply us with everything we need, allowing us to take our own equipment down for maintenance or repair," added. Lt Cdr Freeman.

HMS Ambush is the second of the Royal Navy's new Astute-class submarine. Arriving at her homeport of HM Naval Base Clyde in September 2012, she was commissioned into the Royal Navy on 1st March this year.

"We look forward to working with this impressive addition to the Submarine flotilla in the future," concluded Captain Iles.

The Utility of Fort

RFA FORT VICTORIA conducts a RAS with HMS Kent

The utility of RFA FORT VICTORIA is currently been ably demonstrated as she combines both the role of Gulf Ready Tanker with that of acting as flagship to an international task force hunting pirates in the Indian Ocean.

The Auxiliary Oiler and Solid Support Ship has been playing host to the Singapore-led command staff of Combined Task Force (CTF) 151 for the last three months.

At 35,500 tonnes Fort Victoria is the largest ship in the Naval Service, and she has spent the last few months providing logistics support to British and international security forces in the Gulf region. Now, on top of that, she finds herself with a different job – coordinating the movements of the ships tasked with protecting merchant shipping from the Red Sea to the Straits of Hormuz, including the Gulf of Aden and the Somali Basin.

Capable of refuelling three warships at once, operating helicopters as well as carrying dry supplies like food and medical equipment, the hip will fulfil two roles within the task force – a one-stop shop for keeping the task force afloat, and home to Singapore's Rear Admiral Giam Hock Koon and his seven-nation Battle Staff.

"We're delighted to have the CTF team on board for what looks to be a very challenging, but rewarding deployment," said Captain Kevin Rimell RFA, Fort Victoria's Commanding Officer.

"For a British ship to fly the flag for such a well-regarded international task force is a real honour and a source of pride for me and the crew."

Since embarking the Battle Staff have been busy getting to know their new home, and familiarising themselves with her impressive range of facilities and capabilities.

Rear Admiral Giam said: "RFA Fort Victoria possesses good communications facilities, an experienced crew and the strong and supportive leadership of Captain Rimell and his team.

"The CTF 151 team has seamlessly shifted our Command from our shore facility in Bahrain, and now looks forward to setting sail and getting to the thick of the action."

For Military Expert Raymond Khoo, a Communications Technician on the Battle Staff, Fort Victoria's crew and facilities have already made an impression: "RFA Fort Victoria has far exceeded my expectations.

"I can operate onboard and focus wholeheartedly on my job without having to worry about things like accommodation, food and logistics support. The crew has been thoroughly professional and forthcoming with their help."

RFA LYME Bay - Joint Warrior 13

(Picture courtesy of 1/O K Bailie)

Dutch LCVP in the dock of RFA LYME BAY

RFA LYME BAY sailed from Falmouth on 17 April to join Exercise JOINT WARRIOR 13 – JMC in old money. On board were Mine Warfare Battle Staff 3 (MWBS), 6 Ops, a Flight Deck crew from the Maritime Afloat Support Force (MASF) and some of 17 Port & Maritime Regiment from the RLC. LYME sailed into some fairly windy weather and spent the first night stooging in Falmouth Bay waiting for the wind to abate slightly before heading round the Lizard and up towards St George's Channel. This was accomplished on the 18th and, with a south westerly swell giving LYME some lively movement, the ship headed north to join the exercise in the Irish Sea around the Galloway Peninsula.

Sometime in the late evening of the 18th the wind and swell dropped as Ireland gave shelter to the Irish Sea. Dawn on the 19th saw LYME BAY making good way in a much more comfortable fashion, much to the relief of our Embarked Forces relief who now they could go to the gym without feeling seasick! Later that afternoon the Task Group, led by HMS ILLUSTRIOUS, passed by clearance part of the exercise.

In the early hours of the 21st LYME sailed and headed off to join the rest of the Amphibious Force, HMS BULWARK and HMNLS ROTTERDAM, in Luce Bay which is tucked in behind the south end of the Galloway Peninsula peninsula.

Once there the ship docked down to allow for various marine craft to practice going in and out of the dock and to allow personnel and visitors to board. In the afternoon the Commander UK Task Group (COMUKTG), Commodore Paddy McAlpine, visited the ship to meet up with the Commanding Officer of RFA LYME BAY, Captain Kim Watts RFA, and of the MWBS, Commander Neil Marriott and the MWBS team.

Commodore McAlpine had been attached to LYME as the Commander of Operation ZEST (the repair to the harbour in Tristan da Cunha back in 2008) and was familiar with the ship in its amphibious role, so he was very interested to see the difference when in the MCM Support role. 1/O(X) Marcus Patterson also visited; as the RFA Officer attached to COMUKTG he was able to

(Picture courtesy of 1/O K Bailie)

Flight Deck Ops – Dutch AS 532 lands on RFA LYME BAY

on the way to the amphibious landing area and LYME carried on north of the Galloway Peninsula. Here we took up station to work with the Mine Hunters who had come down from the upper reaches of the Clyde where they had been sheltering from the weather in various lochs. The next day was spent in our box quietly sailing around it whilst the MWBS controlled their charges in the mine bring over fresh information about the immediate and future programming.

High profile visits continued on the 22nd when Vice Admiral Jones CB RN, DEPUTY FLEET COMMANDER, arrived by Sea King just before lunch. The visit had been programmed for later in the afternoon but the weather enforced a change so there was a quick appraisal by the catering staff and the Admiral was treated to lunch in company with the Captain and CO MWBS. Admiral Jones then toured around the ship meeting with the MWBS, 6 Ops 3 Commando and amongst the RFA ships company two old shipmates of his, Med Tech Tony Hendley and LH(S) Rob Ward.

During the visit LYME proceeded to head back to the Clyde Areas to take part in the final part of the mine warfare exercise, on the way a spot of flying was in order so the flyboys in the Merlin could get in some deck practice on a BAY class!

The next few days up to the 25th were spent as the MCM support ship which involved being controlled up the cleared route, where LYME went to State 1 Emergency Stations – what most of us old salts call Action Stations! – and practiced 'blanket search routines' and 'mine brace' positions for an hour before standing down to carry out rafting with the MCMs. HMS PEMBROKE was the first customer and actually

Closed up at State One

required fuel, although LYME is not a tanker as such, fuel can be transferred to vessels alongside. The fuel transfer was lengthy due to the quantity and it was a late finish for LYME followed by a return to sitting in Dynamic Positioning mode. By the morning of the 25th the exercise was winding down and ENDEX was at 1300.

With weather always being a consideration the last day of the exercise was glorious, warm spring sunshine, low winds and hardly any sea and this allowed the MWBS Logistics Officer to achieve disembarkation for the team. LYME sailed up the Firth of Clyde to position just off Lady Isle, with Troon and Prestwick in the background, allowing the Merlin from Prestwick to make four short runs with the MWBS and on their way to a spot of pre deployment leave. JOINT WARRIOR was their final training package before they go deploy, and it appeared to be a success for them and a good revision of practice for LYME who had been in the MCM Support Role prior to returning to UK for refit in 2012.

With the MWBS now safely landed in Prestwick, LYME turned south and headed for Falmouth, with a stop in Plymouth Sound to dock down and discharge the Offshore Raiding Craft and the remainder of the Embarked Forces. With that complete RFA LYME BAY made the evening tide at Falmouth and was alongside Queens Jetty by 1845.

(1/O Kim B Bailie)

MEDICS SHOW THEIR METTLE IN MASS CASUALTY EXERCISE

An explosion rips through the hull of the merchant vessel, critically wounding six members of the crew. Two are in danger of losing limbs, another can't breathe, and a fourth has deep burns across his chest.
The casualties are flown to the nearby RFA Cardigan Bay, where the specialist military medics, doctors and nurses of the Joint Role Two Medical Team (JR2MT) are waiting.

For the team members, this is a high-pressure situation where life and limb are on the line. The scenario may be fictional, and the casualties may be actors, but the responses and reactions have to be perfect.

Best known for their role in the field hospitals of Afghanistan, the JR2MT are keen to show that they can work anywhere in the world. To prove this, as part of the International Mine Countermeasures Exercise 2013 (IMCMEX 13) they are conducting a Mass Casualty Exercise - a simulated incident with numerous serious injuries.

A specialist make-up artist and two professional actors from Amputees in Action have been brought in to add even more realism to the scenario, and to put the surgeons of the JR2MT to the ultimate test - an amputation at sea.

The aim of the Mass Casualty Exercise is to prove that the JR2MT can operate from the medical facilities aboard RFA Cardigan Bay, and her sisters Lyme Bay and Mounts Bay.

Three of our platforms are Bay-class ships, but we've never deployed on one before," explains Surgeon Commander Richard Heames, the Officer in Charge of the JR2MT.

"As a result, our first main training aim is to validate ourselves in our ability to operate from this type of ship and deal with patients using the facilities on board.

"We're also here to provide support to the IMCMEX, offering real world cover to everyone involved."

The Mass Casualty Exercise takes place over two days, allowing time for a realistic simulation of both the merchant vessel incident and a 'mine strike' aboard a mine-hunter - a scenario which involves multiple ships, helicopter and boat movements, and a great deal of coordination.

By involving the two casualties from Amputees in Action, the medics are able to practise with far more complicated 'injuries' than they can normally train on realistically. John Pickup, director of Amputees in Action and one of the simulated casualties, said: "This is the first time we've trained with the Royal Navy, and it's been a great experience all round.

For one of RFA Cardigan Bay's First Aid team the chance to participate in such a realistic exercise put all her skills to the test.

"I've dealt with broken bones before, and that's what I had on the first day of the exercise," said Leading Hand (Administrative Assistant) Jacqueline Todd. "However the amputee casualty was something new."

"When he came off the helicopter, I didn't stop to think about how gory and realistic the injury was. I just remembered my training, and knew I had to get a tourniquet on to stop him bleeding."

"He came up to me afterwards and thanked me for my efforts, telling me that if I'd done what I did for real I would have saved his life. I asked him how he knew, and he said 'Because you tied it really tight"!

The team also had to work seamlessly with RFA Cardigan Bay's embarked medical team and in collaboration with a smaller medial facility aboard the assault ship USS Poncé.

Surg Cdr Heames congratulated his team and the personnel from RFA Cardigan Bay and USS Poncé, saying: "The Mass Casualty Exercise has been successful in developing the medical care process from point of injury, through life-saving surgery aboard RFA Cardigan Bay, and onward transfer to hospital.

Who Says You Can't Teach An Old Dog New Tricks?

Chief Officer David Eagles, currently appointed to the Staff of the First Sea Lord in the Ministry of Defence in London, looks at how the Royal Navy provides and delivers the UK's Very High Readiness Maritime Force.

The UK's 2010 Strategic Defence and Security Review (SDSR) provides the framework and requirement for UK forces out for the next decade and beyond. One key conclusion from the review was that UK Forces should have the ability to deploy highly capable assets quickly when we need to, but also to prepare a greater scale and range of capabilities if required. Noting the enduring maritime advantages of freedom of manoeuvre, flexibility of access, mobility, sustainability, reach and poise, the Royal Navy has developed the Response Force Task Group (RFTG) concept to deliver the UK's scaleable, very high readiness maritime force capable of responding with a rangeHave you ever wondered exactly how far it is to go from Portland to Plymouth? Well as the crow flies it is 68 nm or in the case of RFA GOLD ROVER 91,860 nm. That's right, she left the UK on the 22nd August 2011 and arrived back on the 31st May 2013, a few months short of two years away, racking up 7789 man hours on watch and 325 days at an average speed of 11.8 knots.

So the journey for the Fleet's Oldest Vessel started with a restore and work up in March 2011 following her ships life extension; RFA GOLD ROVER then made a departure from Portland and started the long journey south to the Falklands. There were a few sunshine stops along the way with the old girl stopping at Las Palmas de Gran Canaria, Ascension, St Helena before arriving at the Falklands.

During her time down South in 2011 she undertook replenishments with Her Majesty's Ships MONTROSE, EDINBURGH, CLYDE and PROTECTOR. She also participated in settlement visits around the Islands and as well as embarking 90 soldiers for an Exercise. RFA GOLD ROVER also played host to a team from the South Atlantic Medal Association including four survivors of RFA SIR GALAHAD who laid a wreath over the spot where she now lays. On completion of all of this we headed to Simons Town RSA for a much needed Maintenance Period over Christmas and New Year.

So what did 2012 have in store; a trip around both the Cape of Good Hope and then Cape Horn. RFA GOLD ROVER made her way around the Cape of Good Hope to replenish HMS MONTROSE and encountered some slightly bumpy weather on her return journey back to the Falklands.

Several more settlement visits and exercises around the Falklands saw us become involved in the 30th Anniversary of the Falklands War with a Memorial Service held onboard and over HMS SHEFFIELD..

Battlefield Tours were undertaken by ships staff, with some crew members having served onboard vessels or were boots on the ground back in 1982; this was a time for remembrance and reflection by all.

The Queen's Diamond Jubilee saw RFA GOLD ROVER anchored in Ascension and dressed over all with Captain Nigel Budd presenting the ships company with their Jubilee medals. Here we were all welcomed ashore and invited to join in with the celebrations; a big fish fry up and carnival procession. It was also an opportunity for old friends to reunite with 2/O (X) Tanya Warner meeting up with Jolene Sim now a Conservation Officer on the Island. The last time they met was at South Tyneside College back in 2005 with one passing their OOW ticket and the other Chief Mates.

With P Sqn Force protection embarked RFA GOLD ROVER headed further north to rendezvous with HMS DAUNTLESS and assist in providing Maritime Security to the Gulf Of Guinea. This was both a first for the ship conducting a replenishment with a new Type 45 destroyer and providing a presence in this high threat area.

On arrival in Simons Town, the ship was fitted with WECDIS saying goodbye to the old school methods of navigation and hello to the new system of the electronics.

Whilst in South Africa several members of the ships company gave support and ran with LH (HC) Kelly Duff during her Race for Life Run in memory of her Granddad raising over £700 for Cancer Research.

The ship then headed back to the Falklands to continue her work before embarking on an epic round voyage with HMS DAUNTLESS to the equator and back non stop; East Cove to East Cove 7213nm. On arrival back to the Falklands the ship and Ship's Company said farewell to the CEO, Charlie Brown; three years owner of GOLD ROVER and 43 ½ years service with the Royal Fleet Auxiliary. A fine send off was given with a surprise tour of the Euro Fighter and a slap up meal at MPA Falkland Islands.

A trip down to South Georgia was next on the agenda, certainly not a first or last for the ship but a first for many members of the ships company; ice Navigation at its finest! Some quite amazing and beautiful animals and bergs were seen, including a 19 mile long tabular berg; the real deal and not that just seen in the Mariners Handbook!

Winter had now reached the South Atlantic and RFA GOLD ROVER encountered some quite hairy weather enroute back to Simons Town for Christmas and the New Year. Force 12 winds and horrendous seas for a few days saw the ships staff name the weather phenomenon 'Hurricane Fluffy'.

2013 was brought in with a bang with members of the ships company being in Cape Town to bring in the New Year. Summer in the Southern Hemisphere enabled several members of the ships company to brave the Great White Infested Waters and went diving with the sharks!!! Thankfully all were returned limbs in tact!

No visit to South Africa would be complete without a visit to Table Mountain and several members of the ships company were lucky enough to visit on a day without the Table Cloth being visible.

Enough of the fun activities and back to work with RFA GOLD ROVER heading South once again to the Falklands.

RFA GOLD ROVER'S replenishment duties saw her escort the last of the Type 42 Destroyers, HMS EDINBURGH, up to the Equator; this was her last RAS with a Rover–Boat and her last in the Southern Hemisphere. To mark the occasion Kevin Mackinnon played a departing tribute on his bag pipes finishing off with the Skye Boat Song. 7195 nm were steamed from East Cove to East Cove.

A final settlement visit to Port Edgmont and the dropping off of some much needed fresh stores saw the RFA GOLD ROVER depart the Falklands for the final time in 2013. A brief stop in Ascension and embarking P Sqn again we headed north to rendezvous with HMS ARGYLL ready to conduct Maritime Security Operations in the Gulf Of Guinea.

The first port visit was to Abidjan on the Ivory Coast where RFA GOLD ROVER hosted a lunch for Embassy and Diplomatic Staff; ship tours were given by the MEO Richard Maddock (the font of all knowledge having being MEO onboard for the last 3 years). The next two port visits were to Luanda in Angola and Walvis Bay in Namibia. Here we were in company with HMS ARGYLL with both ships hosting lunches and evening receptions, forging good trade and maritime relations with the different nations.

HMS ARGYLL and RFA GOLD ROVER then departed and went their separate ways with one vessel going further South and the other heading North and homeward bound.

A brief stop in Ascension saw the last two Rover-Boats, BLACK and GOLD ,hand over the duties of ATP(S). On heading North and only 100nm from Ascension the diligent 8 to 12 watch spotted a vessel suspected of engaging in illegal fishing activities. A report was made to Commander British Forces South Atlantic and then we headed on our merry way to the Equator; a ROVER'S work is never done!

On crossing the Equator for the final time this trip, King Neptune's court was called, with six members of the ships company facing charges!! A fine and fitting ceremony was held to round off GOLD ROVER'S deployment nicely.

The final leg of the deployment saw RFA GOLD ROVER pull into the first port she visited back in 2011, Las Palmas, where the CO called on the Admiral in charge of the Naval base and Canary Islands' Naval Flotilla. Here saw the ships company enjoy the delights of Gran Canaria with a bus tour allowing many members of the ships company to visit the island.

A short and slightly bumpy ride back to the UK saw RFA GOLD ROVER arrive back in Plymouth at the end of the May where she will commence her DESTORE before going into a short refit period in Liverpool.

Written by Second Officer (X) Tanya Warner – RFA GOLD ROVER

THE FAITHFUL WATCHMAN RETURNS

(UK MoD/ Crown Copyright)

RFA ARGUS coming alongside in Portland

Under a glowering winter sky, RFA ARGUS returned home from a hugely successful deployment. Arriving back just in time for Christmas, the 28, 481 tonne ship last saw the shores of Britain back in May when she sailed on the Atlantic Patrol Task (North).

Since then she has represented the United Kingdom's interests from New York to Trinidad, delivering everything from 21-gun salutes to Emergency Relief Stores and continually demonstrated the versatility of this unique vessel.

Crewed by the Royal Fleet Auxiliary, augmented by mission support personnel from the Royal Navy, she is far more than a Primary Casualty Receiving Ship.

The Commanding Officer, Captain Gerry Patterson RFA, said: "ARGUS, as a team, is a hybrid crew which melds the Royal Fleet Auxiliary and the Royal Navy into one unit under my command."

"RFA ARGUS deployed as the singleton UK Naval Unit on Atlantic Patrol Task (North) and, with the amalgam of units onboard, has operated as Commander of a Task Group."

"This ship has been through the third busiest Hurricane season in recorded history and has stood ready to assist the Island nations of the Caribbean particularly the UK Overseas Territories in recovery from Hurricane strikes."

"In addition RFA ARGUS has engaged in Counter Narcotics Operations disrupting supplies of illegal substances to the US and Europe."

"We are proud of our achievements but nevertheless glad to be back to our families and loved ones in time for the festive season," he added.

Now she is back, RFA ARGUS will enter a short refit period before returning to sea in the middle of 2013 ready to take up her role once more as the UK's Primary Casualty Receiving Ship; ready at short notice to embark a full team of medical specialists and sail to any potential hot spot in the world.

WAVE KNIGHT GETS A TURTLE!

Captain C G Clarke receiving Turtle Ship Model from Mr Hong-sup Kim of DSME

Over two days in September 2012 RFA WAVE KNIGHT hosted a visit by Daewoo Shipbuilding and Marine Engineering (DSME) representatives, accompanied by the MARS Tanker project personnel from Abbey Wood and BMT (the design authority). The visit was arranged to give DSME the opportunity to visit a "live" RFA and to see the aspects of ship design and build that need to be taken into consideration with the TIDE Class tankers.

The group arrived for the first day at Portland Port and went straight up to the conference room for refreshments and a welcoming chat from the Commanding Officer. During this introductory meeting some traditional Korean gifts were presented one of which was a "turtle"; a gold plated model of a traditional Korean warship from the 15th Century which were so named for their protective roof and squat shape.

After the presentation and introductory talk the groups took a tour of the ship. The focus for the DSME personnel on the first day was the engineering and construction requirements that would be required for the building the new tankers. To that end they were shown the machinery spaces, cargo tank configuration, accommodation block and the RAS Rig arrangements. On the second day the DSME personnel were shown more of the control side of the ship, the bridge, RASCO and the MCR taking in the platform management system which has terminals in all three of the above areas as well as in the office complex. Another purpose of both visits was to allow for the project team in Abbey Wood and the Daewoo technical team to ask ships staff what could be improved in ship design and construction to enable the MARS tankers to be at the forefront of maritime support to the Royal Navy and our allies. To this end the visits were considered to be worthwhile and useful for the project team, the constructors and the end users!

1/O (LS) K B Bailie RFA

DSME, BMT, RFA and MARS personnel by RFA WAVE KNIGHT

RFA ARGUS BACK IN THE DOCK

(Picture by 2/O (LS) P Balch)

RFA ARGUS has returned to Falmouth Docks for a major programme of works to be carried out by A&P Falmouth, as part of the company's through life support "cluster" contract with the Ministry of Defence.

The ship's refit cycle is five yearly and this will be the second refit undertaken in A&P Falmouth since the contract was placed in 2008.

Work began on Monday 21 January and is due to be completed during the summer. The multi-million pound refit will contain general upkeep and upgrade work to ship systems to ensure compliance with the relevant certification authorities and will include replacement of the existing lifeboats, overhaul of the main engines, installation of a new emergency generator, fitting of new engine control systems and an extensive paint and preservation package.

A&P Falmouth's contract with the MOD for the long term maintenance of RFA ships was originally signed in 2008 and has recently been extended by five years, taking it to 2018 following a value for money review.

Gerald Pitts, A&P's Cluster Director, said: "The arrival of RFA ARGUS for her refit demonstrates once again the benefits of the cluster contract and is the culmination of 12 months of design and planning work ready for implementation by A&P Falmouth production teams. The refit is part of the through life support we provide to RFA ARGUS wherever in the world operations take her on a 24 hour, 7 day a week basis."

Commodore (E) David Preston RFA, Head of the MOD's Commercially Supported Shipping team, said: "This latest milestone highlights the value of the through life support 'cluster' contract to the Royal Fleet Auxiliary ensuring it maintains its capability to support the Royal Navy's operations.

"The refit will keep RFA Argus in peak operating condition and we are pleased that our relationship with A&P Falmouth is continuing to reap rewards for both the Ministry of Defence and the company."

BACK IN BUSINESS

RFA Fort Austin is back in the fleet after a period of Extended Readiness and has passed Operational Sea Training with a 'Very Satisfactory' grading overall.

Fort Austin was placed in Extended Readiness in the basin at Portsmouth with much of her gear removed including her Replenishment at Sea (RAS) gear. Towed back in 2010 to Camell Lairds for a refit in Birkenhead, she emerged with refitted accommodation, bridge and deck gear and brand new lifeboats. The ship's company have worked tirelessly to bring the ship back to life after so long and now she has proved she is more than ready for any future tasking.

After a long period of work up her first major commitment was Flag Officer Sea Training (FOST). The first Harbour Week went well with the ship's company proving that they could all pull together in the exercises. RFA Fort Austin also impressed during the Sea Weeks performing well with whatever FOST threw at her.

One task was to prove the ability to receive fuel with RFA Black Rover as the Supplying ship. After a few approaches Black Rover took station and a well-oiled RAS team swung into action with the operation proceeding like clockwork, again impressing the FOST staff. In all just less than 200 cz of diesel was successfully passed from Black Rover to the Fort Austin.

In proving our ability to progress our core capability as Solids Support, test weights and test loads were passed to the Dutch frigate Van Speijk.

The ship is currently involved in a series of exercises and the ship's company have no doubts that the phoenix that is RFA Fort Austin will rise admirably to the challenge.

(RTO (X) Richard Pledge)

THE TIDE-BOATS ARE BACK

The formal announcement has now been made that the MARS Tankers will take on the historic RFA name of the "TIDE-Class". Commissioning from 2016 onwards, the four new ships will be named TIDESPRING, TIDERACE, TIDESURGE and TIDEFORCE; all but TIDEFORCE been familiar names in RFA Service.

Commodore Walworth CBE, ACOS AFSUP, said: "I am absolutely delighted that we are able to announce that the MARS Fleet Tankers will be called the Tide class."

Displacing 37,000 tonnes they will replace the LEAF and ROVER Class maintaining the Royal Fleet Auxiliary's dedicated Replenishment at Sea capability. The 200m long tankers will be able to operate helicopters and support naval units deployed worldwide.

"The original TIDES were the first purpose built fleet tankers to support aircraft carriers and were highly successful and popular ships; the new TIDES promise to be better still," added Cdre Walworth.

The first TIDE class Fleet Tankers served in the Royal Fleet Auxiliary (RFA) from 1954 until 1991, operating worldwide in support of numerous Operations and Exercises from Suez to the Falklands. Developed using the lessons of the Pacific Campaign in World War Two, these versatile ships were the first purpose designed replenishment tankers for the RFA. Carrying bulk fuels, oil and fresh water they replenished Aircraft Carriers and Warships enabling Task Groups to remain at sea for extended periods.

CGI of a TIDE-Boat RASing a T45 Destroyer

THE Bish's Bit

"Action Bish"

This will be my final article for Gunline. From the middle of July I am moving on after 18 months in post as RFA Chaplain. This seems an appropriate time to reflect on my time, and to wish you all well.

The first thing I would say is that I have always found a warm welcome on board our Ships. There can sometimes be an air of trepidation when the Chaplain announces a visit. There is the "spy from headquarters", the "bad joss of the God botherer" or "the passenger". In my visits I have not felt any of this wariness. Rather, each Ship has welcomed a visit. Some Ships have even requested a visit!

The second thing is that the RFA is very professional and effective, and can pride itself on being very good at what it does. I was always amazed at how we could land helicopters or replenish Ships in such a competent and confident way, and then prepare a delicious meal with only a costume change between the evolutions. That was a revelation; that everyone on board is good at doing other jobs!

The third thing is just how much the RFA does, and how many of the tasks once performed by the RN are now firmly RFA jobs. This is a source of pride for the RFA and rightly so, although it means the RFA does more of the up-threat work. Not everyone is happy with that, but to everyone's credit the willingness to get the job done is very much to the fore.

These revelations have given me pause for thought. I have learnt these things about the RFA because I have spent time in the Ships, and talked to you, went on a few runs ashore, and even cooked a few meals. Coming from the RN, I have always been aware of the RFA as a sort of "affiliated" body, but I confess I didn't know much of the detail. Having spent all too little time with you, I feel better able to comment. I suppose though that it would take much longer than I have spent to really get under the skin of the RFA.

The conclusion we can draw from this is obvious. You can never really know someone, or understand an organisation until you walk alongside for a while. I had always heard good things about the RFA from the chaplains who preceded me, but I did not really appreciate how generous and welcoming you all are until I experienced it for myself. Even the atheists have given me the time of day!

That gives me great comfort as the RFA continues its voyage without me. There are many shoals ahead, as that remains constant! A period of great change is just around the corner as the new Commodore takes the helm. The world remains an uncertain place, and Britain's role within it develops. The tasks for the RFA will change; the pressures on us all remain. However I do believe though that the generosity, the friendliness and openness of the RFA will stand you all in good stead.

As I slip and proceed, you will also be able to welcome a new Chaplain. Reverend John Bridges RN joins in July. I have given him glowing reports and he is looking forward to ministering to you all, and getting alongside you all in due course. I wish you well, and thank you for your company. God bless you all.

RFA CENOTAPH CONTINGENT 2012

The Royal Fleet Auxiliary was represented at the Royal Albert Hall and the Cenotaph last year by a contingent led by 3/O (C) Gary Barrowcliffe.

Speaking of the event he said: "It was an honour and a pleasure to be selected as the RFA Contingent Officer for the 2012 November Ceremonies held in London. To represent the RFA at the Royal Albert Hall and conduct the 'Muster' was an occasion that few experience. To march past the Cenotaph and honour our fallen was truly humbling."

Parade Training at HMS EXCELLENT

Asst Cook Shane Rixon said of the experience: "I was proud to represent the RFA and pay my respects to those who have given their lives. It is something that I have always wanted to do and has made my Mum and family really proud.

It was a lovely day and the memory I have is of meeting and seeing so many veterans from all services and conflicts. We left our accommodation at 7.00 hrs and changed into our uniform before mustering at Wellington Barracks at 1000 hrs. We then marched to the Cenotaph where the parade commenced. At 1100 hrs we had the two minute silence, and (the) wreath laying commenced. We had some hymns and sang the National Anthem. On completion of the parade we were back at the barracks for about 1330 where we had photos and a debrief.

Rear (L – R): LH (C) RA Marsh, MM1 J Pickering, MM1 AR Horsefall, STWD CJ Pallet
Front (L – R): CR1 REC Hicks, CPO (C) PL Stephenson, Second Officer (C) GJ Barrowcliffe, Asst Ck S Rixon, LH (C) EL George, SG1A CT Clark

It was a great experience and I would love to have the opportunity to do it again. I would recommend it to everyone to consider."

Leading Hand (Comms) Emma George was also part of the contingent: "It was an honour and a completely unique experience to represent the Royal Fleet Auxiliary at the Cenotaph this year and one I would most certainly be happy to repeat again. Watching the Veterans make their way past was particularly emotional and the fact that so many gave their lives was a very humbling experience."

COMMODORE-IN-CHIEF ROYAL FLEET AUXILIARY VISITS RFA MOUNTS BAY

As part of a four day visit to Valletta, Malta, RFA Mounts Bay hosted a Royal Visit from the Duke and Countess of Wessex, 20 November.

The visit coincided with the gifting of two ambulances from the East Midlands Ambulance Service to Malta St John's Organisation. The Countess of Wessex presented the vehicles in her capacity as Grand President of St John Ambulance in the Priory of England and the Islands. RFA Mounts Bay has transported the vehicles from the UK throughout deployment in the Mediterranean.

Captain Buck with the Duke and Countess of Wessex on the bridge of RFA MOUNTS BAY

Commanding Officer RFA Mounts Bay, Captain David Buck, said:
"Along with my Ship's company and the embarked military force of Mounts Bay, I am honoured and delighted to host this visit amidst the stunning and historic backdrop of the Grand Harbour in Valleta. Given his role as Commodore-in-Chief Royal Fleet Auxiliary, it is fantastic to see that their Royal Highnesses, the Duke and Countess of Wessex, have been able to renew their acquaintance with the ship so soon after the high profile role fulfilled by Mounts Bay at Op Olympic in the summer."

RFA Mounts Bay was in Malta as part of COUGAR 12, the three month deployment to the Mediterranean as part of the United Kingdom's Response Force Task Group exercising with key allies. Exercises included Corsican Lion, which tested the maritime element of the UK-French Combined Joined Expeditionary Force (CJEF), and exercise Albanian Lion which provided superb faculties for the Lead Commando Group to train with Albanian forces. Captain Buck further commented: "The presence of the Malta RFA Association has very much added to today's event, providing a further link to the special relationship between the service and the Maltese seaman who served aboard our ships with distinction in years gone by. The chance to reminisce over RFA Ships of the past was clearly enjoyed by all. Mounts Bay will look back at today with much pride and very much looks forward to future visits and fostering further links with Malta."

HRH with the Malta Royal Fleet Auxiliary Association

Breakfast at Westminster

On 11 Sep 12, for the first time ever, the RFA was invited to join the Armed Forces All Party Parliamentary Group (AFAPPG) for breakfast in the Houses of Parliament. This was a great opportunity to influence key MPs and to get the RFA message across to people who matter. A group of seven Senior Officers drawn from the sea and shore establishment joined the Commodore to meet up with about 30 MPs and Industry Representatives. The event was organised by Dave Eagles, our 'man in London' who is to be congratulated for selecting the continental breakfast option and thus remained consistent with the RFA's 'healthy eating' campaign in the face of some resistance from the RFA Captains! Breakfast was hosted by Caroline Dinenage MP (vice Chairman (Navy) for the AFAPPG) who took the opportunity during her introduction to thank the RFA and all involved in the organisation, afloat and ashore, for their excellent contribution to Defence over many years. The Commodore then spoke for about fifteen minutes about the RFA, the capability and value for money that we deliver across a wide range of Defence outputs, our utility to other Government Departments, the quality of our people and the versatility of the ships. There followed a lively question and answer session and general discussions during which there was notable support for our Service. The event concluded with a fascinating tour of the Parliamentary Estate led by Robin Ashby, Director General of the UK Defence Forum. The morning successfully maintained the high profile we have established over the past couple of years with the political establishment.

ANNOUNCEMENT OF THE NEW COMMODORE ROYAL FLEET AUXILIARY AND ASSISTANT CHIEF OF STAFF AFLOAT SUPPORT

It has been announced that the next Commodore of the Royal Fleet Auxiliary (RFA) Service will be Rob Dorey. Captain Dorey, who joined the RFA in 1980, will take up the post as the professional head of the RFA in September when the current Commodore, Bill Walworth CBE, retires.

Speaking of his new appointment, Captain Dorey said; "it is an honour to be given the responsibility for taking the Royal Fleet Auxiliary forward as a World Class, Cost Effective, Maritime Operational Support Force."

"The challenge will be to match finances with expectations but the investment in the new Tide Class Tankers is a strong indication of the trust and value placed in the RFA and all that we do," he added.

As well as responsibility for the ships and people of the RFA, the role of Assistant Chief of Staff (Afloat Support) also encompasses that of Senior Responsible Owner for delivering the MARS Tanker and HRAS programmes.

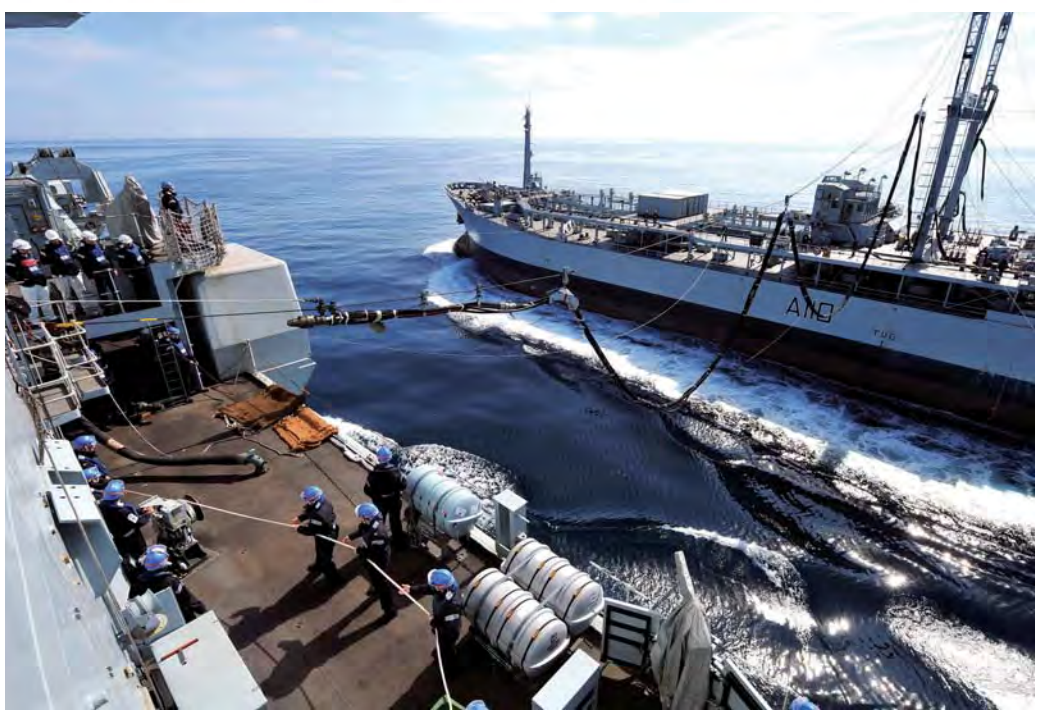
"Our sights are firmly set on the Royal Navy Future Force 2020, the RFA contribution towards it and our future ambitions, without taking the eye off operations today."

"With a team spirit embracing all those at sea and ashore, the RFA is well placed for success" Captain Dorey concluded.

Once promoted he will be the 19th Commodore RFA since the rank was adopted in 1951.

ROYAL FLEET AUXILIARY SHIP OF THE YEAR 2012

Captain Simmons receiving the Ship of the Year Flag from Captain Dorey



RFA ORANGELEAF conducts a RAS with HMS ILLUSTRIOUS

On 8th April 2013 the Ship's Company of RFA ORANGELEAF gathered for the presentation of the Royal Fleet Auxiliary (RFA) Ship of the Year Surface Fleet Effectiveness Trophy for 2012.

This trophy is awarded annually to the RFA vessel that has made a consistent and outstanding contribution in the execution of her tasking and shown the highest standards of effectiveness in the course of her duties throughout the year.

It is more often awarded to ship's following an operational deployment, however on this occasion it was considered that RFA ORANGELEAF's delivery of training support to Flag Officer Sea Training (FOST) units throughout 2012 while at high readiness in her primary role as Fleet Ready Tanker merited recognition.

Presenting the award was Captain Rob Dorey RFA, Deputy Assistant Chief of Staff (Afloat Support), who said: "the ship's company's efforts to get the ship ready post refit, really shone through, with the one of the oldest ships in the fleet really looking great!"

The ship was presented with a certificate and a picture of the trophy as well as, for the first time, an 'Efficiency Pennant' to be flown to show to the rest of the fleet what the ship can do. Captain Charles Simmons RFA, Commanding Officer RFA ORANGELEAF, accepted the award on behalf of the ship and, thanking the Ship's Company for their efforts, said: "This flag is something we will wear proudly; it really gives us something to live up to."

facebook

The RFA now has an official FaceBook page with the latest news and pictures from around the Flotilla and beyond.
You can find it at:
facebook.com/RoyalFleetAuxiliary
If any one has any stories or pictures they wish to submit to the page then email me at:
royalfleetauxiliarymedia@gmail.com

AWARD HONOURS MARS TEAM

(L-R) C/O (LS) Chris Broughton (MARS Logistic Support Manger), Philip Dunne MP (MinDEST), Mark Whittingham (CSS Financial Controller), Robin Boulby (Tanker Team Leader) and Peter Goodwin (Scrutiny)

The Military Afloat Reach and Sustainability (MARS) Tanker Project Team has been honoured with the presentation of a "Minister for Defence Equipment, Support and Technology (MinDEST) Acquisition Award".

Given in MOD Main Building on Tuesday 27 November 2012, the award was presented by the Minister, Philip Dunne MP, and was to recognise and reward excellence in the field of acquisition.

The team was responsible for the procurement of the four MARS Military Tankers to replace the ageing and non-environmentally compliant LEAF and ROVER Boats. They gained approval for an open international competition with the intent of encouraging the world's most efficient shipbuilders to participate. This international competition resulted in a very substantial reduction in the cost of the project, and has produced significant savings for the Ministry of Defence (MOD) and the UK taxpayer.

Robin Boulby, the Tanker Team Leader, said: "This award recognises the hard work of the DE&S MARS Tanker team and colleagues across Defence. The team are the first to compete internationally for a class of naval ships and the first to exploit the new Defence Acquisition White Paper principles; all of which achieved savings for defence."

The MARS Team was one of 13 teams honoured for been at the forefront of procuring world class equipment and support for the Armed Forces.

Congratulating all the teams, Mr Dunne said: "I am delighted to be here today to celebrate your work in support of Defence. The awards recognise and reward excellence and demonstrate that we in the MOD can deliver world-class results. So thank you for all that you do in delivering equipment and support to our Armed Forces."

One of the judges, the MOD's Head of Industrial Policy, Paul Hamilton, added:

"I was delighted with the standard of this year's nominations and our judges had difficult decisions to make. Today's winners represent excellence in acquisition and good team working right across Defence and I congratulate everyone who has been recognised this year."

FLEET COMMANDER'S COMMENDATION FOR PO ALLISTER STRACHAN

PO (SA) Allister Strachan has been awarded a Fleet Commander's Commendation for his efforts during the de-store of RFA FORT GEORGE and the regeneration of RFA FORT AUSTIN. The award was presented by Commodore Walworth OBE RFA on behalf of the (then) Fleet Commander, Admiral Sir George Zambellas KCB DSC.

Accompanied by his wife, Margaret, Allister was very proud to have received such a high profile award and the text of the commendation makes impressive reading:

"RFA FORT GEORGE was withdrawn from service in May 2011 with the intention of selling her on a Government to Government basis. Part of the sale package was to include the entire stores account held within the central store and individual stores loan records. FORT GEORGE was put into a preserved state in Birkenhead to await sale. When it became apparent that a seller could not be found, a local decision was reached that the stores account could be returned into the joint support chain at minimal cost with a large potential benefit, both operationally and financially.

Petty Officer Allister Strachan was appointed to the team and set about the project with exceptional enthusiasm and zeal. 120 pallets of equipment were removed from the ship and relocated to a warehouse in Cammell Laird shipyard. The most basic of facilities were transformed into a supply chain hub by the inventive use of available equipment and through the cajoling and persuasion of the local workforce. Each of the 120 pallets were required to be emptied, re-packaged and have return notes raised, with an overriding objective of prioritising the most expensive equipment, thus ensuring that the maximum financial benefits were returned in the shortest possible time.

Commodore Walworth CBE RFA, PO (SA) Strachan and Mrs. Margaret Strachan

Running in parallel to the de-store of FORT GEORGE was the regeneration of RFA FORT AUSTIN. Petty Officer Strachan saw this as an opportunity to offer further financial and operational benefits by, effectively, cross-decking equipment from FORT GEORGE to FORT AUSTIN, cutting out a large and expensive physical supply chain "dog-leg" and lessening the financial burden on the Integrated Project Team. The financial savings make impressive reading, £1.8 million worth of equipment returned into the supply chain, 27 pallets of stores recycled into FORT AUSTIN at an approximate saving of £300k, however, they only tell half the story. The project succeeded because of the determination of Petty Officer Strachan and a handful of others who successfully engaged in the work. He remained focussed on attaining the maximum benefits for Defence and his determination to succeed never faltered, even in the face of severe climatic conditions and a sparsity of infrastructure. Indeed, Petty Officer Strachan was a beacon of enthusiasm and an outstanding example of what can be achieved by RFA personnel.

Petty Officer Strachan has given outstanding support to a high profile project, the success of which can be directly attributed to his relentless determination and professional skills. The RFA is fortunate to have people of his calibre and quality. He can be rightly proud of his efforts and is fully deserving of a Fleet Commander's Commendation."

FLEET COMMANDER'S COMMENDATION FOR 1/O TONY DAY

First Officer Tony Day receiving his commendation from Admiral Sir George Zambellas

First Officer Tony Day has received a FLEET Commander's Commendation for organising the replenishment of Royal Navy ships that were blockading the port of Benghazi in Libya in April 2011.

These Commendations are given to sailors, marines and civilians working across the Naval Service who have been nominated for exceptional performance in their unit.

A total of 19 personnel from across the Royal Fleet Auxiliary, Royal Navy and civilian staff has been awarded for outstanding efforts over the past year.

Fleet Commander Admiral Sir George Zambellas (now First Sea lord) presented the commendations at a special ceremony at Admiralty House, Portsmouth.

Adm Zambellas said: "Fleet Commander Commendations are my opportunity to recognise the particular contribution that our sailors, marines, RFA and civilian personnel make to the success of their units.

"I was delighted to be able to present my Commendations to so many exceptional men and women, in front of their families and friends, and to thank them personally for their hard-work and dedication."

First Officer Day, who was based on HMS Albion for this period, said: I was very proud to have received this commendation – the role of a task force underway replenishment coordinator is unique and always challenging.

(L-R) Robyn Scriens, 1/O Tony Day and Carolyn Day

"Arranging replenishment serials, maintaining the logistic supply line for a variety of task force units to meet their specific requirements and retain their full operational capability is very rewarding."

LETTERS

Please send any letters or correspondence to:
1/O RJ Lavender MBE
SO2 Media Operations (OPS 2)
MP 1.4 NCHQ
Leach Building
Whale Island
Portsmouth
PO2 8BY
Or email:
NAVY MEDIACOMMS-OPS-RFA@mod.uk

Around the World

RFA ARGUS has completed her Operational Sea Training and has conducted Flying Currency training with 820 NAS Merlins and 771 NAS SAR Sea Kings.

RFA BLACK ROVER is on Atlantic Patrol Task (South) duties.

RFA CARDIGAN BAY remains deployed east of Suez in support of naval assets. Most recently she has taken part in a Mine Counter Measures Exercise (MCMX) with RN and USN ships and aircraft in her role as mother/ Command Ship for the minehunters.

RFA DILIGENCE deployed in advance of the Response Force Task Force as part of this years COUGAR 13 Deployment. She is now East of Suez operating in support of National Tasking as well as taking part in the MCMX with RFA CARDIGAN BAY.

RFA FORT AUSTIN is deployed with the COUGAR 13 Task Force.

RFA FORT ROSALIE is in a Maintenance Period at Cammell Lairds.

RFA FORT VICTORIA remains deployed east of Suez and is currently acting as the Command Platform for Combined Task Force 151 (whose aim is to deter, disrupt and, if necessary, hunt down pirates). As well as supporting this, the ship has also been involved with this year's RFTG Deployment.

RFA GOLD ROVER is in Cammell Lairds, Birkenhead, for a well deserved Refit Period after her 21-month deployment to the South Atlantic.

RFA LYME BAY has deployed on EXERCISE COUGAR 13 as part of the Response Force Task Group.

RFA ORANGELEAF is operating in support of Flag Officer Sea Training off the south coast.

RFA MOUNTS BAY is deployed on COUGAR 13 with elements of 42 Commando RM embarked who took part in EXERCISE DRAGON HAMMER in Albania.

RFA WAVE KNIGHT continues in the role of Atlantic Patrol Task (North), along with HMS WESTMINSTER, conducting counter narcotic and disaster relief patrols off the east coast of North America. With her embarked team of RFA, RN and US Law Enforcement personnel, WAVE KNIGHT was responsible for intercepting 1276 KG of marijuana with a street value of £6.4m in September.

RFA WAVE RULER is now deployed East of Suez.

RFA CADET OF THE YEAR 2012

The daughters of Chief Officer Richard Jones RFA, Beth and Kim, present Thorsten with a miniature Quiach

Each year the Royal Fleet Auxiliary (RFA) presents The Richard Jones Award to the best Cadet.

The 2012 award was presented to Third Officer (X) Thorsten Brabetz by the Commodore of the RFA, Bill Walworth CBE and by the daughters of Richard Jones in March 2013.

Thorsten (41) joined the Royal Fleet Auxiliary as an Officer Cadet in June 2009. Attending Fleetwood Nautical Campus, Thorsten passed his MCA Orals in August 2012 after an exemplary Cadetship.

Third Officer Brabetz was selected for the Richard Jones award following outstanding performances at college, which resulted in him mentoring more junior cadets. In addition, he combined this with first-class sea going reports. Thorsten consistently demonstrated diligence and dedication throughout his time onboard and became an integral part of the Bridge Team wherever he served.

His last report as a Cadet was assessed as significantly above requirements and well fitted for promotion. His college reports were time and again outstanding with an exemplary motivation and attendance throughout his time at Fleetwood Nautical Campus. He is without any hesitation a very worthy recipient of the Richard Jones Award.

During his training Thorsten served on RFA Wave Ruler, Fort Rosalie and Mounts Bay.

Thorsten took up his first appointment as a qualified 3/O(X) on RFA Wave Knight in October 2012, only just returning to the UK from the ship which is currently deployed on Counter Narcotics and Disaster Relief Patrol in the North Atlantic.

The Richard Jones Award was first presented in 2000 after been set up in memory of Chief Officer Jones who had died the previous October. During his service with the RFA, Richard was closely involved with Cadet training and was instrumental in shaping the career structure of RFA Cadets. The award is in the form of an engraved Quaich, a traditional two-handled Scottish drinking bowl.

Cadet Awarded First IMarEST Prize

Officer Cadet Paul Walkden has been awarded two prestigious prizes for his initial training at Britannia Royal Naval College (BRNC).

Paul passed out of the College in the summer of 2012 with The Commodore's Trophy for the Most Outstanding RFA Student. He was presented with a further award by the Institute of Marine Engineering, Science and Technology (IMarEST) winning the RFA Cadet Award, the first time it has been presented.

His citation read: "Cadet Walkden not only proved himself highly capable under all the tested modules of the BRNC Course, but also under the daily scrutiny by staff, in which he never failed to impress."

Speaking of the award, Paul said: "I am honoured to receive the IMarEST prize; it has been a fantastic day."

The prize was awarded by Commodore Bill Walworth CBE RFA, and Mr. John Saunders, IMarEST Professional Development & Communication Executive at Naval Command Headquarters in Portsmouth.

The Institute of Marine Engineering, Science & Technology is the international membership body and learned society for all marine professionals. The IMarEST is a registered charity and is the first Institute to bring together marine engineers, scientists and technologists into one international multi-disciplinary professional body. It is the largest marine organisation of its kind with a worldwide membership based in over 100 countries.

Commodore Walworth CBE RFA, Cadet Paul Walkden and Mr. Saunders

The organisation's aim is to work with the global marine community to promote the scientific development of marine engineering, science and technology, providing opportunities for the exchange of ideas and practices and upholding the status, standards and expertise of marine professionals worldwide.

Cadet (X) Walkden joined the RFA in May 2012 as a Deck Cadet and is currently at Fleetwood Nautical College.

CAPTAIN SHAUN JONES OBE

Captain Shaun Jones has been invested as an Officer of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire (OBE) by HRH The Prince of Wales for his work commanding RFA Fort Victoria in the Gulf of Aden and Somali Basin.

RFA FORT VICTORIA's involvement in the task group extended to freeing a pirated Pakistani dhow and an Italian merchant ship (MV Montecristo) in October 2011. Both crews were liberated by Royal Marine boarding teams, with the pirates captured and sent for prosecution in Italy and the Seychelles.

Captain Shaun Jones OBE RFA with his wife, Stephanie, and children, Camilla and Adrian

Captain Jones said: "Being presented with the OBE by the Prince of Wales at Buckingham Palace in the company of all sorts of heroic and worthy people was a very humbling experience."

"Although I have the honour to wear this award, it is really a truly team award to all the personnel embarked in RFA Fort Victoria during our highly successful anti-piracy operations off Somalia."

Capt Jones, who returned home on leave in March from RFA Fort Victoria, said that during the counter-piracy patrol the ship had been involved in intercepting more than 35 suspected pirates and protected more than 40 sailors at risk of piracy attacks. "Our success would not have been possible without the support of staff ashore and most importantly our families and I will always be proud of our achievements in making the high seas safer for fellow mariners," said Captain Jones who is married to wife Stephanie.

His OBE citation said: "Captain Jones showed exemplary leadership and versatility throughout a period when RFA Fort Victoria was employed as the command and host platform for the UK's enhanced boarding capability.

It said later: "RFA Fort Victoria and her enhanced Counter Piracy Task Group achieved seven piracy disruptions, capturing a total of 36 Somali pirates which were handed over to the legal authorities and a further 22 were stripped of their equipment and sent back to Somalia."

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.

COMMODORE PRESTON OBE

Cdre Preston

The Royal Fleet Auxiliary's Senior Engineer has been recognised in the Queen's Birthday Honours List for achieving excellence in Engineering.

Commodore David Preston RFA heads up Commercially Supported Shipping at the Defence Equipment and Support organisation, based at Abbey Wood, in Bristol.

In this capacity he is responsible for the acquisition and in-service support of all the Royal Fleet Auxiliary, Ice Patrol and Hydrographic ships, as well as Offshore Patrol Vessels, all MOD Yachts and Boats and the Maritime Salvage Organisation.

This year marks his fortieth anniversary in the RFA and fittingly he has been awarded the OBE for his lasting legacy of Engineering excellence and outstanding record of improving ship acquisition and through life support.

Cdre Preston put his award down to effective teamwork saying: "I believe this award recognises the importance of the RFA and in particular its Engineering cadre in delivering real value to UK defence operations.

"Over the past decade my team at Abbey Wood has made real advances in delivering cost effective acquisition and support solutions and without doubt they have proven to be the most flexible, agile and innovative group that I have ever worked with."

David joined the RFA in September 1973 and has had a challenging and varied career.

But it was during the Falklands War that he feels the important role of the RFA became evident with many RFA ships deployed in support of the operation to retake the Islands.

He said: "This was when the real value of the Royal Fleet Auxiliary was eventually recognised and since then the RFA has evolved rapidly into one of the most effective and professional support organisations in the world."

Royal Honour For Captain Ferris MVO OBE RFA

(L-R) Julia, Mrs. Heather Ferris, Captain Ross Ferris MVO OBE RFA, Melloney and Phillippa

In Her Majesty's Diamond Jubilee Honours List, Captain Ross Ferris OBE RFA was made a Member of the Royal Victorian Order (MVO) for his work in RFA FORT ROSALIE earlier last year. Whilst on Atlantic Patrol Tasking (North) the ship was entrusted with acting as Royal Yacht, accommodating and transporting The Earl and Countess of Wessex on their tour of the Windward and Leeward Islands where they were representing Her Majesty the Queen on the Diamond Jubilee tour, February and March 2012.

Captain Ferris attended his investiture at Buckingham Palace in November and was presented the award by HM The Queen in person.

Captain Ferris said:" I was pleased to have been able to tell Her Majesty that the entire ship's company of RFA FORT ROSALIE were immensely proud to have been entrusted with such a high profile, important tour and very much enjoyed the experience."

"I am honoured that Her Majesty has recognized my part in it in such a way."

Accompanying Captain Ferris were his wife Heather and their daughters Julia, Melloney and Phillippa.

Membership in the Royal Victorian Order is conferred by the reigning monarch on those who have performed personal service for the sovereign or any member of her family. It was established by Queen Victoria in 1896 as a junior and personal order of knighthood.

THE WORSHIPFUL COMPANY OF COOK AWARDS 2013

Courtesy of Michael O'Sullivan Photography

Matt Rowberry

Courtesy of Michael O'Sullivan Photography

Whisky Walker

On the 6 March 2013 the Worshipful Company of Cooks held its annual prize winners lunch at the Innholders' Hall. Amongst the Service and Civilian Award Winners was Steward Andrew Walker who was awarded 'The RFA Steward of the Year' and CPO (Cook) Matt Rowberry who was awarded 'The RFA Chef of the Year'. These prizes are awarded by the Master of the Worshipful Company and are made to reward individual and team achievement as well as to encourage excellence.

THE JOHN COLES MEMORIAL TROPHY 2012

The John Coles Memorial Trophy is awarded to the RFA vessel which has excelled in training' throughout the reporting period 1 Jan 2012 to 20 Dec 2012.

The recipient of the 2012 Trophy is RFA FORT ROSALIE.

The ship completed a two week Directed Continuation Training (East of Suez) (DCT (EOS)) package in September; the first part conducted in the South Coast Exercise Areas and the final part on passage from the UK to Suez.

Training was conducted as the Ship changed roles from Atlantic Patrol Task (North) to undertake a specific task East of Suez. They demonstrated that from a warfare perspective they could defend themselves against multiple surface and single air threats as well as deal with the consequences of taking damage.

This was a positive performance by a proactive Ships Company proving their ability to control internal damage with strong Command and Control. The ship led training and preparations ahead of DCT,

The John Coles Memorial Trophy

which were conducted during a busy maintenance period prior to redeploying which paid dividends.

Well done to all concerned.

(The Trophy was dedicated to the memory of Chief Officer John Coles following his tragic death in a car accident in 1988.)

RFA ASSOCIATION

Chairman's Dit

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RFA Memorial

The RFA memorial was officially dedicated on 11th October in the presence of our patron HRH The Earl of Wessex KG GCVO ADC Commodore in Chief Royal Fleet Auxiliary. An otherwise dull day was brightened by the 140 guests who travelled to the National Memorial Arboretum at Alrewas from all ends of the country and by the colourful presence of the Royal Marine Band.

In February 2008 Captain Tony Pitt and I visited the National Memorial Arboretum and thought we should have our own RFA memorial and that we might be able to raise a couple of thousand pounds to cover the cost. Approximately two years later Commodore Bill Wallworth asked If I would continue this earlier survey and produce a memorial befitting the RFA of the 21st century.

We formed a team of 4, 2 RFAA one RFA and one artist. Each of us produced a plan but the best idea came from artist Rob Langford who produced the design of a bow sitting on a compass base. We added the seats and Keith Rackham, a director of H. L. Perfitt Ltd., the memorial maker, added the back panel to give added stature and presence. Tom Adams kindly volunteered to reseach RFA history which was checked and double checked before the engraving went ahead. I am happy to say that we achieved much more than we originally set out to do. Wonderful RFA support and the generosity of a number of benefactors helped raise some £40K which we hope will not only cover the build costs but the ongoing maintenance and cleaning charges for the next few years.

HRH has said the Memorial is a fitting tribute to the RFA and RFAA, and that he felt honoured to be there and have the chance to meet so many past & present members of the Service.

2013 Annual Dinner and AGM

The 2013 AGM and the reunion dinner will now be held at the Liner Hotel in Liverpool on Friday 24th May. The reunion dinner was last held here in 2009 and the hotel was a popular venue then and hopefully will be again. The hotel have promised to give us the same excellent deal. The AGM calling notice and more details about the reunion dinner will be posted on our website. www.rfa-association.org.uk The date coincides with the Battle of the Atlantic 70th anniversay – see details below.

Merchant Navy Medal Awards - 2012

Congratulations to this year's recipients, which include Commodore David Squire CBE, RFA Retd. Chairman, Merchant Navy Training Board for services to the Nautical Institute and Trinity House Merchant Navy Cadet Scholarship Scheme.

Remembrance Sunday.

The Association was represented in London by Captain Pat Thompson who laid a wreath at the Cenotaph.

Captain Pat Thompson represented the Association at the Cenotaph along with Captain Alan Roach & David Bolton

The wreaths are laid by Commodre Bill Wallworth OBE RFA representing the RFA Service and by myself on behalf of the RFA Association. Other wreaths were laid by our patron the Earl of Wessex KG KCVO ADC, Mrs Jane Wallworth on behalf of the widows and by Vice Admiral Richards Chief of Defence Intelligence on behalf of the Royal Navy and Royal Marines.
Photograph:Martin Greatbatch

Earl of Wessex's talks to the Memorial team. Captain Robin Lock OBE, Robert Langford, Keith Rackham, (Perfitts memorial maker), myself and Captain John Sail MNM MNI.

The 4 RFA standard bearers, Cadet David Rowe - RFA National Standard, Brian Taylor - National Association Standard, Gordon Monks - London Standard, Ray Jago - Plymouth Standard are between the twin ensigns of the RFA Service and RFA Association with the Royal Marine band behind.

In the Marquee after the Dedication Service.
Photographs: David Gerrard.

In Plymouth the RFA Contingent with the Branch Standard assembled at the Citadel and marched to the Naval War Memorial on the Hoe, lead by The Royal Marine Band, in time for the ceremony at 1100. A wreath was laid at the Memorial by Commodore Peter Lannin after which all the 100 or so veterans marched back to the Citadel.

Remembrance service in Plymouth. Richard Walker, John Redhead, Peter Lannin and Ray Jago

At Marchward Captain Brian Waters laid a wreath on behalf of the RFAA at the Marchwood Falklands Memorial together with reps from COMRFA, the Sir Galahad Association, Marchwood Parish Council and the Army, following the service in St John's Church. Retired WO2 Jim Wright (SWO, RFA SIR GERAINT, 1982 and a Friend of the Solent Branch) played the pipes.

The Solent Branch of the RFAA much values it's connections with Marchwood and is grateful for the generosity of the community there in erecting and maintaining the memorial. It is believed the Marchwood Memorial is the only one raised specifically for the RFA by a local community."

Battle of the Atlantic 70th Anniversary

The First Sea Lord and Liverpool City Council have given their full support to a series of events commemorating the 70th Anniversary of the Battle of the Atlantic (BOA 70). This will be the major National event in 2013 with Liverpool at its focus.

The event is timed to coincide with the late May Bank Holiday 24-27 May 2013 and includes: visiting ships being open to the Public, a charity Royal Marine Band Concert at the Liverpool Philharmonic Hall on Saturday 25 May, a Service of Remembrance at Liverpool Anglican Cathedral followed by a March/Fly Past on Sunday 26 May and a themed period event at St George's Hall, Liverpool on Monday 27 May, again with music from the Band of Her Majesty's Royal Marines. In addition to Royal Navy warships, vessels from the USA, Canada, Germany and Russia are anticipated and the First Sea Lord will be the senior host for Heads of Foreign Navies, Maritime Associations and relevant Trade Associations.

The National event will highlight the crucial importance of UK maritime trade and the leading part that Liverpool has played, and continues to play, in worldwide commerce as well as commemorating the heroism and sacrifice of the veterans of the convoy campaign in the Second World War.

Should anyone be interested in attending this event or the service in the Anglican Cathdral please could they contact me.

Frank Andrews

FOR SERVICE, SEAFARERS AND FAMILIES

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

Gordon Butterworth - Memorial Service

The memorial service for Captain Gordon Butterworth was held at St Andrews Church Plymouth on 19th October.

There was never a prospect that we would fill a Church as large as St Andrew's, but the many family members, friends & colleagues who gathered there today made a good attempt.

Following a ceremonial entry led by local RFAA & MNA Standards the Service, admirably conducted by the Reverend James Tabor, proceeded with moving prayers and the traditional rousing hymns.

Eulogies by Cdre William Walworth, Cdre Peter Lannin & Captain Tony Pitt recounted the different aspects of his distinguished career and later life in retirement.

These were followed by an amusing & touching family tribute from Gavin Butterworth with his memories of Grandpa Gordon.

Afterwards the Congregation, many of whom had travelled from afar, gathered over refreshments for personal recollections and the renewal of auld acquaintance.

Captain David Gerrard

Father of the Fleet

Gordon was one of our most senior captains and was selected to succeed Captain Alec MacWiliam as Chief Marine Superintendent in 1981. A difficult time for the RFA - redundancies, the study into full-scale navalisation, funding difficulties and no cohesive training strategy.

The management of the RFA at the time was horizontal with all the levers and money in the hands of civil service management so that the professionals at times felt powerless to influence or implement the many necessary reforms to create a modern service. Gordon worked with the system in play with a mixture of pragmatism and Yorkshire determination, without doubt setting in motion the creation of the modern RFA Service we have today - a unique civilian shipping enterprise led and managed entirely by its seamen and engineers.

In 1982, in the second year in office, the Falkland's were invaded and at very short notice the RFA was pitch forked into a pivotal role of providing, maintaining and managing a huge logistical shipping effort which involved every man and boy in the Service. Gordon surrounded himself with a small highly professional team and led the Service brilliantly in dealing with all the preparation, support and advice to the seagoers, and with the joys and sorrows that followed.

Following the Falklands there was renewed public interest and awareness of the RFA and its role resulting in a new pride in the Service, and a new identity. Gordon capitalized on this and continued to press for reforms in training, arming the ships and preparing the crews to man the emerging new classes of RFA. At his instigation the Service was granted a new badge formed of sea tritons and an anchor, created by the College of Heralds and approved by Her Majesty. Uniform was introduced, not previously issued to ratings, and the public began to see smartly turned out parties at national events in the capital, identified by their distinct blue uniform and mid-blue beret.

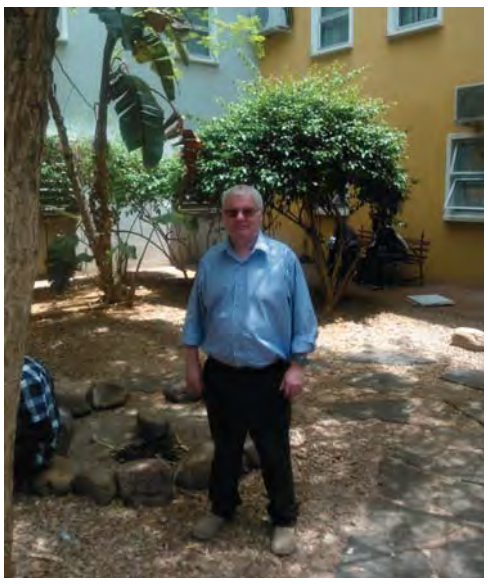
GB retired late in 1985 and was made a CBE (Mil) in the 1986 New Years Honours. He and his wife Phyllis retired to their lovely home of forty years in Saltash, and there he kept a close eye on his former charges through the splendid views he enjoyed down the Tamar toward the Hamoaze. The couple were probably the most famous in the RFA, Phyllis having shared many of Gordon's travels and adventures at sea, and the two remained in close touch with colleagues.

Gordon was a frequent and popular after dinner speaker at mess nights, and there was also always a warm welcome at Dunvegan (their Saltash home) for visiting officers, with a round of golf at St Mellion also a possibility. Very sadly Gordon was widowed after only five years of retirement, and this was a great personal blow, shared by his many friends. However he continued to inspire and interact with both serving and retired colleagues in the following years, becoming President of the RFA Association when that was formed in 2001.

Declining health obliged Gordon to retire finally in 2005, and he did so on the occasion of the appointment by Her Majesty of HRH the Earl Of Wessex as Patron of the Association on board RFA Fort George. He had earned the position of "Father of the Fleet" and he certainly made an outstanding contribution to the life and development of the RFA Service.

Captain Rex Cooper

Trustee moves



Richard Fernley in Namibia

Two of the Association's trustees have moved abroad for a long period of time Richard Fernley has moved to Namibia for 16 months and Chris Locke to the Falkland Islands. Whist it is possible to run the associations's affairs whilst abroad and we have suceeded in using a skype link once with Chris it is clearly better to meet face to face. Accordingly both Richard and Chris have put their trusteeship on hold until they return to UK. In their place Captain Ray Bennett has offered us his services which we have been delighted to accept.

Richard Fernley is working on a project for Namibian Ministry of Education, setting up a country wide supply system for textbooks.

Chris Locke is the Queens Harbour Master at Port Stanley, Falkland Islands

RFA Bayleaf Final Voyage

Bayleaf was launched in 1981and during her life was used to supply and refuel ships in the Falklands War in 1982, the Gulf War in 1991, and the invasion of Iraq in 2003, She sailed on her final voyage on 3rd August this year from Portsmouth to a scrap yard in Izmir, Turkey.

The Association has been given permission to make a limited number of copies of this picture painted by Jack Rigg when the ship returned from the Falklands in 1982. Copies are available for sale for just £10 which includes P & P.

If you would like a copy please contact Captain Pat Thompson at:-

deputy.chairman@rfa-association.org.uk

CROSSED THE BAR

David Marsden, a former Supply Officer died on 18 August. His funeral was 3rd September at Hamble Church. The RFAA was well represented and there were probably about 150 - 200 people there in total. David was given a splendid send off and his coffin was draped with an RFA ensign.

Ken Morrison. Ken died suddenly on 1st September from an Aortic aneurysm (rupture of the Aorta). He was 58. The funeral was well attended – with Martin Tromen, Dave Barker, Russ Taylor, Duncan Garford and Terry Simmons. The crematorium in Hastings was full with standing room only. His partner, Carol, his children, Katie and Pete and Heather his ex-wife, were there. His son, Pete, wore his Dad's medals and spoke very movingly about his father. Everybody who sailed with Ken will remember him with affection as he was such a good shipmate and friend.

John Cooper a former motorman died 13th September and his funeral was held on 25 September. His coffin was draped with an RFA ensign

Did you know that the RFA Association is open to all seafarers and retired members of the RFA?

Its purpose is to care for the RFA Community, their families, and their dependents, afloat and ashore.

- There is an annual dinner held at different venues around UK (in 2013 it will be Liverpool)
- We help keep both serving and ex seafarers in touch
- Maintain the history, culture and ethos of the service by retaining many RFA artefacts that are available to view and borrow
- Run our own website: www.rfa-association.org.uk
- Have professional contacts, give advice in times of need which can help when afloat or ashore
- Answer questions that often arise in retirement
- Can assist in times of bereavement.

Will you consider joining and help us to continue our work?
Membership is just £15 per year.
Request a joining form by emailing *dawn@rfa-association.org.uk*
telephone 01772 685427
or visit our website www.rfa-association.org.uk
The RFA Association for all RFA's family and friends.

BRNC UNCUT

Passing out through Britannia Royal Naval College has become an established part of Officer Training within the Royal Fleet Auxiliary. 2012 has, however, seen a reinvigorated syllabus concentrating more on the requirements of the RFA and our unique identity. From the summer intake we have an Engineer Cadets perspective of his time on course and from the Autumn Term that of a Deck Cadet.

RFA Summer Term

RFA Autumn Term (with a stray Bish)

BRNC THROUGH THE EYES OF AN ENGINEERING CADET

On the 20th May 2012, twelve RFA Cadets walked through the gates of Britannia Royal Naval College (BRNC), Dartmouth, in order to begin the INT RFA course which would last for the next eight weeks. The course was made up of a mixture of Deck and Engineer Cadets; I was one of the six engineers. This is a brief account of our time at Dartmouth and the benefits obtained from an engineer's perspective.

The evening of arrival saw us unpacking our newly, issued uniforms and beginning one of the seemingly endless ironing and polishing sessions which would become our nightly routine. On Monday morning, the Cadets emerging from cabins already looked completely different from the night before, even though some tram lines and dull shoes still existed at this stage. The first week consisted mainly of administrative lectures, introductions to the College and of course, lots of physical training. Period Zero PT sessions were not however obligatory for RFA Cadets but in order to further integration and mutual respect with our RN colleagues we decided, as a division, to attend these early morning sessions. It also helped us massively with the fitness levels required for the leadership development exercises held on Dartmoor later in the course.

Our Divisional Officer, 2/O(X) Alex Townsend has gone to great lengths to improve the syllabus of the course in order to further understanding of the differences between the various departments in the RFA. The advantages of this are obvious, as Cadets going on not only to Fleetwood and Warsash but also into the wider fleet, will have a better appreciation and therefore respect for what each branch does and the unique difficulties they face. This in turn allows working for each other to be more easily achieved as the reasons for carrying out certain procedures or manoeuvres may be more easily understood.

The primary aspect of the course where 2/O(X) Townsend has sought to achieve this is the time spent by Cadets on the River Dart in both the whalers and picket boats. Our first exposure to the water was in the smaller, single screw whalers. In these boats we learnt basic concepts of seamanship such as effects of tide and wind and how these factors can make life extremely difficult for Deck Officers not only in daily manoeuvres at sea but more importantly, when coming alongside or securing to a buoy. All of the Engineer Cadets carried out these manoeuvres, as well as man overboard drills in what was a relatively busy section of the river.

Once tickets had been gained in the whalers, we moved onto the larger, twin screw picket boats, in which we carried out the same manoeuvres as before but were able to appreciate the precision and range of movement that can be achieved with two screws rather than one, whilst factoring in wind and tide. Enclosed space turns were also carried out in the picket boats which for a few, was quite an entertaining experience! Many if not all of things would probably never have been experienced by the engineers and by doing so, I believe that it allows us to appreciate how difficult it can be and why sometimes (not always!),

certain demand are placed on engines and systems alike. This can only be a good thing in terms of broadening understanding between the two branches.

Moving into the classroom, we were given a brief introduction into navigation and chart reading. As an engineer, the various almanacs and global tide variations etc were enough to reinforce in my mind that I had chosen the right branch for me and will be glad to leave that to the Deck Cadets when we arrive at Fleetwood! Once again though, it did raise awareness of this side of seamanship.

Our eight weeks at BRNC passed extremely quickly and I have omitted accounts of ceremonial drill and leadership exercises on Dartmoor as theses were things common to Deck and Engineer Cadet alike and alien to us all. This article focuses on how the course benefited us as engineers and,hopefully, I have described that above. We now move onto Fleetwood and Warsash for the next phase of our training with a much greater understanding of the challenges faced by the Deck branch and that can only be beneficial to the smooth running of a ship. Whilst this understanding may be greater, it will never (hopefully) alleviate the good natured banter that obviously exists between the two branches and that compliments morale. Nor will it change the fact that engineers are clearly the best and, whether it be single screw or twin screw, no one is going anywhere without us!

CDT(E) Tim Garland RFA

BRNC: THE VIEW FROM THE BRIDGE

Having just left education after receiving my A levels, I could not wait for the summer to end and begin my career with the RFA. This all started at Britannia Royal Naval College (BRNC) where we completed an 8 week course. It was designed to inform us about all aspects of the RFA but also to give us a chance to integrate with the Royal Naval Officer Cadets. This was to understand what they do and why as we will be working closely alongside them in the future.

Arriving at BRNC for the first time, I was struck by the unbelievable architecture and the sheer size of the building. It was a daunting position to be in; having just left home and standing in front of such a magnificent building where I would spend the next eight weeks of my life. Having met my fellow cadets on an induction day a week prior, I was at ease and excited to start some new friendships.

The accommodation was basic providing all the essentials: a bed, sink and wardrobe. It was everything you would expect from a naval college. More glamorously, we were able to eat in the Senior Gun Room. This was where senior students would eat and looked like something out of Hogwarts. For the first few weeks it was mesmerising. To top it off the food was top quality, satisfying all our ever hungry stomachs.

During the course we studied a variety of subjects including: maritime operations, strategic studies, ship tech, meteorology, navigation and RFA specific lectures. There was a worry that some of these would not be relevant to us as we are at a Royal Naval College. Thankfully, all lessons were derived back to why it was relevant to us, making lessons more interesting and enjoyable. Strategic studies were the lessons I most looked forward to. Mostly because it was history orientated, but also our lecturer seemed to have infinite enthusiasm grabbing all of our attention (think Jack Black in 'The School of Rock).

The main reason we spend time at BRNC is to improve our leadership. This was primarily done during Basic Leadership Training (BLD) and then followed by Assessed Basic Leadership Exercise (ABLE). While on BLD and ABLE we performed numerous practical leadership tasks as a leader and as a team member. Both were mentally and physically taxing. ABLE, is designed to deprive you of sleep and comfort over a 72 hour period in order to impact on your leadership ability. It was challenging for all of us but truly rewarding. Dartmoor is unforgiving but somebody must have been watching over us, as the weather held up during our time in the field making the experience much more pleasant. Having seen how hard the Royal Naval Officer Cadets are trained, everyone on the course has gained great respect for them and I for one will be happy to work side by side with them.

We had numerous opportunities to take advantage of the river facilities at BRNC. Using both motor whalers and Pickett Boats we performing varying manoeuvres, and as a result, immensely improved our seamanship skills. Every occasion out on the river was great fun. My personal favourite however was the rib acquaint. These were power boats and on them we reached insane speeds while crashing through waves and performing tight turns. We all received numerous bumps and bruises but it was completely worth it.

One major obstacle on the course was ceremonial training (CT). Marching began as a timing nightmare with everyone out of step with each other. This began to improve through the weeks with our very own Cadet McCubbin taking charge with his powerful voice. It all came together on our final day. Our pass out parade went brilliantly with everyone marching to the beat and in sync. It was the perfect way to impress our families at the end of our course.

Studying at BRNC was an absolute privilege. and an experience I will never forget. My time here was one I will treasure having made great friends; ones which I fully expect to last through the rest of my career. Going forward from here, I feel confident in moving on into nautical college. There is no doubt that BRNC has put myself and the rest of my peers in a great position to excel.

Cadet (X) Huw Lewis

RFA OFFICERS PASS OUT OF BRNC (The Official Story)

A group of 11 new Officers recruited for the Royal Fleet Auxiliary (RFA) have completed their initial training at Britannia Royal Naval College (BRNC).The Officer Cadets who began their training in September marched out onto the parade ground at BRNC in front of their families and friends to be inspected by Captain Duncan Lamb, RFA, Deputy Assistant Chief of Staff Afloat Support Strategic Development.

Also taking part in the parade were over 70 Royal Navy Officer Cadets, at varying stages of their training at BRNC.

Captain Jerry Kyd, the Commanding Officer of BRNC, said:

"The RFA fleet provides vital support to the Royal Navy in allowing ships to remain deployed anywhere in the world.

"The training we provide to RFA personnel here at BRNC ensures that they are fully conversant with the way the Royal Navy operates and brings with it mutual benefits.

"These Cadets have worked hard over the last eight weeks to complete the course.

"I hope they will build upon the skills they have learned here to realise their potential and have a very successful career."

The RFA's initial training course for Officers is underpinned by the core maritime skills that are the foundations of naval life, together with an overview of RFA tasking, which are essential in providing the joint operational effectiveness between the RFA and Royal Navy.

The course includes time on the River Dart, fitness sessions and also teaches the Cadets how to operate and lead in the field.

Command, leadership and management training is a constant thread throughout the course with coaching, mentoring and development activities emphasized throughout.

The eight week course is progressive and designed to ensure that the students are equipped to undertake further professional maritime training at the Fleetwood Nautical College, before taking their place at sea.

RFA FORT ROSALIE AWARDED THE CENTENARY WEDGEWOOD BOWL

Wedgewood Bowl

The Royal Fleet Auxiliary Centenary Wedgewood Bowl is an annual award for Humanitarian Aid and International Relations.

The recipient of the award for 2012 is RFA FORT ROSALIE for her outstanding contribution towards international relations. RFA FORT ROSALIE was deployed to the Caribbean from December 2011 until June 2012. During her deployment she engaged in High Level Defence Diplomacy, most notably supporting 'The UK Caribbean Forum' in Grenada in February. Foreign Ministers and Prime Ministers of practically every Caribbean island and bordering country attended, as well as four Ministers (including the Foreign Secretary).

A very high level and intense visit to Veracruz, Mexico, at the request of the UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office and the British Embassy also occurred in February.

FTR

The ship either contributed to or hosted several seminars and events, including a major reception co-hosted by the Commanding Officer and the Ambassador.

The ship visited Cuba at the end of May, a country which, in terms of protocol and Defence Diplomacy, is very important to the United Kingdom. A key aim of the visit was strengthening the Counter Narcotics collaboration between British and Cuban authorities and a very productive meeting was held onboard RFA FORT ROSALIE with the Cuban Ministry of the Interior to discuss details of this work. The visit concluded with Cuba's British Culture Week and the 250th Anniversary of the Battle of Havana.

RFA FORT ROSALIE conducted a two week tour of the Windward and Leeward Islands with Their Royal Highnesses the Earl and Countess of Wessex embarked. This was in support of Her Majesty's Diamond Jubilee,

FTRO-Veracruz

where the ship served as a 'Royal Yacht' with all of the protocol and diplomatic pressures that this entailed; including holding a Royal Reception in Barbados hosted by their Royal Highnesses, operating a Royal Barge (created onboard from a 11 metre workboat) and dressing ship every day, all without external assistance.

All these events were characterised by the strongest of plaudits from Attaches, High Commissions, Embassies and Their Royal Highnesses.

(The RFA Centenary Wedgwood Bowl was donated by Josiah Wedgwood & Sons Limited and presented to Commodore R C Thornton RFA, at the Dover Maritime Festival on the 24 March 2006, by the Minister for Shipping, Dr Stephen J Ladyman MP.)

CHIEF ENGINEERING OFFICER ROGER STEVENS RETIRES

Roger and Gill with their retirement gift and the Officers of RFA WAVE KNIGHT, Bill Carson of Cammell Laird and Rob Duckworth of Seaking Ltd

At the appointed hour on 6th December 2012, with the wind and rain bucketing down on No.1 Jetty Devonport, Roger Stevens finally ditched his younger love (WAVE KNIGHT) for somebody far more deserving and 'leggy' – his wife Gill.

The ever-present MEO of WAVE KNIGHT – well it seems that way at least – eventually achieved the coveted status of Chief Engineer for a trip and retired in the knowledge that he reached the peak of his chosen profession on the best ship in the RFA Flotilla.

The Officers' Mess, along with a secretly squirreled away Mrs Stevens and some fitting representation from Cammell Lairds and Seaking Ltd, duly did the honours on behalf of ship and Service. Some great dits and messages of salutations ensued from a very wide arc: Commodore Walworth, Graham Turner, Ian Schumaker, Paul Jenkins, Martin Stone, Ian McDonald, Tim Henshaw, Nigel Sim (on behalf of FTS), Mike Tarrant, Paul Griffin and Alex Shore to name a good few.

The message was clear: a great professional, a great shipmate, great memories and a great all-round bloke who will be sorely missed. Enjoy your retirement Roger; you've deserved it.

Roger was awarded the first honorary Officers Mess Membership.

Forty Eight Years In a Blue Suit

After an amazing 48 years in a blue suit First Officer Chris Jordan, the Royal Fleet Auxiliary's Afloat Development Officer, is finally hanging up his cap.

Chris joined the Royal Navy as a 15 year old Boy Seaman before been commissioned in 1978 and specialising in Gunnery. His first contact with the RFA occurred in 1983 when, in the post-Falklands world, he was appointed as our 'first' Defensive Weapons Officer and developed the RFA Gunnery Training at HMS COLLINGWOOD. His enthusiasm for the RFA and Gunnery culminated in FOST sea rides and the creation of the 'Jordan Trophy' for the RFA ship that achieved the best scores for Above Water Warfare.

Awarded an MBE in 1997 for his work as the Royal Navy's Ceremonial Training Officer, he left the service after 35 years service.

In 2001 he joined the RFA and became the Afloat Training Officer, later known as the Afloat Development Officer. As a First Officer he was responsible for all RFA Officers and Ratings new entry training, which included NVQ Portfolio Training, ensuring that standards were achieved and maintained. Chris was also responsible for the RFA's

Ceremonial events including the Presentation of The Queen's Colour to the RFA and the dedication of the RFA Memorial at the National Memorial Arboretum as well as the annual RFA presence at the November Ceremonies.

Our thanks and best wishes go to Chris and his wife Susanne, for a long happy and healthy retirement, as they plan their tours of Australia, New Zealand, Italy and Canada; we hope to see them both at future RFA events.

SHIPPING FESTIVAL SERVICE AT WINCHESTER CATHEDRAL

Pictured with the Princess Royal are LH (AA) R Bowey and CR1 S Halliwell

A Shipping Festival Service was held at Winchester Cathedral on Thursday 13th June as a mark of thanks to the continuing prosperity of the shipping industry in Hampshire and for the seafarers who serve and contribute towards it. This year's annual service saw a royal visit by the Princess Royal - Princess Anne, accompanied by the Lord Lieutenant of Hampshire, the Mayor of Southampton and also the Mayor of Winchester.

Representing the Royal Fleet Auxiliary was LH(AA) R Bowey, CR1 S Halliwell and SG1A C Clark with 2/O (E) M Peet RVM as the Ceremonial Officer.

The service has been held each year since 1930, apart from a break during World War Two.

LH(AA) Bowey and CR1 Halliwell (on the right) bring in the RFA Ensign

RFA DARKDALE MEMORIAL ST HELENA

(Courtesy of St Helena Museum)

As the Battle of the Atlantic Commemorations were conducted in the UK, RFA BLACK ROVER remembered one of our own lost during that campaign.

In October 1941, RFA DARKDALE was the station tanker based at St. Helena operating in support of ships using the Cape Convoy Routes. Just after midnight on the 22nd the German submarine U-68 torpedoed her causing the DARKDALE to explode, turn over and sink within five minutes; 41 members of the ship's company were killed.

RFA BLACK ROVER visited the island in late May this year and landed a party of volunteers to maintain the Jamestown cenotaph upon which a plaque is placed to remember the lives lost on RFA DARKDALE.

And to remind our colleagues who went down with her that the Royal Fleet Auxiliary has not forgotten them.

(L-R) SG1A Andrew Baird, SG2 Simon Wood and SG1A Stephen Betts

RFA WAVE KNIGHT AMIGOS

Offer a challenge to the KNIGHT – and it will be taken up. Look at these upstanding Mo-mbers of the ship's company. Nine Knights or is it nine Amigos. Whatever it is, MOVEMBER month didn't improve their looks as testified by the judges. Well done to LH(C) Steve Gill for sporting his fan-TACHE-tic mo which was judged least ugly. A big pat on the back goes to 1/O(X) McMenemy for carrying the baton and overseeing the raising of £200 plus for Testicular and Prostate Cancer Research.

**The Competitors (L-R): MO-Voltage (aka 1/O (SE); MO-ET (aka MEO Stuart Hope);
The Three MO-sketeers (aka 2/O (X) Gordon Peebles, LH(C) Steve Gill and XO Jed McAnley);
The Three Amig-MOs (aka FOX Steve McMenemy, 2/O (E) Mike Lynch and 2/O (SE) Jozef Wiacek)
and Hulk- MO-gan aka 3/O (LS) Jamie Smith)**

**The Finalists (L to R): 3rd place – 2/O Jozef Wiacek; Runner-up – 3/O Jamie Smith (Gangs of New York)
and the Winner - LH(C) Steve Gil**

Martin Dallen 1959 - 2012

It is with much regret that we mark the passing of Second Officer (E) Martin Dallen on 27 April 2012. Martin was diagnosed with cancer a few weeks after leaving RFA Cardigan Bay which was to be his last ship. Martin leaves his father Maurice and mother Pat from Rolvenden Kent. Martin was with P&O before joining the RFA in May 1998 and during his career served in all but one class of RFA. His father emphasised how much Martin enjoyed serving with the RFA and often spoke well of his time and experiences throughout his service. Martin's funeral service was held in Rolvenden Church Kent attended by his colleagues from sea and RFA HQ.

BZ MINI CHOFF ONE – RFA FORT AUSTIN SWIMATHON

As part of SWIMATHON 2013 Sophia Lewis (aka Mini ChOff No.1), who is only 8 years old, swam One-and-a-half Kilometres in 41 minutes at the River Park Leisure Centre, Winchester. This was to raise valuable funds for Marie Curie Cancer Care and the Swimathon Foundation.

Swimathon is the world's biggest fundraising swimming event and takes place every April in hundreds of pools across the UK. It is now in its 26th year with more than half a million swimmers taking part, swimming the equivalent of 25 times around the world and raising over £36 million for charity. The SWIMATHON the Foundation offers grants to organisations and individuals who provide and promote swimming to their local community.

It's proven that taking regular exercise can improve health and wellbeing; sometimes a little extra funding can help take this message to a lot more people.

Sophia managed to raise £405 in total of which the Captain, Officers and Crew of RFA FORT AUSTIN contributed £220.

A BIG THANK YOU TO ALL WHO DONATED.

(Chief Officer Miles Lewis)

WAVE KNIGHT MCC

Members of RFA WAVE KNIGHT's Ships Company were lucky enough to hire Harley Davidson's for a period of 24hrs during an AMP Mayport, FL. This is their story...

The excitement was palpable as we collected the keys to our Hogs from the ADAMEC Harley Davidson dealership, Bay-meadows Road, Jacksonville. With mountains of chrome gleaming in the winter sun, each rider carefully inspected their own chosen machine before setting out on our adventure. Be warned though, Harleys by nature are extremely large and heavy and are not for the faint hearted, even for experienced motorcycle riders like ourselves. However, after a few tentative laps around the outside of the dealership enabling us to get used to our chromed monsters, our pillions tentatively made their way onboard.

Our route to Daytona Beach involved riding along the excellent scenic A1A coastal route which takes you direct to Daytona via the City of St Augustine (North America's oldest City). By the time we reached the outskirts of Daytona it was dark. Too dark in fact, so engrossed in our riding, it transpired that we were still wearing our shades!

Once removed, we eventually rolled into Daytona. Having checked into the hotel it was time to check out main street with many famous biker bars and haunts, including the world famous Dirty Harry's.

The next morning saw many photos taken at the famous Daytona Beach sign. (As you will note on the photograph, we attempted to hold up the traffic flow as long as possible!) Then following an epic breakfast at Rossi's Diner, we headed back to Jacksonville via route 17 which took us into the real Florida, which is dotted here and there with farming communities, light traffic and pot-hole free roads. Then thundering up route 1 in diamond formation, Sons of Anarchy style (well, sort of...) we had a quick pit stop at the Cheyenne bar, a full on Harley extravaganza with many different models ridden by locals and people from afar. I have to add that everyone we encountered on our trip was extremely friendly and we enjoyed a hassle free trip. Then before we knew it, and with much sadness, it was time to return to ADAMEC and handover the keys.

Everyone was reluctant to end their ride, having had a unique trip and all of us sporting the widest grins. Our trip has inspired some of the pillions to take their motorcycle test when they return home to the UK. ADAMEC were friendly, knowledgeable and gave us a hefty military discount.

They are highly recommended. So, if you find yourself in Mayport, and are seeking a motorcycling adventure...

The riders, bikes & pillions...

2/O (C) Gary "Opie" Barrowcliffe – Heritage Soft Tail – Pillion, 3/O (LS) Jamie "Prospect" Smith

3/O (E) Fraser "Clay" Church – Road King – Pillion, Cadet (E) Daniel "Prospect" Renshaw

LH (E) Martin "Jax" Bradshaw – Ultra Glide – Pillion, Asst (CK) Rebecca "Gemma" Cosham

MM1 Lee "Piney" Chittenden – V-Rod

Story by 2/O(C) G Barrowcliffe

WAVE KNIGHT CHARITY EVENING

The XO tests his nerves

A Charity volunteer in the Sponge Stocks

Following a hectic three day stay at Miami where RFA WAVE KNIGHT hosted an Official Reception in support of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office Disaster Management Conference, it was decided to hold a Charity event and BBQ at sea prior to our next port.

The event proved a huge success and included a Charity Auction, Water Sponge Stocks and a Lucky Dip Prize Draw.

The total amount raised for the Ship's chosen Charity (Wishes and Dreams) was £668.00p.

Deadline for submissions to the next Gunline is 31 March 2014

Keep in touch with the RFA when at home

Want to keep up to date with what's going on in the RFA whilst on leave? If so, make sure your email address is registered in Magellan (via your appointer or the Ship's Office). Once you are on our mailing list we will make sure that you receive all the latest information as it is released. This currently includes a fortnightly newsletter covering all the latest news, and copies of any (unclassified) briefs and bulletins that you normally see onboard ship. So if you want to receive these updates, sign up today!

LETTERS

Please send any letters or correspondence to:
1/O RJ Lavender MBE
SO2 Media Operations (OPS 2)
MP 1.4 NCHQ
Leach Building
Whale Island
Portsmouth
PO2 8BY
Or email:
NAVY MEDIACOMMS-OPS-RFA@mod.uk

THE CHARITY FOR CIVIL SERVANTS - HELPING YOU

In 2011 the Charity's helpline received over 9.300 calls asking for advice and support. They helped over 100 people with mobility issues, put a roof over the heads of 229 people, helped 250 individuals with immediate needs following an emergency such as fire or flood and helped just under 6,000 struggling with money worries.

The charity is here to help all civil servants, current, former and retired, as well as their financial dependents, for life. That includes us as members of the Royal Fleet Auxiliary. You might have a family member struggling with caring issues; or a colleague struggling with stress; the charity's friendly advice line workers will listen with a confidential ear and provide the appropriate information and support – they'll also point you in the right direction if you requiremore specialist advice. Their help and advice line is open from Monday to Friday, 8.30 am to 5.00 pm tel: 0800 056 2424 or see www.foryoubyyou.org.uk

LETTER FROM MERRICK WILLIS, CEO CHARITY FOR CIVIL SERVANTS

"I was a soldier in my younger days and had the pleasure of being a "guest" of the Royal Fleet Auxiliary on several memorable trips! I'm also well aware of the support shown to the Armed Service charities by MOD civil servants and other organisations like RFA who work alongside them.

But since taking responsibility for the Charity for Civil Servants, I've been concerned at how few non-military MOD staff are aware of their own in-house charity, and who therefore benefit from our support. My message is simple: of course you must support your colleagues in the Armed Services, but please don't forget your civilian colleagues who may be in need and don't forget we're here for all of you in the RFA if you need us.

The Armed Service charities can rely on public generosity for funds. But our Charity depends on donations from civilian staff, serving and retired, to do our good work. Sadly, donation levels within MOD are well below those elsewhere in the Civil Service and this may be because not enough people are aware of what we do.

I hope to work more closely with colleagues in MOD to give the Charity higher visibility, to encourage more MOD staff, including RFA, to use our services and to increase the number among them who support our work via donations. Please do take a look at our website www.foryoubyyou.org.uk to learn more about how we can help each other."

DAVID PELLS, ROYAL FLEET AUXILIARY

David Pells was paralysed after an accident whilst working abroad with the Royal Fleet Auxiliary. When he asked if we could help towards the cost of a mobility car to help him get out and about we were only too pleased to help.

Over time David's condition improved; he started a wheelchair rugby team and applied for a further grant towards a specially adapted chair, allowing him to enjoy his sport to the full. Then with the aid of additional funding towards day chairs he completed an Honours degree in ICT. Today although work commitments mean he no longer plays rugby, he's still actively involved in the club's day-to-day running and recently helped celebrate it's 10th anniversary.

He reflects: "In terms of the support the Charity has given me - including towards the day chairs, it's just been fantastic – particularly because purchasing a chair that fits my day to day needs rather than one from the local services made a huge impact in terms of my independence."

The Charity for Civil Servants — for you by you

THE ROYAL FLEET AUXILIARY
CALENDAR 2014

The calendar features the activities of the Royal Fleet Auxiliary over the last 12 months and the success achieved on a global basis. Each month illustrates an aspect of Royal Fleet Auxiliary service and the professionalism displayed by the RFA in all its duties.

The quality calendar is in full colour, 297mm square in size and spiral-bound.

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TIDE CLASS AUXILIARY OILERS

Most of the TIDE-Class Acquisition Team.

Introduction

TIDE-Class Auxiliary Oilers are a fleet of four brand new ships that will be built by Daewoo Shipbuilding and Marine Engineering (DSME) in South Korea for entry into RFA service in the second half of this decade.

By now you are probably aware of the ship design and build programme and you've probably seen that the four ships have been given names: Tidespring, Tiderace, Tidesurge and Tideforce. Way back in March 2012 you probably also noticed one or two articles in the newspapers announcing the contract being let to DSME.

You may have seen statistics equating cargo carrying capacity to Olympic sized swimming pools and ship's length as measured against Blackpool tower. What I want to do through this article is to tell you more – not through the medium of silly statistics beloved of "red top" newspapers, but more what you are likely to see on the ships and the facts which will be of direct interest to you.

Capable Cargo Carriers

In describing the TIDE-Class Auxiliary Oilers, think of Wave-Boats and you will have a good basis to imagine what the ships will be like. The Tides will be slightly larger with a cargo carrying capacity of around 19,000 cubic metres.

The cargo tanks will be configured three abreast with the centreline tanks designated as issue tanks. Surrounding these will be ballast water tanks which provide the "double hull" to meet international legislation. The cargo (F76, F44 and fresh water) will be distributed and pumped via a centralised pump room.

Moving toward the bow, there will be an oversized egg whisk (more on that later) and a covered fo'c'sle to keep the deck hands dry; that's about three-quarters of the ship described. This could be a short article!

Before moving to the aft quarter of the ship, it is worth writing a little about the RAS system. The abeam RAS system selected by DSME for the TIDES will be very similar to your experiences of other RFA ships but there are a number of features that will be of interest to you.

a. The first is the tensioning control of the jackstay wire; this ensures constant tension by use of a ram tensioner with an HP air system, rather than hanging the whole system off the motor. This will reduce power consumption in all but the most uncomfortable sea states.

b. Secondly, I'm sure you have already noticed in promotional images that the upper deck looks like it's missing all the RAS equipment! This is because all winches and drives are installed below decks – protected from the elements, reducing the difficulty of maintenance and increasing the clear space on the upper deck.

c. Third, though you might not be able to tell from the diagrams in this article, each abeam rig carries up to two 7" and one 2.5" hoses. This is so that the Tides can rapidly fill the thirsty Queen Elizabeth class carriers with the Dieso, aviation fuel and fresh water they will need to perform their roles.

While normal operations will use the RAS masts for abeam replenishment, there is to be provision for replenishing astern and receiving a line over the bow. This is so that vessels unsuited to abeam replenishment can still be fuelled, and for use in high sea states when abeam replenishment is considered too dangerous.

Between the forward mast and the covered fo'c'sle, there is provision for 8 fully-loaded TEUs that can contain equipment for special missions, humanitarian aid or outsize solid stores. On the starboard side around midships, and on either side of RAS control, are two masts corresponding to the Queen Elizabeth Class aircraft carrier reception points. Aft of RASCO, there is a further port-side mast for the replenishment of other vessels.

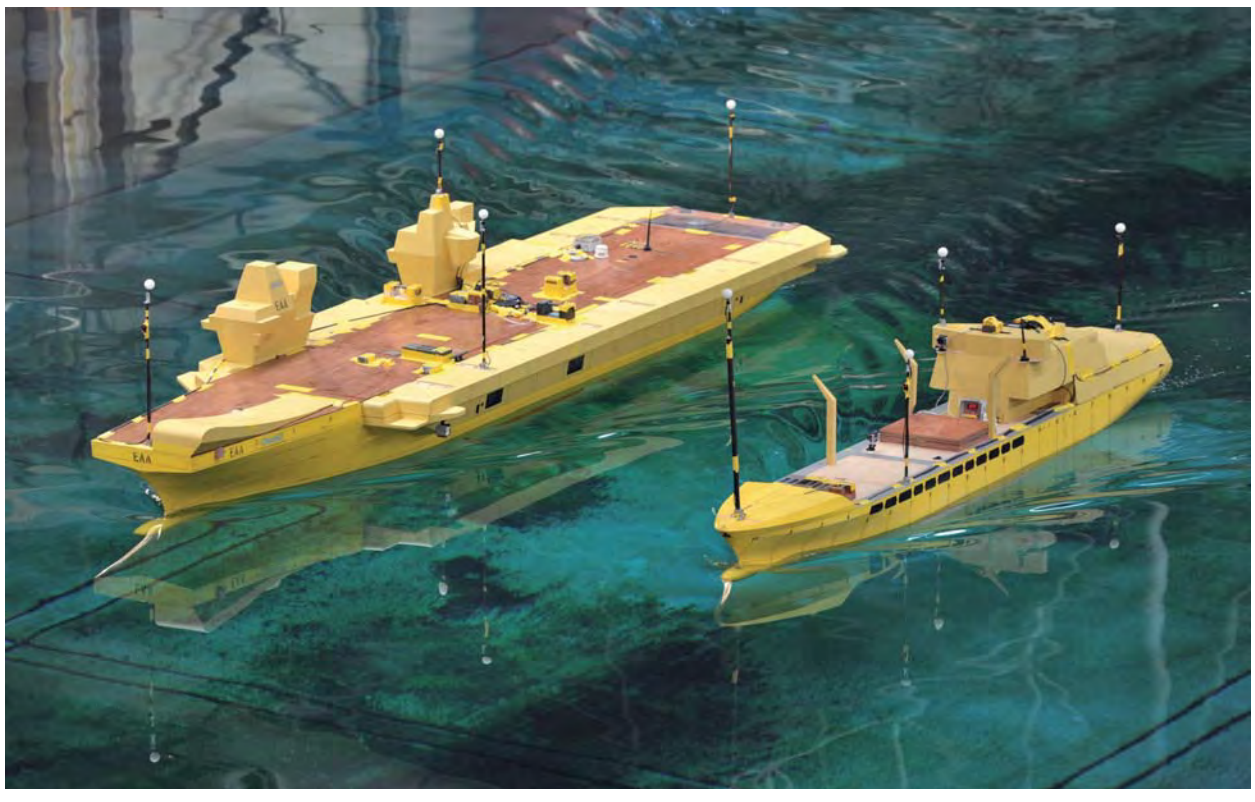
The RAS masts are boxed in to reduce radar cross-section, and the same treatment has been applied to the front and sides of the superstructure. Protected within cut-outs in the forward corners of the superstructure are the ships' boats and large lifeboats. Sited well above the fray, the full width bridge on 06/07 Deck offers enclosed bridge wings. The Tides might not be major warships, but they have the command, control and communications equipment to work within the fleet. Most of these will be situated between the bridge and the main diesel engine exhausts at the aft end of the superstructure.

You'll notice that the aft end of the superstructure has few windows, since much of this volume contains the hangar and aviation support spaces.; more on that later.

Power and propulsion

Going below decks, the main machinery spaces are separated fore and aft by an enhanced bulkhead in accordance with Lloyd's Register PSMR* notation. The TIDE class are twin shaft vessels with four-bladed, 6.5m diameter controllable pitch propellers supplied by Schottel. Propulsive and electrical generating machinery is duplicated port and starboard. All pretty standard so far, but the real novelty is in the hybrid propulsion system. Each shaft can be driven either by a main diesel engine or from the main diesel generators via a large electric hybrid machine (motor-generator). Electrical generation is either through the hybrid machine or from the dedicated electrical generators. The operational implication is that, up to around 10 knots, the diesel generators effectively provide both the propulsive and hotel loads. Above this, the main diesel engines power the shaft and the hybrid motors, which supplies electrical power.

Seakeeping and manoeuvring tests at QinetiQ Haslar



(Image reproduced courtesy of QinetiQ)

RFA TIDESPRING conducts a RAS with RFA ARGUS

(© BMT Defence Services Ltd)

In the event that the main power system is inoperable (potentially due to enemy attack), the aforementioned egg-beater comes into play. A several-megawatt secondary propulsion diesel generator gives the Tides a 'limp home' capability by providing power to a drop-down thruster in the bow. This can also be used as a bow thruster when manoeuvring in harbour. Finally, there is a 1MWe emergency generator to provide electrical power under emergency conditions; as required by international legislation.

Upper Decks

Leaving the lower decks behind and below, we start to encounter accommodation and crew spaces on board, which take up the majority of the aft quarter of the ship. There has been a real focus on the quality of accommodation and the crew's living spaces. In fact, one change to the original design is that all RFA cabins are now single-berth. The officers, senior rates and junior rates dining areas and social spaces are sized appropriately and a generously-sized galley means that the crew will get decent scran.

The Tide class will have an RFA core complement of 63. The ships have been designed such that this core crew can conduct the full range of re-supply methods, basic self defence and the operation of CBRN equipment, damage control and fire fighting systems. An additional 45 berths are available, covering the RFA training margin, an embarked flight and force protection personnel.

Like the Wave class, the Tides will be able to land aircraft up to the Merlin in size. The flight deck is unsurprisingly over the quarterdeck, and aviation facilities in the superstructure include a workshop, stores and magazines, an admin office and a dedicated aircrew briefing room that frees up the main conference room for use by the ship's crew.

Build

Commercial build and outfitting processes will be adopted for the TIDE-Class, which are to be built in one of the premier special ship yards in the world. Rest assured that the yard knows what they are doing with naval ships, having built arguably the world's most heavily armed class of destroyers for the South Korean Navy.

The Okpo shipyard in Korea produces around 70 commercial and special ships per year, and this pace is reflected in the tempo of build for the tankers. Block assembly – the joining of pre-built and pre-outfitted pieces of ship – will take only around fifty days. From steel cut to launch is around ten months, and the gap between each ship delivery is to be six months.

After sea trials in Korea to ensure the ships performs as required, each vessel will return to the UK for extensive customisation. This will bring work to a UK yard and keeps expertise on the complex and classified systems 'in-house'.

Supportability

Integrated Logistics Support (ILS) is the methodology used by the MoD to ensure that equipment (TIDE Class Tankers) is supportable Through Life. It is vital to have all the 'building blocks' in place before the MT can enter service to ensure they can be operated and maintained safely with a support solution offering best Value for Money.

DSME will provide these 'building blocks' to ensure the MT is fully supportable and safe, can be maintained by a trained crew who have the correct spares available, when needed, together with the correct tools, test equipment and documentation to enable the Authority to keep the MT available for tasking.

To do this DSME will conduct a full maintenance identification study; conduct a full Training Needs Analysis (TNA) to identify the training requirements. DSME will also deliver all of the information required to codify all spares and support and test equipment as well as supplying the initial 2 years worth of spares together with a full suite of technical documentation.

Where we are today

The 'basic' design is now complete. BMT Defence Services Limited, based in Bath, have provided hundreds of design drawings and plans – and the team in Bristol has had the support of the Royal Navy and RFA community in making sure that we get exactly what we need for the job. This has meant that good working relationship fostered early on has been really important. It is now down to DSME to develop the detailed design and move to production in the summer of 2014. Hopefully, this article has answered some of your questions on the TIDE-Class project.

And, as for silly statistics, how about this;

A Range Rover's fuel tank, connected to all four 7" hoses on the starboard side of a TIDE-Class tanker, would be full in 0.12 seconds. Unfortunately, the fuel would be passing through the nozzle at around Mach 2 and completely destroy your car. My sincere apologies – it seemed like a good idea at the time.

(Mark Lewis - MARS Tanker - Naval

Names new and old

TIDESPRING - The original TIDESPRING was awarded the Falklands Island Battle Honour in 1982, operating in support of the re-capture of South Georgia and then sustaining the fleet off the Falklands. She left service in 1992.

TIDERACE - After service in the Suez Crisis, the TIDERACE was renamed the TIDEFLOW to avoid confusion with another ship name. She left service in 1975.

TIDESURGE - She was built as TIDERANGE in 1954, but was renamed in 1958 and Served until 1976.

TIDEFORCE - A new name in RFA service.

How the TIDE Class builds upon the capabilities of the ships it will be replacing

Upgraded modern systems and more efficient machinery providing cost savings through life from fuel, maintenance and spares;

Double hulled tankers to meet the latest requirements for safety and marine pollution legislation (MARPOL and EU);

Enhanced survivability capabilities from lessons learnt over many years of ship design and detailed modelling;

Organic aviation capability for maritime inter theatre lift requirements upgradable to operate ASW helicopters;

Increased reliability and maintainability with modern equipment provided;

Increased reversionary modes of operation of ship systems should anything fail, learning especially from LSDA electrical experience.

Recent and ongoing studies to de-risk the project

MARS Tanker and QEC side-by-side model tests

One of the recent successes has been the testing of the performance of the Tide Class alongside a QEC model at the world-class testing facilities down at Haslar. This was to show the operator the reality of coordinated replenishment operations between two large vessels soon to be in service. You may have read something about this in Desider and the MARS Tanker Newsletter.

RASSC Studies

The tests above support ongoing computer modelling and visualisation of the RAS system and applied loads, motions and interactions between the Tides and other ship types.

Survivability

As well as designing against the Defence standard for stability, survivability analysis with SURVIVE software is being performed to ensure that not just the ship but also the distributed systems are optimised against hostile action.

Tide, by the numbers

Contract value - £452 million
RFA Tidespring (1st ship) delivered to MoD - 15th October 2015
RFA Tideforce (4th and final ship) delivered - 15th April 2017
Length - 200m
Cargo - 19,000m3 mix of ship and aviation fuel
Design life - 25 years
Complement - 108