Gunline Summer07.qxd 15/6/07 18:14 Page 1

FALKLANDS 25

GUNLINE

ROYAL FLEET AUXILIARY

Gunline - The First Point of Contact | Published by the Royal Auxilary Service | May 2007 | www.rfa.mod.uk

ON TASK!

After 25 years since Operation Corporate, RFA SIR BEDIVERE is still going strong in support of military operations.

1st April 2007 was a momentous day for the Iraq Navy and the Naval Transition Team (NaTT). It marked the day when the Royal Fleet Auxiliary *Sir Bedivere* began acting as a mother ship and afloat training platform for the Iraq Navy and Iraq Marines. RFA Sir Bedivere, a veteran of the Falklands campaign, is ideally suited to this task. Recently refitted, she has ample accommodation for both instructors and students; a Bridge large enough for navigation training; the logistics capacity to sustain the Iraq Navy's Patrol Boats and Fast Aluminium Boats (FABs); as well as plenty of deck storage space for the FABs. As a result, vessels with a normal endurance of 48 hours may avoid a daily three hour transit to their operating area, can remain on task almost indefinitely…..

Full story *Page 15*

Inside this Issue...

Life aboard the BLACK *Page 3*

Mariners Park staff visit Orangeleaf *Page p16*

His Royal Highness visits HQ *Page 5*

Dubai petrolheads *Page 14*

Blast from the past *Page 7*

Gunline Summer07.qxd 15/6/07 16:25 Page 2

From the Commodore...

I write this article after listening to a lecture on the events of 25 years ago, given by Professor Sir Lawrence Freeman of Kings' College London. His subject is War Studies and he took the chair on 1 April 1982 he is also the official historian of the conflict so there will be few with a better knowledge than he. I found it fascinating to be reminded of the backdrop, the players and the events as they unfolded in those fateful times. The views, the opinions and the relationships between Prime Minister, Ministers, Advisors, Military Commanders, the press, the public, the Islanders and of course other nations were brought to life and set in context and went some way to explaining why the key events happened the way they did.

So, apart from reminding you of the Falklands 25 Commemorations as this edition goes to press, why should I bring all of this to the fore here? Well, as I said in my preface to the book "No Sea too Rough" there can be no doubt that the Falklands conflict was a defining moment in the history of the RFA Service. The events of 1982 triggered many questions about our equipment, training, capability and status, and while some of these questions will rumble on, I have only to look around me to see that the majority of the hard – won lessons have been learned and the results are clearly visible in the ships and people of today. All of this is true of course but there is something missing from that list of questions and that something is values. For those of you who have read my previous articles on the theme of "A world leader in versatile, valued, and integrated afloat support" you might be thinking "Oh here he goes again, banging on about valued meaning doing what we do well and at the right price" Well this time I'm not – I am now on the trail of our shared values. What is it that we all believe in? What is it that makes us tick as an organisation? What is it that creates that desire to go and do what we do in conditions of extreme weather and at times (as the Falklands testified) violence? Perhaps more importantly we ought to be trying to pin down the values that we aspire to in the future for it is those that we should build into our training and our daily lives. Of course I have given this some thought and you will not be surprised to learn that "Vision" and "Mission" statements are linked – they combine to produce our organisational objectives and these determine the values necessary if we are to deliver.

At the risk of turning this column into a consultants presentation I include a table that I hope you will spend a few moments pondering – some of the words will be familiar to you already.

Of course we can all pick out a few choice words from each of these objectives but the ones I want to offer are: Reliability, Cost Effective, Output orientated and Learning.

I believe these are our values – or should be if we want to be taken seriously. I know "management speak" can be a real turn – off so let me just make sure we all understand what we mean by each of these:

Reliability – means we deliver each and every time we are required to. It means that we as an organisation (at whatever level) and that we as individuals (at whatever level) can be relied upon to deliver – to achieve our objectives and hence accomplish the mission.

Cost Effective – means doing it right at the right price – you have already had this lesson!

Output Orientated – means being focussed intensely on giving the customer what the customer wants. If what we are doing is not contributing to our mission in some way then I suggest we stop doing it! Just in case you are in any doubt we are in the business of military effect – either enabling it or at times delivering it.

Learning – precisely what it says and it applies to us both as an organisation and as individuals. It is the acquisition, accumulation and exploitation of knowledge at all levels.

OK enough of the education and explanation, let us now apply our clearly defined, well understood and shared values to the work place – For those of you who were caught up in the Falklands War – (not recognised or declared, but that is what it felt like for those in the thick of the conflict) compare the values of the people and the Service then with where we are now and where we are going in the future. For those of you who were not there, think about more recent operations such as Gulf War I and II and if those are outside your experience think of the jobs we are doing now. – How do these values stack up?

My own opinion is that the values I have highlighted are fundamental to our future success, but there are some other factions and I will share some thoughts with you in the next Gunline. In the meantime enjoy sharing the experiences of those who contributed to "No Sea Too Rough". – All RFA personnel will receive a personal copy to commemorate this 25th Anniversary of the Falklands War.

Stay safe and happy.

Rapid deployment and strategic reach of the Versatile Maritime Force (VMF)	To optimise Readiness & Capability requirements against tasking. Ships and people need to have range and reliability. Maintain a strong ethos of professionalism, experience and safety in an output based cost-effective organisation. To be receptive to new ideas and systems to develop an "efficiency culture".	To be able to change manning, training and procedures at short notice to produce the best effect. To be able to take on different missions at short notice. Be able to charter and man a wide range of ships to meet unexpected requirements.	Be able to prepare, train and deploy in a manner that is coherent with the desired outcome of a mission. To share a commonality of training and procedures with force elements. Ensure command structures are aware of RFA capabilities. Be affiliated or accredited to areas of best practice and expertise associated with ship operations and benchmarked.
Sustainability for operations worldwide with minimum reliance on Host Nation Support (HNS)	Provide genuine support for the each and every mission by developing a "customer approach" to sustainability requirements. Be able to sustain high "time on task" at minimum cost. Be able to offer additional benefits as a force multiplier. Freight effectively in operational downtime to offer cost effectiveness and operational resilience. Be vocal in the sale of RFA purpose and capabilities.	Operate legally under all envisaged scenarios. Must be able to provide a range of support profiles and be able to surge to meet short term requirements. Be able to deliver sustainment at any time and place of the operational commander's choosing. To be able to operate independently with awareness of environment.	Be affiliated or accredited to areas of best practice and expertise associated with FGR mission. Be part of the command structure and decision process for smart, "risk based" logistics. Be part of the command structure and decision process to interpret situation, requirements and threats to establish the most suitable operating profile. Be able to operate up-threat or in-area as part of a task force.

It's Back t

YOU MUST GET REALLY BORED AT SEA?

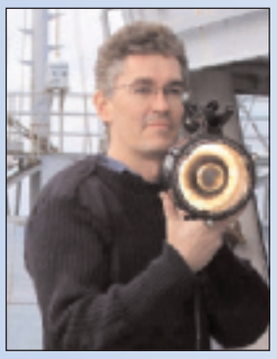
By CR1 Steve Gill

That's the normal reaction I get when ask what I do for a living, but it is far from the truth. At the moment RFA Black Rover is operating as the Flag Officer Sea Training (FOST) tanker, which involves countless Replenishment's at Sea (RAS) per week with UK and foreign Navies. It is an incredible achievement on its own getting two and sometimes three multi-thousand tonne ships to sail along quite gracefully together as fuel or other cargo that may be required by the customer ship is passed, what seems effortlessly, this can only be put down to the professionalism of all involved. I've had trouble getting a tank of four star in a stopped vehicle without getting it on the forecourt! And with all the heavy equipment flying around in what isn't the calmest of seas there is that element of danger which makes you glad people do know what they're doing. (Glad you seem to think so Steve- ed).

If this isn't enough to keep us on our toes, throw in the odd mad fishermen whom insist on getting in the way, forcing us to alter course or speed in harmony with the other vessels (like an ballet for the obese), you can imagine our minds don't wonder to far from the task at hand.

On every Thursday you have to add into the equation that a war is going on around you, called the "Thursday War" would you believe, with lots of warships, submarines, helicopters and fast jets whizzing around it could be all to easy to become distracted. This isn't all the FOST tanker does, only today we were playing at being a foreign merchant vessel, from that unsavoury nation "Ginger" (the good guys are from "Brownian"), to which a coalition warship needed to board us, check our paperwork and conduct a search of the vessel and half dozen or so non English speaking crew. If nothing is found our ship would be free to carry on its passage. So in come the boarding party by fast boat and winched on by helicopter, they soon round up the crew and start conducting their searches crew and ship. Very scary for myself as one of the non English crewman being surrounded by armed men and women, but to give the Royal Navy their dues they put my mind at ease and assure me no harm is going to come to me. With the ships manifest being scrutinised on the bridge and the cargo hold having being searched it appears all is in order today and the search teams disembark the same way they came and we are allowed to continue our passage, we may not be so lucky next time.

This is an abridged version in the life of the FOST tanker, what next week will bring who knows, we could be a stricken craft needing a tow, we could even be the unsavoury merchant vessel with some contraband on board this time and of cause there is always the "War" on Thursday.



So yes I do get bored at sea, you have got to be joking! Next time you see me take pity and make me a cup of tea (milk with two, chocolate biscuits optional).

A sunny and bright start to the day on board RFA Black Rover, much welcomed after a long bout of rough seas and grey weather. In anticipation for an imminent SAREX, (Search and Rescue Exercise) we are greeted by our cheerful Chief Officer, Chris Locke, who informed us that we were to report to the ship's hospital. Once there we discovered that we were both required to "put on our make up" and await the arrival, by helicopter, of a gang of sailors from HMS Ocean! (Sounds interesting – ed)

This must sound odd, but in our line of work you must expect the unexpected.

The exercise scenario to unfold was that our ship had suffered an engine room fire and we (James and I) had been badly burned, (simulated by the make up expertly applied by a keen FOST Medtech, Tony Headley) and that we would require treatment from a first aid team from HMS Ocean. Once on board it was their job to locate us, assess our situation and try to treat our injuries. When they found us they were confronted by the usual bad acting from ourselves

Gunline Summer07.qxd 15/6/07 16:25 Page 3

to Black...

WELCOMING THE COMMANDING OFFICER MILITARY SEALIFT COMMAND

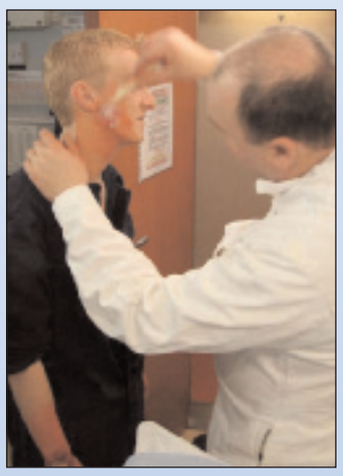
Whilst continuing her busy role as FOST support tanker, Black Rover was delighted to welcome Rear Admiral Robert D Reilly Jnr USN onboard during the FOST weekly war serial of 10 May 07. Accompanied by Head of RFA, Commodore Thornton, the visit formed part of a week long familiarisation for RAdm Reilly to the UK, further fostering the special relationship built up between the RFA and US Military Sealift Command. This would represent the only opportunity during the week for RAdm Reilly to witness an RFA performing at sea, so the anticipation and keenness to impress were highly evident onboard. The visit party was completed by Chief Officer Susan Orsini (MSC), Lt Linda Torbet RN, Lt Burford USN and Chief Officer Gerry Patterson (SRFAO to FOST)

Following a very early morning boat transfer from Devonport Dockyard, it was important to get the day off to the right start and following the ships departure from Plymouth Sound, a full English breakfast was well received by all. A ships tour then allowed useful interaction with ship's company providing RAdm Reilly an insight into the working routines of the FOST tanker and more generically those of the service as a whole. The murky visibility did not detract from the opportunity to witness the impressive sight of HMNLS Evertson conducting a RAS operation under war conditions, supplemented by HMS Chatham conducting RAS approaches on Black Rover's disengaged side.

RAdm Reilly brings a wealth of USN experience to his post, having completed high profile appointments in command of USN ships and shore posts alike. It was therefore a privilege and pleasure for Captain Dave Buck, the officers and crew of Black Rover to welcome him and his staff onboard to provide a short insight into our business. Following an exchange of plaques it was all too quickly to bid farewell prior to a helicopter transfer back to Devonport. Perhaps the programmers will allow Black Rover to pay a return call with a visit to the USA next time!!

Black Rover's GPMG Team

(mostly moans, groans and colourful language) and after an assessment it was decided that we were to be evacuated for more professional treatment aboard HMS Ocean.



For James the drama was over, however unfortunately for me, after being deemed far too injured to walk, it meant a stretcher lift up steep ladders to the flight deck. I can assure you this is not a comfortable experience. All in all, not too unusual for a morning onboard the RFA FOST tanker.

By Cadet Richard Pennel

Richard, in the make up department before his performance as a casualty

Captain David Buck RFA receives a MSC plaque from Rear Admiral Reilly USN

TS Caprice and their hosts

3/O Kevin Clifton giving chartwork instruction

GUNNERY TRAINING

RFA Black Rover, as with all ships in the RFA, has a dedicated shipboard gurney crew consisting of personnel from all the departments onboard. In order to keep our team up to speed in self defence, training serials take place onboard as often as our busy schedule allows. So although Black Rover's primary roll is to train other units working up under the Flag Officer Sea Training (FOST) umbrella we also conduct our own internal training when the situation allows.

The Gunnery training focuses on all disciplines ranging from command and control, through to the instruction of the Officer in charge of the shoot, known on board as the Point Defence Officer (PDO), also the Local Gun Director (LGD) and finally the Gunner or more correctly named the Aimer.

The ultimate objective of the team is to protect the vessel from an air or surface attack. So the training is not just for the crew to shoot the guns but it allows the Deck Officers to practise the command and control of a shoot. Consequently the Captain was first up. The command and control of a shoot is a voice procedure exercise. Certain commands are given at appropriate times giving the aimer the permission to fire the gun.

Under intense pressure from "Harry" simulating an incoming terrorist attack (an interesting prospect- Ed) the target was first warned to "back off" with a shot close to it (shot across the bow). With failure of the target to back off it is then hopefully, taken out by the gun. Harry piled on the pressure further by causing stoppages on the gun. This meant that the aimer had to remove the jam on the gun and then reload. With an incoming attack this has to be a quick. It becomes an even quicker procedure when you have Harry yelling in your ear!

ANOTHER SUCCESSFUL VISIT FOR TS CAPRICE - BLACK ROVER'S AFFILIATED SEA CADETS

It was an early start for twelve members of Bexleyheath Sea Cadet unit from TS Caprice as they boarded the early morning train from London to Weymouth. They were preparing to spend the weekend onboard RFA Black Rover who was alongside in Portland harbour undergoing a maintenance period.

The Cadets from the South London unit were greeted and driven to the ship by navigator, 2/O (X) Julian Parkin and arrived onboard shortly before noon. After the long journey a hearty meal was the order of the day and L/H (CK) Kevin Watson was on hand to provide a top class feast.

After lunch it was down to business, with the Cadets firstly having to make up their camp beds and set up home in the ships hold. The Cadets then moved on to the hard graft, the aim of which was for them to gain badges and certificates in Navigation practices. A set of course notes were provided by 3/O (X) Kevin Clifton and with the help from Navs and our XO, Chris Locke the Cadets were taught all of the relevant information for the following day's exam!

As the day drew to a close, the Cadets, accompanied by L/H(C) Derek Rose and CR1 Steve Gill, were on hand and ready for sunset. Once again a well deserved meal was prepared by the ships catering department before ending the day with a film night in the Officers mess.

After a somewhat different nights sleep the Cadets were up and ready for action. An hour revision and practice period was followed by an exam, covering all of the subjects from the previous day.

After the exam the Cadets were given an engine room tour by 3/O (E) Scott Goodings while 3/O (X) Jennifer Jewell was marking their papers. The results from the exam were excellent, with every Cadet achieving over 80% and one even managed a very commendable 100%.

Certificates were then presented by the XO, recording the event with his trusty camera, making the visit all the more worthwhile.

The following week, Black Rover's CO, Captain Dave Buck was privileged to be invited to TS Caprice annual presentation evening in Bexleyheath, Kent. After inspecting the guard he was delighted to present a series of awards to the Cadets, including the recently hard earned Class 3 Navigation certificates and badges. An excellent buffet spread followed, allowing the chance to chat to some very proud cadets, their equally proud parents and hopefully some RFA navigators of the future!

Overall, both visits were a great success, further enhancing the excellent relationship already established between RFA Black Rover and TS Caprice. Well done to the Bexleyheath Sea Cadets for working hard and achieving their Navigation Certificate and Badge.

By 3/O(X) Kevin Clifton, Sea Cadet Liaison Officer

Captain Buck keeps a good lookout for the target

For our training our target consisted of a marker float streamed just outside the range of the weapon, well in theory! It had to be replaced soon after the first rounds were fired with a cardboard box.

We never managed to recover the box, so with over a thousand rounds fired off we can only assume that we were successful!

Gunline Summer07.qxd 15/6/07 16:25 Page 4

Letters

Hi to All,

To squash any rumours about me. I have been medically retired due to a loss of hearing which makes me a danger on ships. I retire(d) on the 6 June 2007.

I wish to say I have had an enjoyable 30 Years with the RFA and sailed with some great shipmates.

I am looking forward to my retirement even if I have now to wear two hearing aides.

I wish to thank those who e-mailed me luck in my retirement and I wish everyone the best for the future with the RFA.

Best Regards

Mick Whittaker

E-mail address metalmickey69@gmail.com

Dear Editor,

During my last trip on the Fort Rosalie I organised a collection for a little girl in my son's school. She has cerebral palsy and her mum lost money when the Farepak Company collapsed. We did it during the last week of OST and managed to collect £200. When I came home on leave I went to the school and presented her with the money and a signed photo of the ship from the Captain. Her mum was so overwhelmed she was in tears. Eve has always wanted to go to Disneyland Paris, so they will make good use of the money for that. The little girls name is Eve and she is 6 years old. Enclosed is a copy of the letter her mum has sent to thank the Captain and crew of the Fort Rosalie for their kind support.

CPO(D) Rolf Wara

6 Jan 2007

To the Captain and everyone on the Fort Rosalie,

Hello I'm Eve's mum, I wanted to say a massive thank you to all of the people who donated monies towards Eves Christmas present. It was a huge surprise and to be honest I did have a cry, I can't believe how kind some people are and you lot have made Eve and the rest of us very happy.

Eve has always wanted to go to Eurodisney, so that is whaat we are going to do with the money, I promise that we will send some photos of us over there for all of you to look at.

We had a really bad run at the end of last year, we lost the Farepak money and a whole host of other things went wrong and we really didn't think we would be celebrating Christmas, but with the help of you we had a lovely time and have our trip to look forward to. We are going to book it in the next few weeks and looking to go in February or March.

So thank you all again, Eve has the photo of the ship in her bedroom and is now telling everyone you all helped.

Kate Batten

Hola!

"I'll give you 2 trips and you'll be back ashore" that's what someone said to me when I left the shipyard in March 1969. I finally left on a rainy day in late November 2006 at Glen Mallen.

The RFA first saw me in 1985 when I joined SIR TRISTRAM during her re-build and thereafter many "SIR" Boats plus other ships in the company I finally tied up for the last time.

May I thank the COP's on FORT AUSTIN for their retirement gifts, they are mementos I will always treasure. My thanks also to Captain Fell who presented me with a chart which has an X depicting where I now live in Spain.

Many thanks to Chief Officer X Andy Smith for the ships crest, and not forgetting the catering staff for the spread.

I won't miss the long standbys in all weather conditions but I will miss the camaraderie of some great times at sea. If you are ever passing through Torrevieja, please do!

From sunny Spain I bid you all good luck in the future, HASTA LUEGO, Adios.

John Richardson, CPO Carpenter (retd)

Final Farewell as Last Serving QM Retires

by Third Officer (X) March

Photos by Chief Officer (LS) Keith Truscott

The 20th January saw a passing of an age, when after over 20 years service the last Quarter Master in the RFA retired. QM Chris Inker paid a final visit to RFA FORT ROSALIE his home from home within the RFA for the last 5 years on the 12th January.

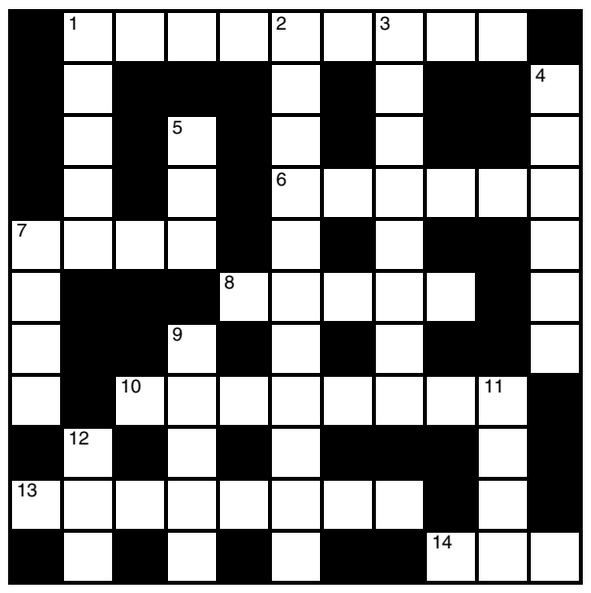
At the time Chris joined the RFA the Deck department was divided into two, the Quarter Masters and the Able Seamen. The QMs life onboard was dominated by bridge watch-keeping, steering and gangway watches with very little in the way of routine ship maintenance. However with the merger of the two areas and Deck Ratings keeping watches the number of QMs started to dwindle.

Having joined the Merchant Fleet at the tender age of 16 he has spent 44 years at sea, moving from BP tankers to join the RFA in 1986. Since then Chris has taken part in many RFA operations around the world. During the late 1980's he saw service during the Iran/Iraq war and was in the region during Gulf War One. From 1992 until 1999 he spent much time in the Balkans, based in Split initially in RESOURCE and then in FORT GRANGE (later the FORT ROSALIE). From one area of conflict he moved to another staying with FORT ROSALIE on both her Afghanistan and Gulf War Two deployments.

Chris spent his last trip on FORT AUSTIN but still returned 'home' to the FORT ROSALIE to say his final goodbyes. Chris who is an active member of the Bristol Merchant Navy Association is retiring to a well earned life of leisure which he plans to spend at his home in Sharehampton, Bristol.

Left: Old and new hands: QM Chris Inker, PO(D) Jimmy Shearer and SG2 Lisa Southworth
Right: Final Farewell: QM Chris Inker with Chief Officer (X) Andrew Armstrong receiving a ships crest

RFA's of the past



Across

1 Tanker which supported minesweepers in the Med (9)
6 A167 (6)
7 Former name for RFA Ashleaf (4)
8 Hospital ship in the Korean War (5)
10 1916 cargo ship converted to tanker (8)
13 Tanker which later became RFA Roseleaf (8)
14 RFA Olwen's name when towed away for scrap (3)

Down

1 1917 completed Swan Hunter built tanker. Sold 1959 (5)
2 Ammo ship scrapped 1970 (4, 7)
3 Chungchow (8)
4 Tanker on the China Station in 1930's (6)
5 Water carrier (3)
7 RN tanker transferred to RFA service 1946 (4)
9 Named RFA Olynthus until 1967 (5)
11 Damaged by fire (4)
12 RFA Olna arrived to be scrapped as this (3)

OBITUARY

Trevor White - MM 1 - staff number - 398643D - pensioned out of service in 1999, lived in Guinsaugon, Southern Leyte, Philippines was tragically lost in the Landslide there on 17th February 2006 where he lived with his wife Glory who has also been lost. Will always be loved and remembered by his Sister Pat, Mike and Family. The photo attached is Trevor on the right of the picture with his Friend Larry Dwyer on the left who is a serving member of the RFA.

Mrs Pat Byrne.

Send your letters to: The Editor, Gunline, FLEET-DCS-INFO-MEDIA MP, 1-4 Henry Leach Building, Whale Island Portsmouth, Hants, PO2 8BY, Tel: 02392 625379, Email: nick.covill617@mod.uk

Gunline Summer07.qxd 15/6/07 16:25 Page 5

HRH The Earl of Wessex Visits the Royal Fleet Auxiliary at Whale Island

On 8th May His Royal Highness The Earl of Wessex visited shore based members of the Royal Fleet Auxiliary at Whale Island..

HRH The Earl Of Wessex met the RFA shore staff at West Battery in his capacity as the new Commodore-in-Chief of the RFA Service after he graciously accepted the position in August last year.

His Royal Highness also met members of the RFA Staff who work within Henry Leach Building, the Royal Navy's headquarters.

Many RFA shore staff are based at West Battery and Henry Leach Building, and are made up of permanent non-uniformed civil servants and uniformed seafarers who are appointed ashore for 2-3 year periods before returning to sea.

There are many roles of the Staff in West Battery that could be summarised as meeting all the needs of both the sea and shore based employees. Within West Battery, the team's responsibilities are as far reaching as training, career development and education, support and administration, appointments to ships, medical support and travel. The appointers within West Battery are the liaison with the families and are a friendly voice for any concerned parents, partners or other family members.

As the RFA has become more integrated with the Royal Navy, most of the departments within the Royal Navy's HQ have at least one uniformed member of the RFA as part of their staff and many of the non uniformed RFA staff are also representing the service within other departments. Within the HQ, their role includes advice to those at sea on all aspects of day to day life on a ship. They also look at longer term planning, predicting the requirements of support to military operations, supplies, personnel and indeed ships.

There is a lot that goes on in the background to the maritime face of the RFA, the role of the shore staff is absolutely essential, not only to the day to day running of the service but also looking ahead to ensure the RFA can provide support to the Royal Navy well into the future.

Left: HRH The Earl of Wessex is met at West Battery by the Second Sea Lord. Middle and right: The Earl of Wessex meets shore staff from West Battery and Leach Building.

RFA Lyme Bay is coming…

The office is empty, this is unusual. The ship is a hive of activity, contractors of all descriptions are industriously carrying out their daily tasks of fitting out, setting to work, commissioning, painting, cleaning, demonstrating, scaffolding and just a few, loafing. Every now and then you will spot a Day-Glo jacketed man on his hands and knees looking beneath a desk or squeezed into a recess in order to get a better look behind a panel. This is the RFA man, carrying out his daily compartment Final Inspections (FIs). The term Final Inspection does not correctly do it justice as there are many types of FI's, the items list, the FI with waivers, the behind panel, the paint FI, the deck FI and the re-visit. Torch in hand he diligently carries out his inspections leaving no scratch bare or wire unsecured; and why not, this will become his home (if for a short while) and he feels a pride in what is the last of class. Fourth to come out of the build process and last hull to be built at Wallsend.

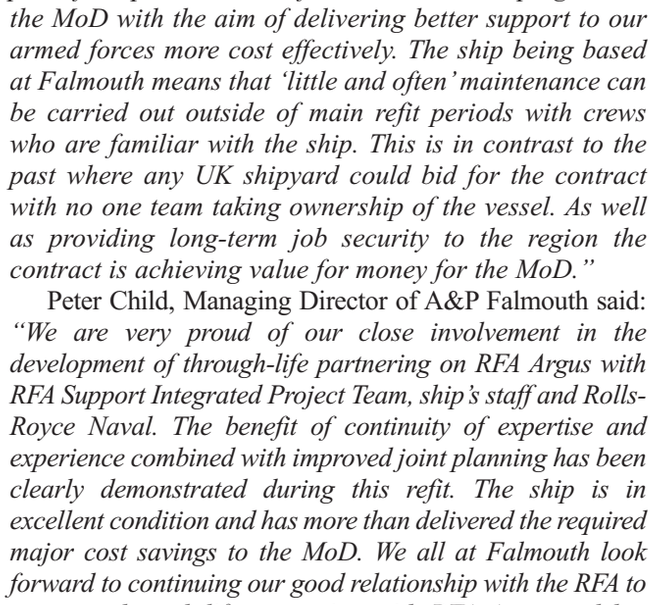
The work started at Wallsend and taken over at Govan is ongoing but there is a light at the end of the tunnel, there is a plan. Already critical systems are being set to work, there is a basin trial planned, an inclining experiment and the sea trials. Crew have begun to be appointed and each day yields a new face or old acquaintance. Meetings are attended and programmes are drawn up.

Sea trials are in the forefront of the Navigators mind. Height of tide, the weather, timings, "can we run this trial concurrently with this trial?" navigation, pilot information, speed restrictions, "we need how much water?" There is a stack of BR's on a desk, someone's going through them, checking and double checking that there isn't any missing. Four of the crew are in the main store checking and re-stowing boxes and pallets according to department and size. The Med Tech is in the sick bay wondering where he's going to stow the Entinox and oxygen. The Q is counting extinguishers and the engineers are examining systems.

The ship is not the only thing being prepared, those not in the office are on courses; HV, Crisis Management, N5R, ISSC, ECDIS, USO, IBSC, NTD, First Aid and IPMS among others.

The ship and crew are getting ready; the Lyme Bay is coming…

By 2/O X James Steer



RFA Lyme Bay

RFA Argus Gets New Lease of Life in Falmouth

The UK's primary casualty reception ship, RFA Argus, has been upgraded in a £12 million contract in Falmouth, which extends her operational life to 2020.

The 28,000 tonne RFA Argus has been at A&P in Falmouth for 233 days where her 100-bed hospital has been upgraded and her diesel generators replaced together with improvements to her communications and aviation systems. A&P will now maintain the ship for the rest of her working life in a new 'through life' partnering with the MoD. This is expected to lead to a new and more economical approach to ship repair and maintenance throughout the RFA flotilla providing the MoD with improved economy and availability with industry enjoying a guaranteed long-term contract that encourages investment in infrastructure, all at a fixed price.

RFA Argus Although her main role is to provide specialist aviation-training facilities RFA Argus has a working hospital and operating theatres, which were installed when the ship was deployed to the Gulf 1990.

She can accommodate any of the Royal Navy's helicopters and is fitted with two enormous lifts on the vehicle deck that serve four hanger spaces below.

She can be adapted to transport large amounts of equipment very quickly, which was used when she was deployed as part of Britain's contribution to the UN protection force in the former Yugoslavia.

Her Commanding Officer Captain Paul Whyte MBE said: *"We have just completed an excellent refit at A&P Falmouth that has seen immense improvement in capability. RFA Argus is now base-ported at Falmouth, which cements a long association with the ship and the Cornish town. This gives us a huge logistical benefit with the nearness of RNAS Culdrose and closeness to the flying training areas in the southwest approaches."*

"The partnership of RFA Support IPT with A&P Falmouth and Rolls-Royce Naval Marine now established at the waterfront is a first for defence. This initiative is part of the procurement reform initiative sweeping across the MoD with the aim of delivering better support to our armed forces more cost effectively. The ship being based at Falmouth means that 'little and often' maintenance can be carried out outside of main refit periods with crews who are familiar with the ship. This is in contrast to the past where any UK shipyard could bid for the contract with no one team taking ownership of the vessel. As well as providing long-term job security to the region the contract is achieving value for money for the MoD."

Peter Child, Managing Director of A&P Falmouth said: *"We are very proud of our close involvement in the development of through-life partnering on RFA Argus with RFA Support Integrated Project Team, ship's staff and Rolls-Royce Naval. The benefit of continuity of expertise and experience combined with improved joint planning has been clearly demonstrated during this refit. The ship is in excellent condition and has more than delivered the required major cost savings to the MoD. We all at Falmouth look forward to continuing our good relationship with the RFA to progress through-life partnering with RFA Argus and her crew in future years. Residents of Falmouth will be familiar with the sight of this unique vessel in the docks since the commencement of her refit in 2003 and subsequent return for short maintenance periods and to berth alongside during stand down from operational duties."*

Left: RFA Argus looking good at Falmouth

Below: RFA Agrus

Gunline Summer07.qxd 15/6/07 16:25 Page 6

Life at sea is no barrier to learning

When it comes to distance learning The Marine Society's College of the Sea has often led the way.
Its Director of Education for the past two decades, Brian Thomas, looks at what lays behind its remarkable success and its continued relevance for the RFA today.

Seventy years ago, when the College of the Sea was formally inaugurated, a contributor to The Nautical Magazine wanted to know "What's all this 'education for seafarers' anyhow? Possibly some would consider me a diehard, but all this education business seems to me to be in danger of being carried too far."

The writer, who signed himself as 'Zonk' but admitted to being an Extra-Master, was echoing the view of a not insignificant body of opinion both within and outside the shipping industry on the enthusiastic efforts of the College of the Sea to offer education to seafarers.

"Too much trouble today is caused by people who, naturally half-baked, have absorbed a little education and in doing so have become nothing but a nuisance to society" went on Zonk.

How times change. Generations of seafarers have reason to be pleased that the College of the Sea rose above the derisory comments of those who chose to denigrate its work.

The college, and its parent charity the Seafarers Education Service, has often been ahead of the game. A first was scored in championing the widespread use of portable reading devices at sea. They proved popular: lightweight and unobtrusive, yet robust; unlikely to be stolen, and untroubled by technical glitches. The first library of books went to sea in 1920 and the service continues to this day with hundreds of ships supplied with thousands of titles every year.

The college was second only to the University of London's External Programme, which this year celebrates its 150th year, in delivering educational provision by means of tutor supported distance learning. These were heady days; the college's successful experiment attracted an editorial in The Times and the letters column often extolled the virtues of its efforts.

It led the field in delivering education in the workplace, maintaining its belief that education is what survives when what has been learned has been forgotten. Artist tutor Grenville Cottingham was the first in 1966. Throughout the 1970s and 80s tutors in a range of disciplines were dispatched to sea by the college.

The legacy of these days continues to be felt. Whilst the industry has changed, so has The Marine Society College of the Sea adapted its methods and offering, thereby ensuring its services to seafarers remain accessible and relevant. There may be fewer seafarers, but numbers are still considerable with the most recent analysis indicating 27,180 UK personnel active at sea in the commercial sector [source: UK Seafarers Analysis – Department for Transport, 2006] with the naval service adding a further 38,710.

University degrees for seafarers

A flavour of The Marine Society's current offering is to be found in its ground breaking work-based learning degree programme for seafarers launched in May.

In partnership with Middlesex University, The Marine Society is offering seafarers the first nautically flavoured and entirely distance-taught route to full honours graduate status. The good news for seafarers is that this means they no longer need to come ashore to enhance their career prospects.

Seafarers can now top-up their HND whilst at sea with an honours degree from the London-based university. The programme is open to all seafarers, of whatever rank or stage in their careers.

Also on offer for Class 1 Certificate of Competency holders is an opportunity to have experience and qualifications counted to get an MA or MSc. The Marine Society has worked with Middlesex University to get the latter to accredit senior seafarers' professional qualifications and experiential learning as being worth 60 credits at HE Level 4. That amounts to a third of the way towards a Master's degree. No other qualifications are needed, beyond a Class 1 CoC and five years experience at sea with that level of professional certification.

What is work-based learning?

Both routes outlined above are by work-based learning: fast, flexible and seafarer-friendly. There are no formal examinations, access to the internet is not a requirement, there's no need to attend a college, with the assurance that underpinning support is available from the world's oldest seafarers' charity dedicated to the wellbeing of seafarers.

Rather than simply reinforcing seafarers' professional skills and competencies, this innovative approach focuses on nurturing a learner's analytical and evaluative skills. It is about developing knowledge and understanding beyond the capacity to do a particular job. This is important, because it offers the learner a qualification whose worth is widely recognised and therefore transferable within and beyond the maritime sector.

HND top-up degree

The BA or BSc (Hons) top-up course from an HND/FD takes up to 16 months to complete and costs £3,024. Its appeal for seafarers is self-evident. It provides an opportunity to gain a full honours degree by simultaneously combining work and study. For many – and not just seafarers - the conventional concept of the student studying on a college campus is neither feasible nor desirable: away from home, accommodation fees, loss of earnings.

Workplace learning features a different kind of curriculum, less confined by academic subject boundaries and more informed by professional frameworks of employment practice.

Masters degree for Class 1 holders

For Class 1 CoC holders with at least five years experience the Master's degree programme is available costing £4,080. Assessment is through coursework comprising a portfolio of the learner's professional practice, a module on problem-solving, and a major project aimed at improving personal and corporate performance.

The course leading to the award of an MA or MSc lasts around 16 months, and like the top-up course, comes fully tutor-supported via email, fax, phone or post.

Both programmes are seafarer-friendly, so the syllabus is sufficiently flexible to cope with lifestyle constraints and external factors that might disrupt study patterns.

Moreover, financial help may be available from The Marine Society as well as the customary underpinning logistical support to British seafarers who enrol.

Director of Education at The Marine Society, Brian Thomas, says: "Workplace learning is not just about learning work-related skills. Although our work-based learning programmes for seafarers do indeed develop knowledge, understanding and skills directly relevant to a career at sea, their added value lays in the fact that the skills imparted are eminently transferable to employment ashore. The fact that they can be completed without the expense and aggravation of ever stepping ashore is a terrific bonus!î

The Marine Society's College of the Sea has a rich, fascinating and truly unique history and a relevant and dynamic contemporary role. Its' championing of work-based learning degrees with accreditation for seafarers' competencies and experiential learning serves as testimony to the worth of the organisation.

Seafarers in this country are undoubtedly very fortunate to have available the services of The Marine Society. They should make sure they use it!

Find out more at www.mscos.ac.uk

Website News

Following the merger of The Marine Society and the Sea Cadets, The Marine Society's traditional support for seafarers continues and can be found well laid out in a brand new website launched just last month [www.mscos.ac.uk]

The new site outlines the range of learning opportunities available to RFA personnel, including ways in which The Marine Society can support learning at sea – from the provision of tutor-supported programmes at GCSE/A level, to underpinning logistical help for Open University study, through to financial assistance for professional development.

There is a range of interesting 'ad-qual' diploma courses featured in the website offered in partnership with other providers such as Lloyds Maritime Academy. And as a special concession to UK seafarers an impressive 15% discount is available to those who apply for a diploma through The Marine Society.

The new website also carries a Book of the Month promotion: a recommended topical title selected for its anticipated appeal to seafarers and offered at a significant discount www.ms-sc.org/month

Financial Assistance

The Marine Society continues to financially support serving officers and ratings with the RFA.

Administrating the JW Slater Fund on behalf of Nautilus UK several ratings are studying for their OOW certificate. The awards are worth £10,000.

Interest-free loans are available to assist those who wish to study for vocational courses and Worcester Scholarships to assist with higher education programmes.

Already this year several Worcester scholarships have been awarded to RFA personnel. They include assistance to obtain a BSc in Maritime Studies, a BSc in Marine Engineering, and a professional qualification from the Chartered Institute of Personnel & Development.

When awarding scholarships The Marine Society is looking for a carefully considered application with the underpinning aim of furthering a maritime career.

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

Contact The Marine Society for more on 020 7654 7000 or logon at www.mscos.ac.uk or email aharris@ms-sc.org

The Marine Society – committed to the well being of seafarers for 251 years.

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

MCA ACCREDIT RN TECHNICAL TRAINING

Maritime and Coastguard Agency (MCA) accreditation of the Engineering Technician Initial Career Course has paved the way for closer links between the commercial shipping industry and the Royal Navy.

All ET(ME) leaving the Royal Naval School of Marine Engineering (RNSME) at HMS SULTAN now have a clear, direct route to achieving the Ratings' Engine Room Watchkeeping Certificate under STCW Reg. III/4.

A recent visit by the new MCA Chief Executive, Mr Peter Cardy to RNSME has reinforced the mutual desire for closer cooperation between the MCA, Royal Fleet Auxiliary (RFA) and the Royal Navy.

Pictured are (from L to R) Capt Jonathan Woodcock RN, Mr Peter Cardy with Capt Graham Turner RFA.

The director of the Royal Naval School of Marine Engineering, Captain Jonathan Woodcock described the MCA approval of RN training as, "recognition of the quality of structured and progressive engineering training consistently delivered by the Royal Navy and paths the way for validation of further RN/RFA technical training in the future."

This accreditation now allows the RFA to utilise the training infrastructure provided at RNSME to meet much of its future technical training requirements. This is indicative of recent reviews of both RN and RFA technical branches.

The Royal Naval School of Marine Engineering which develops and enhances Fleet engineering ethos, trains around 500 Engineering Technicians / year through the ET initial career course. Leaving RNSME with Key Skills Level 1 and NVQ level 2, these ratings are able to achieve award of the Engine Room Watch Rating Certificate through completion of their mandatory On Job Training taskbooks during their First Sea Draft. This fundamental step will also enable ratings to begin to formally accrue sea service towards Merchant Shipping "Engineer Officer of the Watch" certification through the experienced seafarer route (as detailed in MGN 278).

Gunline Summer07.qxd 15/6/07 16:25 Page 7

RFA FORT ROSALIE IS GIVEN FREEDOM OF THE BOROUGH OF TAMWORTH

I am very pleased to be able to announce that following meetings with Fort Rosalie last year Tamworth Borough Council accepted an invitation to be affiliated with the ship. This culminated with a visit of the Mayor to the ship. On 17th April Cllr Maureen Gant, Mayor of Tamworth accompanied by her consort Cllr Ken Gant and Civic Officer Alec Benwell visited Fort Rosalie whilst alongside in Glen Mallen, Loch Long. The Lady Mayor had the opportunity to meet Commodore R Thornton ACOS FGR who was also visiting on that day. The Lady Mayor and party had dinner with the Officers, were accommodated overnight and enjoyed a tour of the ship the following day. During the visit the Lady Mayor presented Fort Rosalie with the Freedom of the Borough, which the ship was honoured to receive.

Transcript of citation (taken from certificate)

Borough of Tamworth

At a special meeting of the Borough Council held on Tuesday the twentyseventh day of March 2007.

It was resolved

that, pursuant to section 249(5) of the Local Government Act 1972 the council, in recognition of the outstanding contribution to the town with its affiliation to the Tamworth and Lichfield Sea Cadets by the Royal Fleet Auxiliary Ship Fort Rosalie (formally Fort Grange) and being desirous of Twinning with and thereby cementing and fostering a long and happy association which has been enjoyed between the Borough and the

Royal Fleet Auxiliary Ship Fort Rosalie

and as a mark of esteem do hereby confer upon them

The Freedom of the Borough

in perpetuity the right, title privilege, honour and distinction of marching through the streets of the Borough on all ceremonial occasions

In witness whereof the common seal of the Borough of Tamworth was hereunto affixed this day the 27th day of March 2007 in the presence of

Mayor of Tamworth, Cllr. Mrs M. Gant Chief Executive, Mr D. Weatherley

Certificate of Freedom of Borough presented by Cllr Maureen Gant

A TRIP DOWN MEMORY LANE

Captain X Shaun Jones and Captain E Bob Settle visit the old RFA STROMNESS (now the USNS SATURN)

RFA's PAST AND PRESENT MEET UP IN BAHRAIN – MARCH 2007

During SIR BEDIVERE's visit to Bahrain in late March 2007 she was joined on the adjacent berth by USNS SATURN (better know as RFA STROMNESS). These two veterans of the Falklands War had started life together on the River Tyne when they were launched in 1966 in sight of one another on either side of the river. The two ships provided a combined age of over 80 and the memory of shipbuilding on the Tyne let alone in two yards…how times have changed.

The SIR BEDIVERE's Commanding Officer, Captain Shaun Jones, who had served as a Deck Cadet in TARBATNESS and STROMNESS, and the Chief Engineering Officer, Captain Bob Settle were invited over to SATURN by their opposite numbers, Captain Richard Cicchetti and Chief Engineer Officer John Tite for lunch and a nostalgic reminder of the NESS Class. It transpired that Richard and John were classmates from Kings Point Merchant Marine Academy (1980). Although Bob had never served in a NESS, he could not resist an opportunity to see the SULZER stone crusher sat in the middle of the quintessential cathedral engine room. Additionally, a visit to the steering flat and the rotary vein system could not be resisted!

Although STROMNESS had a relatively short career in the RFA, she still evokes positive memories of an immaculate ship that you were genuinely proud to serve in and it was nice to see that she had continued in a similar vein under US colours. She is scheduled to leave active service in 2009 at which point she would have served in the RN and USN Fleets for 42 years.

The most significant amendment under US control has been the provision of a hangar and embarkation of two PUMA helicopters for VERTREP tasking. The replenishment rigs have all been modified with US equipment and the forward hold converted into a cargo tank thus giving the ship a liquid issue capability. It was pleasing to note that although over 40 years old that SATURN remained a highly capable and reliable vessel and that the Americans had been able to wring even more capability of out her since her transfer in 1983. The removal of the lifeboats had provided additional deck space for a rescue boat. Much original equipment and traffolite tallies remained in place and the Rating's accommodation was called China Town in memory of the Hong Kong Chinese who used to serve in the STROMNESS.

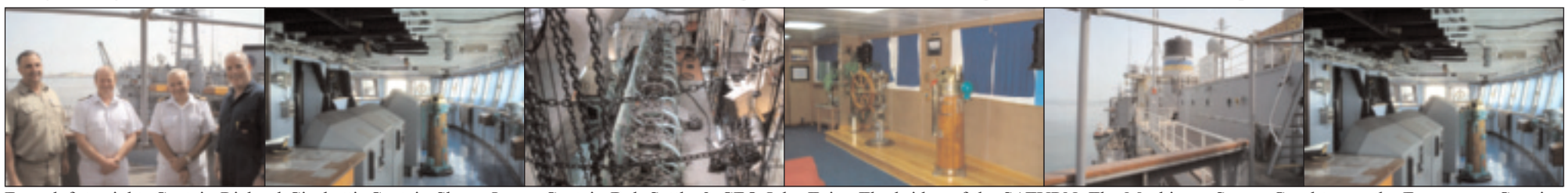
The Officer's Lounge, cabins, MCO and Bridge all

USNS SATURN (Ex-RFA STROMNESS) and SPICA (Ex-RFA TARBATNESS) at sea

remained more or less unchanged since her RFA career and it was eerie to enter old cabins where you had lived and enjoyed yourself over 30 years ago. It made a change to go into the Captain's cabin without the fear and concern of having your shore leave removed! Bob was invited by the Chief Engineer Officer to inspect the Kalamazoo planned maintenance book. Although no longer the primary PM recording document John says, he still refers to the book almost daily for machinery details and records. Bob said that the list of Chief Engineers and Superintendents at the front of the book brought back many memories of heroes and tyrants, some unfortunately not with us.

An extremely enjoyable two hours brought back many happy memories. Although there will always be a debate amongst the older members of the RFA that the MOD should have never sold the NESS Class in the prime of their life, it must not detract from the fact that they have provided the RN and USN with 120 years of faultless service. This is a fine testament to their original concept, designers, builders and crews. They have clearly outlived their parents!

Shaun Jones, Captain RFA



From left to right: Captain Richard Cicchetti, Captain Shaun Jones, Captain Bob Settle & CEO John Tuite. The bridge of the SATURN. The Machinery Space. Good to see the Emergency Conning Position was located in the Officers Bar, much more civilised in the past. The upper deck. The bridge.

END OF AN ERA: SATURN AND SPICA TURN OVER FOR THE LAST TIME

On Wednesday, February 14, 2007, the Combat Stores Ships USNS SATURN (T-AFS 10) and USNS SPICA (T-AFS 9) completed their last "blue water" turnover in the Red Sea. Both ships are scheduled for decommissioning and this replenishment-at-sea evolution, both vertical and connected, marked the end of a long history of "crossdeck" transfers between these two vessels.

During the fifth month of their last deployment to the Arabian Gulf, SPICA turned over its inventory of provisions, ship's store, and general stock to the SATURN. SPICA, through careful long term planning and inventory management, retained on board only 150 pallets of cargo for this turnover and positioned 80 pallets ashore for the SATURN to load as dictated by customer demand. This is a far cry from the days of 1200 pallet turnover evolutions. Reduced fleet size, improved distribution channels and the fleet prime vendor program have reduced the size of T-AFS inventories and load outs from the peak of the Cold War era.

Military sailors and Civilian Mariners onboard both ships prepared, transferred, received and stowed the frozen, chilled, and dry material that SATURN would supply to the battlegroups stationed in the 5th Fleet AOR for the following three months of operation. The ships worked in perfect harmony during the evolution to make it a success.

SATURN's Junior Cargo Supply Officer, Mr. Ron McCann, has worked his way up with experience on several MSC ships, including the SPICA. "I've come full circle from my first ship, SPICA, as assistant storekeeper, to 10 years later back onboard with an officer's position". Upon transferring to the SATURN, Mr. McCann was a key player in the stock transfers between the two ships.

Built in the still-active slipway at the Swan Hunter shipyard in Newcastle-upon-Tyne, England, SATURN and SPICA were originally named for locations in Scotland. They were commissioned into the British Royal Fleet Auxiliary in the 1960's, and purchased by the U.S. Navy to enter service with MSC during the early 1980's. Their durable construction and heavy Sheffield steel scantlings have given 75 ship years of service to MSC, in addition to their long careers in the Royal Fleet Auxiliary, where they were participants in events such as the British strategic withdrawal from east of Suez, and the Falklands campaign.

As they plied the seven seas, the single screw ships were propelled by a reliable Sulzer diesel engine with a fuel efficiency that is the envy of shipping executives throughout the world. The ships were modernized throughout their MSC careers, but retained many unique features, such as wooden deck sheathing, a pub-like bar in the officers lounge, and bathtubs in several staterooms.

SATURN will be the last SIRIUS Class T-AFS to decommission. After the already decommissioned SIRIUS, and the SPICA, which is scheduled for the next fiscal year, she is scheduled to decommission during fiscal year 2009.

By: LTJG Jose Gorritz, USNS SATURN PAO

Gunline Summer07.qxd 15/6/07 16:25 Page 8

GO TELL IT ON THE MOUNTS

Captain Ross Ferris and Chief Officer Miles Lewis host the Transport Minister Dr Stephen Ladyman on the bridge

DOVER MARITIME CAREERS FESTIVAL

RFA MOUNTS BAY had the privilege of being involved in this year's Maritime Careers Festival in DOVER. We arrived in port on Thursday 22nd March and the ship was made ready to host VIPs and guests for the following day. We dressed ship at 0800 on Friday and at midday the Captain, Ross Ferris, welcomed local dignitaries and the organisers and notables of the festival, onboard for a reception on the Bridge. The Mayor of Dover was presented with a ship's crest to commemorate the event. The ship was then opened to the public to come on board and have an interactive tour with several of the ship's company on hand to explain what we do in port and at sea.

Along with ourselves, representatives from other shipping companies, employment agencies and colleges had also set up stands in the cruise terminal to welcome visitors and answer questions on careers, training and industry related topics. CR2 Hemmings, a member of the crew, helped out on the RFA stall because her attendance at the festival the previous year had lead to her applying for a position with the RFA. She was in the best position to give advice to potential applicants and willingly gave a number of interviews to the local media as the success story of the Dover Festival!

On Saturday, RFA MOUNTS BAY was fortunate enough to play host to the Minister for Transport Stephen Ladyman, who came on board for a tour and met the Captain and a number of crew members. Then once again, the ship was opened to visitors and over the two days we had several hundred members of the public to come and have a look around. All in all, our attendance at the festival proved to be a success with many people being made aware of the role of the RFA around the world and a few taking application forms away with them!

The RFA Mounts Bay football team took part in an International Football Tournament organised by our Swedish hosts in Gothenburg. With an array of ships of different nationalities in the harbour, many of which entered teams, the football tournament was a truly international affair. Our team, made up from the ship's crew and 3 RLC (Royal Logistic Corp) lads, had an average age of 30 and had not played together before, so we weren't holding out much hope!

After a kickabout in the car park while waiting for the bus to depart, we headed off to the sports complex. Upon arrival we were ushered into the sports hall where we were divided into groups - blue, red, yellow and green. We were placed in the blue group along with HMS Manchester, FS Cassiopee, FGS Bad Bevensen and TCG Barbaros. The team from the Turkish ship (TCG Barbaros) never turned up, so it was left to the four remaining teams to battle it out for a place in the semis.

First up, we were up against HMS Manchester, the big "derby" (they were berthed outboard of us!). The match kicked off at a furious pace and with little structure or shape to the team, we soon found ourselves under the kosh. Under continuous pressure from the opposition midfield and attack, it wasn't too long before we found ourselves a goal down. Shortly afterwards, a second followed as novice keeper Chris 'the kitten' Gould watched a high looping ball slip through his arms and trickle into the net. The final whistle sounded after 15 minutes, we came off a bit disappointed but not too dejected considering it was our first match together and we'd only lost 2-0.

The next match saw us up against the French ship FS Cassiopee. With a few changes, to the starting line up and formation, we were hopeful of a result. The French where fast, but with a more structured and settled team and a wind advantage, we were matching them. Some solid defending, good movement in midfield and lively strikers lead to us getting forward and threatening the French goal. Chris Lewis was yellow carded after he was adjudged to have brought down a Frenchman on the left wing, it was a blatant dive by the French lad who had shown his acrobatic skills in the previous match with the Manchester. The game hung finely in the balance with some good exchanges of play from both sides before the sucker blow came in the dying minutes. Goalkeeper Arwel Roberts (on for Chris after the first game), who had made some outstanding saves to deny the French, was eventually beaten when some fine play from the French down the right flank resulted in a neat little cross ball into the edge of the six yard box which was neatly despatched by one of the French attackers who remained unmarked. The game ended 1-0, but a much improved performance left us feeling confident of getting a result in the third and final match.

Our last game was against the German ship FGS Bad Bevensen (who for some reason we thought were Belgians!). It was a must win for British and Mounts Bay Pride!

The Germans looked more like a rugby than a football team, so we knew we were in for a tough match. We pressed from kick off and some neat touches in midfield saw Kenny and AJ, with Mark in support, getting through to attack the German goal. The first attempt saw a lovely ball over the top from Andy send Mark through but the German defender stopped him just before he was about to pull the trigger. The winning goal, when it came, was the end result of some fine play from the whole team – a master stroke of pure genius. The right and left midfielders feigned runs as the ball was played from defence to Andy who played it to Robbie. A through ball from Robbie then found Kenny in space just beyond the opposition 18 yard box, with two players to beat he deftly took it round a floundering left back, leaving him trailing in his wake. With only a man mountain of a German defender left to beat (he was at least 20ft tall the way Kenny tells it), he attacked at pace and with a fade to the right he pulled toward the left post, before neatly shooting into the right hand corner to score.

The whole team went wild, but we had to hang on as a final German corner could have ended it all. The German corner was thankfully collected by Arwel just before the ref blew the whistle. We had won one match but it felt like we had won the tournament. After the game we trudged back to the dressing room for some well earned refreshments, which our Swedish Hosts had provided for us. We are still not sure who won the tournament, but at least we beat the Germans, and did not come back to the ship with the wooden spoon. They think its all over, it is now!

RFA Mounts Bay Football Team [Back row L-R] Jim Render (3/O(E), Chris Lewis (2/O(E), Neil Jefferson (STWD), Chris Gould (3/O(X), Andy Shanley (CR1), Luke Gibson (CDT), Kenny Lecointe (SCO). [Front row L-R] Arwel Roberts (3/O(E), Thomas Wyatt (CDT), Gordon Buchanan (3/O(X), AJ Carruthers (CR1), Mark Little (RLC), Gurung Amar (RLC), Pun Dhan (RLC)

NEPTUNE WARRIOR

RFA Mounts Bay left Cornwall after her Freedom of Falmouth Ceremony on Wednesday 18th April to proceed to the Clyde to anchor at the Tail of the Bank in preparation for her next deployment. Having attended pre-exercise briefings in Faslane, Exercise Neptune Warrior 071 started on Monday 23rd April when we left the anchorage to take up our station alongside other Royal Fleet Auxiliary vessels, British Warships and Warships and Auxiliaries from around the world.

Initially our role was to provide a launch platform for the Pre-Landing Forces. We accommodated troops and made use of our cranes and dock facilities to conduct exercise raids. Without flooding the docking area aft, the Marines could launch their inflatable craft from the stern door. Our flight deck also played a major part in the operations receiving Lynx and Merlin helicopters for training evolutions, and to transport personnel from ship to ship. Mounts Bay's dynamic positioning facility was well used during amphibious and flying operations and we utilised our ability to flood the dock in a demonstration raid.

During Exercise Neptune Warrior, we were exposed to simulated terrorist attacks using aeroplanes, helicopters and fast water craft. The Officer of the Watch on the Bridge had to carry out defensive manoeuvring and the reactions of the ship's company were repeatedly tested. Not only did we have to defend ourselves against the attacks but in addition warn other ships in the vicinity that we and they were in danger, so the process also proved a successful communications exercise. Close protection from high speed US Navy warships was very impressive.

For us the operation lasted a week but then commitments called us down to Marchwood, Southampton to embark 40 Commando Royal Marines for our next deployment that will see us working alongside other naval vessels in the Baltic area. This will be a large exercise involving forces from many countries around the Mediterranean coast, both sides of the Atlantic and Baltic. Its title is Noble Mariner and it will provide us, the rest of the UK Amphibious Task Group and Carrier Strike Groups and Staffs with the opportunity to hone our skills ready for future deployments and NATO tasking.

On the way down to Marchwood, RFA Mounts Bay couldn't resist going into the area with which it shares its name - which made for a fabulous photograph opportunity!

Gunline Summer07.qxd 15/6/07 16:25 Page 9

ROYAL FLEET AUXILIARY

RFA CARDIGAN BAY

RFA WAVERULER

RFA BAYLEAF
SIR BEDIVERE

RFA FORT AUSTIN

RFA GOLDROVER

..AROUND THE WORLD

BLACK ROVER
Continues to work very hard as FOST Tanker this year, she will be completing her time working out of Devonport towards the end of June for a well earned refit period.

GOLD ROVER
Gold has been busy down south, she has been patrolling the Falkland Islands and making preperations for the many memorials and ceremonies marking 25 years since the Falklands War.

BAYLEAF
Has continued with her operational tasking in the Gulf in support of Coalition forces. She is presently in Dubai undergoing a scheduled maintenence period before returning to her tasking in the area.

BRAMBLELEAF
having returned from operations in the Gulf, she is currently at extended readiness in Portsmouth.

ORANGELEAF
Has been undergoing a Ships Life Extention Period (SLEP) in Birkenhead. The SLEP will modernise and replace old equipment bringing ORANGELEAF up to date to continue her role as support tanker into the future.

WAVE KNIGHT
Dry docked in Birkenhead, for a well earned refit and maintenance. She will be due back to sea towards the end of June.

WAVE RULER
Continuing her counter drug operations, WAVE RULER has enjoyed a visit to Barbados in May and a maintenance period towards the end of the month in Curacao. She will be back on the high seas from mid-June re-commencing counter drug operations.

FORT GEORGE
Has been extremely busy on Exercise Noble Mariner, in the Baltic. She has a scheduled maintenence period in Glen Mallen throughout June.

FORT VICTORIA
The FORT VICTORIA has been alongside in Portsmouth throughout May, her tasking is under review at the time of writing.

FORT AUSTIN
The AUSTIN has been working hard in the Gulf in support of Operation Enduring Freedom, she had a visit to Salalah in Oman in May and will remain on National Tasking in the region until her return to the UK towards the end of June.

FORT ROSALIE
May saw the ROSALIE completing Ex Noble Mariner in the North Atlantic, after a quick visit to Aarhus and Gothanburg she was then off to the Baltic to join Ex Noble Mariner. She will have a short stop in Glen Mallen before exercising on the South coast.

ARGUS
Having had her succesful refit ARGUS has been off Devonport in the FOST areas for a shake down of equipment before commencing her OST towards the end of May. She is presently in Falmouth for defect rectification before commencing operational flying training and a visit to Lisbon towards the end of june.

DILIGENCE
Presently in dry dock in Birkenhead, undergoing a refit.

SIR BEDIVERE
Very busy programme for the BEDI since she became the mothership for the Iraqi patrol boats in April. May saw her visiting Kuwait before a maintenance period in Jebel Ali. She will continue her national tasking with the Iraqi navy throughout May and June.

LYME BAY
LYME is coming towards the end of her build in Govan, she is due to commence sea trials out of Falmouth towards the end of June.

LARGS BAY
Like the ROSALIE LARGS BAY has been put through her paces during Ex. Neptune Warrior and Noble Mariner during May, 8-19 June will see her in Marchwood and Southampton in support of the Falklands 25 ceremonies and parades.

MOUNTS BAY
Followed the same programme as the LARGS BAY during May, demonstrating the new capability of these ships, June sees her running out of Marchwood and she will return to Falmouth towards the end of June for a maintenance period.

CARDIGAN BAY
Has enjoyed being deployed to the Mediteranean as a mothership for the MCMV's, she has visited Patras and La Spezia in May and is looking forward to visits to Pireaus, Erdek and Izmir in June.

RFA FORT GEORGE
OAKLEAF

RFA LYME BAY

RFA DILIGENCE
WAVE KNIGHT
ORANGELEAF

RFA MOUNTS BAY
LARGS BAY

RFA ARGUS

RFA OAKLEAF
BRAMBLELEAF
FORT VICTORIA

RFA FORT ROSALIE

RFA BLACK ROVER

Provided courtesy of The U.K Hydrographic Office

RFA ASSOCIATION

CONTACT INFORMATION

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

CHAIRMAN
Rex Cooper
01434 240002
E-mail:
Chairman@rfa-association.org

ADMIN

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

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

ACCOUNTS
David Cameron
0131 3345665
E-mail: accounts@rfa-association.org

SUBSCRIPTIONS
Pat Cooper
01434 240002
E-mail:
moneypenny@rfa-association.org

PLYMOUTH BRANCH
Richard Walker
01752 407411
E-mail:
plymouth@rfa-association.org

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

LONDON BRANCH
Peter Robinson
01322 448788
E-mail: peter@rfa-association.org

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

MIDLANDS BRANCH
John Walton
0128 3733889
E-mail:
midlands@rfa-association.org

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

Mailing Address
PO Box 120
Hexham NE48 1XA
Web Sites:
http://www.rfa-association.org
and Plymouth Branch
http://www.rfaaplymouth.org

RFA REUNION 2007

From Peter Robinson – London Branch Chairman

Saturday 28th April saw some very feverish activity at the Victory Services Club here in London, for we had a few hours to prepare the dining room for the RFA Reunion. Members of the London branch rolled up their sleeves and got stuck in - tables were labelled, flowers arranged and bunting and standards were hung. This year the chosen theme was inevitably the Falklands, and so the tables were named by reference to the fifteen RFA battle honours held by the RFA Association. The printed programme too featured the iconic picture of the return of RFA SIR TRISTRAM to London in 1985.

At 1800 the members and their guests started to assemble and at 1850 we threw open the doors of the private entrance to begin the reception. The band of the Guards Association struck up with some very tasteful music and members got into the mood very quickly. At 19:30 our Patron HRH The Earl of Wessex arrived, and Rex presented members of the organising committee to him. Commodore Bob then led His Royal Highness to the El Alamein room to meet the assembled members and their guests. His Royal Highness is a very friendly and approachable man who made everyone he spoke to feel at ease, many members came up to me afterwards to say how easy he was to talk to and how knowledgeable.

Just after 2000 Dinner was called and everyone moved down to the Carisbrooke Hall, where Shane Redmond, our London President, bade everyone welcome, and outlined the programme. After dinner and the loyal toast Commodore Bob gave us the customary RFA brief on the state of and prospects for the Service, and he concluded with a toast to "The men and women of the RFA and the RFA Association".

Rex then rose to thank the Commodore, and bring together the various strands of the evening, and to look ahead to the challenges we face as an Association. He the went on to explain the background to the James Coull Memorial Award, and to introduce this year's recipient, Chief Officer Brian Hayes. Brian was invited to step forward, and he then received the framed award and congratulations from the Earl of Wessex. In concluding, Rex thanked His Royal Highness for agreeing to write the foreword for the RFA Falklands history, and then presented him with the first of two copies to reach London, and this was received with evident pleasure.

At about 2200 His Royal Highness departed after a very enjoyable evening and we then moved to fundraising mode, and to the more informal part of the event. We began with an auction of a second copy of the book, and this went to Chris Locke on a generous bid of £50. This was followed by the raffle draw, which was ably managed by Gillian Downham and her family, and raised a considerable sum for Association funds. Our thanks to all concerned with this effort, and to all those who gave or secured the attractive prizes.

A wonderful atmosphere continued well into the night and so on to Sunday morning at breakfast, fostered by that mixture of friendship and shared experiences, in both peace and war. Surely that is what must sustain the Reunion, and ensures that Members leave promising to "meet again next year".

I am told that His Royal Highness thoroughly enjoyed meeting members of the RFA Association and their guests. This was the first time our Patron has joined us at an event, and we hope there will be many more in the years to come.

HRH The Earl of Wessex arrives at the Victory Services Club, met by the London Team

HRH with Roger Davis, President of the Malta RFA Assn., and John McLoughlin

HRH with Tom Adams (centre) - RFAA historian and writer

The Carisbrook Hall

HRH receives the first copy of the RFA Falklands History from the Association.

THE JAMES COULL MEMORIAL AWARD

In the spring of 2003 the Trustees announced the establishment of the JAMES COULL MEMORIAL Award, in memory of Commodore J G M Coull, who died in September 2002. This was made possible through the initiative and generosity of a Member who endowed funds for this purpose. The scheme is fully supported by the Head of Service, and the Coull family, who remain in touch and follow the annual award with great interest. Commodore James Coull was a distinguished sea-going officer, and was widely regarded as on of the finest seamen in command in the RFA.

The COULL AWARD is made in each year where a serving officer or rating makes an outstanding contribution to the good name of the Service, or selfless act above and beyond the normal call of duty, or other extraordinary achievement in his professional field. This award is appropriate to the memory of Commodore Coull, and its perpetuation is entirely in accordance with the aims of the RFA Association.

The Award was first made in 2004 when CPO Martin Joyce was selected by the Trustees to be the recipient after receiving a Commander in Chief Commendation. The award takes the form of a large engraved crystal vase and a framed diploma, and these were presented to Mr Joyce by Mrs Mary Coull at a ceremony on board RFA FORT VICTORIA.

The second award was made in 2005 on RFA Centenary Day, when the Commander in Chief, Sir Jonathon Band, made the presentation to Second Officer Ian Johnson MBE. This officer was recommended for his outstanding leadership and determination in carrying out civil relief operations in Grenada, following Hurricane Ivan.

In 2006 the Trustees selected Chief Officer Brian Hayes for the Award, following a Commander in Chief Commendation. This followed a catastrophic main engine failure in RFA FORT AUSTIN, when it became necessary to remove a main piston, and re-configure the engine. Mr Hayes was commended for his outstanding leadership and engineering ability in managing this difficult work, which is normally only carried out in harbour. Brian and his partner Joyce Bond were guests of the RFA Association at the RFA Reunion in London on 28th April, and the Award was presented by our Patron, HRH The Earl of Wessex.

We hope that Commanding Officers will continue to report outstanding acts and achievements to the Trustees through COMRFA so that such service can be recognised through the operation of the James Coull Award

HRH presents the James Coull Memorial Award to Brian Hayes.

CHAIRMAN'S LOG

EVENTS AND PLANS

The Future.

When I wrote in the Christmas issue I flagged up the possibility of a move to the South, and for a new structure to take the Association forward with the next tranche of officers and committee. A sub-committee was established in February to examine and cost the main options, which are collaboration/co-location with either the Marine Society in Lambeth, or with the Royal Naval Association in Portsmouth. The latter is proposing to move from present moorings in Chelsea to very much more suitable premises in the Portsmouth historic dockyard, where there would be a visitor centre, retailing, and conference facilities. We have long-standing and warm relations with both these charities, and either would afford us the shared facilities that a small charity needs to survive. We had hoped these matters would be sufficiently advanced for options to be circulated prior to the AGM planned for 4th July, and for endorsement by the Membership of plans for the future. Unfortunately we have not made sufficient progress with the costing and options, and we will not be in a position to include these matters in an early AGM, which is therefore being postponed until the autumn. It is very important to get this right, and to produce a solution that all can support, and I am sure we will all benefit from taking extra time for that purpose. As I write the concurrent F25 cocktail party in RFA ARGUS on 4th July is going ahead, and the Association has been allocated a block of tickets, which cost £10 each. We will be circulating information shortly to give Members the chance to bid for tickets for this important event.

RFA Reunion.

We have just enjoyed a superb Reunion in London, hosted by the London Branch, and Peter Robinson's' report is in this issue. Next year we expect to be in Edinburgh, on 10th May, and in 2009 we are provisionally looking at Cardiff, with Liverpool as a reserve. Our experiences since leaving our permanent home in the Northeast confirm the view that regionalising the event helps with branch development and team building. It is however important to keep up support nationally, for if we lose that the Reunion will cease being the main engine of association.

Other Events.

We stand on the cusp of the F25 events, and the signs are that these will be very important and enjoyable, and the RFA and RFA Association will play a full part. Beyond that we have been invited to join the Annual Seafarers' Service at St Paul's in October this year, and will be able to parade standards from the 2008 service onwards. We have received approval from the Royal British Legion to join the Annual Cenotaph Ceremony and March past on 11th November. We have been allocated thirty places within the naval column, and those wishing to take part should contact Peter Robinson, London Chairman.

Remember Force 4 ?

I am delighted to report we have been given permission to use the old house mag title for the journal of the RFA Association. This will be published by Social Enterprise Solutions, who produce our Yearbook. FORCE 4 will be a glossy A4 size, with around twenty pages of editorial, and it will be supported by advertising, and issued free to all Members. We hope to have the first edition out in July, and it will inevitably feature the Falklands edition of the original paper. We aim to place copies on board all ships in the Flotilla as part of our programme of alerting the interest of serving personnel to the benefits of membership. We hope to run two issues a year, and welcome copy, which can be e-mailed to F4@rfa-association.org

PEOPLE

Crossed The Bar. It is with great sadness we record the loss of the following Members since December 2006:

Captain Sydney Clench, former Senior Master RFA
Captain Connie Constantine – Chief Engineer and founder of the RFA Reunion
Captain David Habesch – author, master mariner and prominent veteran leader

Full appreciation will be published in the first edition of Force 4.

Trustee Changes. We welcome Shane Redmond, Chris Locke (WAPPS) and Alan Roach (Northern Lights). John Roddis and Tony Pitt are retiring, having given unbroken and tremendous support since the Association was formed six years ago.

MEMBERSHIP

Subscriptions. We have managed to hold the subs at £10 since our year of registration in 2002, but rising postal and other costs mean we are spending all of that and more on basic membership services. With a possible change to paid staff, clearly the time has come to raise the subscriptions, and these will go up in January 2008 to £15 p.a. (£150 Life). New standing orders will be sent to all annual Members later this year.

PJM Medal. The RFA Association was invited by the MOD to act as the focal point for applications for the PJM. Applications received were processed and forwarded to the MOD who sent them on to the Malaysian High Commission. The medals are in course of issue, and some may be made regionally by the Malaysian Defence Attache. However it is clear the scale of applications overall has surprised the Malaysian authorities and the issue of the medals will take some time. In the meantime we can only advise applicants to be patient as no further hastening action or individual queries can be accepted by the MOD or the Malaysian High Commission.

NEW SHORE BASED ENSIGN FOR THE ASSOCIATION

Designed by Graham Bartram, our Honorary Vexillologist, for use ashore, and for those occasions that an ensign is appropriate

FREEDOM OF FALMOUTH FOR RFA MOUNTS BAY

From Jan Reed

Captain Ferris gives the Mayor of Falmouth the ships crest

The Parade marches off

The RFA Mounts Bay was given the Freedom of Falmouth on Sunday, 15 April 2007, allowing the ship's crew to parade with "bugles and drums" when alongside - at any ceremony ongoing in Falmouth. The town clerk read out the wording from a framed copy of the Freedom Articles, and this was exchanged for a ship's crest in a short but poignant ceremony on the plaza outside the Maritime Museum. There were a number of standards paraded including the Branch RFAA. (Standard bearer Mr Richard Walker) and music was provided by the band from RNAS Culdrose.

The town council treated the visitors, including the dozen or so worthies from the Plymouth Branch RFAA, to a cream tea in the Maritime Museum and in the evening we repaired to the ship for a cocktail party. The evening gathering gave a chance for ship's crew and local dignitaries and representatives to meet and foster the bonds that we hope will strengthen in the years to come.

NO SEA TOO ROUGH

The untold story of the RFA in the Falklands War

By Geoff Puddefoot

With a foreword by

HRH The Earl of Wessex

This book is based on gripping eyewitness accounts and interviews; and is illustrated with previously unpublished photos, many taken by the participants themselves.

This is the RFA's story of what they did, why and where, twenty-five years ago. 256 pages, 60 colour and black and white photographs.

Available from May 2007 from the RFA Association for £16.00 including post and packing.

To order please complete the coupon below and send with your cheque to:

RFA Association, PO Box 120, Hexham NE48 1XA

PLEASE SEND ME _____ COPIES.

I ENCLOSE MY CHEQUE FOR £_____

(Made payable to the RFA Association)

NAME _____

ADDRESS 1 _____

ADDRESS 2 _____

ADDRESS 3 _____

ADDRESS 4 & POST CODE _____

TEL or E-MAIL ADDRESS _____

Gunline Summer07.qxd 15/6/07 16:24 Page 14

Ocean Greyhound, Bayleaf Gulf Tanker

It has been a busy six months for RFA Bayleaf. After finally escaping the clutches of a refit in Singapore in August, we became the first ship to conduct an 'out of area' BOST with the Flag Officer Sea Training (FOST) team using Salalah (Oman) as a base. This went well and we 'passed-out' with a Very Satisfactory assessment and resumed our role as the Arabian Gulf Ready Tanker. We met up with our smallest RAS customers the mine-hunters HMS Ramsey and HMS Blyth, who were deploying to the Gulf, and then finally made our first maintenance stop for 12,000 miles in Jebel Ali (UAE), for Christmas and New Year.

After New Year we shifted to Star Terminal where we loaded cargo in preparation for our next tasking. All topped up and ready to go we sailed for the Central and Northern Arabian Gulf (known as CAG and SAG). Our first replenishment was with USS Boxer, who was not only our largest customer to date but also our thirstiest! In contrast to HMS Ramsey and HMS Blyth's 24 tonnes we delivered around 2400 tonnes. This was to be the start of a busy few weeks for all the team onboard. For those of you who imagine the Gulf to be warm and sunny..... it's not in winter (more like the North Sea, cool windy and wet!)

The maritime security operations in and around the Gulf are provided by a coalition of countries lead by the USA, with the UK, Australia, France, Pakistan and Germany currently providing warships for which we provide the fuel and support to keep them at sea.

Our replenishment at sea (RAS) programme keeps us busy but we still have to fit in the necessary training for the Ships Company. Anything from fire fighting, weapon training (now fitted with mini-gun rapid-fire weapons as well as 20mm and GPMG), manoverboard drills, to machinery breakdown drills such as Steering Gear failures.

After a busy couple of weeks at sea we were once again in port, this time Port Rashid, Dubai. The first few days were busy with the ISM audit team inspection and general ship maintenance. However it wasn't all work....a team-building day was organised for the Ships Company. There was a choice of a round of Golf or a trip to Wild Wadis Water Park. The majority of takers were for the Water Park, with many making their first visit and a memorable one at that.

As the ship prepared for its next patrol there was a further requirement to top up with fuel, which meant a quick 'pit-stop' in Jebel Ali and another visit to Star Terminal.

The second patrol of 2007 took us further south towards the Horn of Africa and Gulf of Aden in support of Operation Enduring Freedom, this pleased the many sun worshipers onboard as the Northern end of the Gulf, the NAG, was still cool and windy! Bayleaf continues its support to warships policing this area notorious for its illicit activities.

Here we conducted replenishments with warships in support of 'Operation Enduring Freedom' which included French, British, American and Pakistani ships.

Some weeks ago we were conducting a morning replenishment with HMS Campbeltown and one of our diligent watch keepers spotted several large cargo-bales floating down the starboard side of the ship. The positions were noted and on completion of the Replenishment we turned around to investigate. After several hours of searching, the bales were spotted once again. The crash boat was launched and the boatmen were equipped with a camera and knife to investigate the 'booty'. Following a cautious approach the bale was cut open to reveal …… plastic flip-flops!!! Three other bales were recovered and loaded onboard. After a quick count, the Bosun and his merry men estimated we had picked up 1200 pairs of flip-flops, coming in all shapes and sizes. After a free issue of flip-flops to the Ships Company the Captain set about looking for a home for the rest of the pairs. This came in the form of a Children's Charity in Dubai.

It wasn't all hard work and with a break in the programme the Ships Company were treated to a BBQ lunch. A big thanks to Des the Yeoman who did a fantastic job cooking in the heat of the mid-day sun!! The Captain also sold off lots of goodies raising a £100 for a children's cancer charity.

DUBAI VISIT

A visit to Dubai saw our usual crew changeover and we were able to organise a few team-building activities ashore. This time the choices were an afternoon at the Dubai Autodrome Go-Karting Track, or a round of Golf. The RFA Padre also managed a visit to the ship and got to know many of the Ships Company.

Prior to sailing we embarked the FOST Gunnery instructors and between replenishment serials we polished up the skills of our gunnery teams. A busy week followed with Gunnery Training, Replenishments, Fire Fighting and Damage Control Training. With gunnery training, of course, comes the 'proof of the pudding' with a series of live shoots. The weapons team conducted both day and night shoots to test their skills. The evening shoot was quite spectacular with a paper sack target covered in multi-coloured luminous liquid looking like a well-lit Christmas Tree. On completion of the weapons team shoot, a few rounds were left in the Mini Gun, and under the watchful gaze of the FOST instructor, I was able to shoot at the target myself. Wow!..... is all I can say!

A replenishment with the Fort Austin and Sir Bedivere saw the FOST team depart, and us enroute to our next commitment another replenishment before we headed back towards Dubai for our maintenance period.

Shoreside contractors assisted the ships officers and crew in the repair and maintenance of various pieces of machinery. From Generators in the Engineroom to steel work out on deck.

Bayleaf also underwent several mandatory surveys whilst in the AMP. The surveyors left impressed with the standards which were being maintained by all onboard.

After many days hard work in the increasing desert heat, there's plenty of ways to unwind in Dubai, but none more stylish (or cooling) than learning how to Snowboard in the Worlds biggest indoor Snowdome. The opportunity was seized by several of the Ships Company to take up the offer of one or two lessons, some took to it a little too easily! I think they may have been before!

On departure from Dubai it was only a matter of a few hours before Bayleaf was loading fuel at its next destination, Jebel Ali, and undergoing another survey to test the ships Oil carrying ability and integrity. The surveyors were once again impressed by the standards and left the ship to finish the cargo load before continuing on another 3 week patrol.

Since the departure from Jebel Ali, Bayleaf has remained busy, conducting 4 Replenishments so far

Left T-B: BAYLEAF replenishes USS BOXER. BAYLEAF replenishes FS Aconit. 3/O Tanya "Deadeye" Warner. Go-Karting at Dubai Autodrome. Nice lot but a bit chippy. Show me the way of the bullet Master Grasshopper.

Gunline Summer07.qxd 15/6/07 16:24 Page 15

with American, French and German Warships operating in our area. All of which left very happy customers. We always deliver the best grade of fuel!

The last RAS was with our fellow RFA, Fort Austin, we passed her several hundred cubic metres of fuel, safe in the knowledge the next days replenishment she would return the favour with a dry store RAS, to us, of several cases of Beer. Strangely, after the fuel RAS she was re tasked, and the stores RAS was cancelled. Funny old thing.

In the periods we're not RASing warships, Bayleaf always stays occupied with internal serials such as MOBEX (man over board exercise) and this month to stay in check with current political correctness 'Fred' the Man overboard dummy has handed on his mantle to our new dummy 'Ruth'. Who, might I add has taken to her new role of falling over the side of the ship at the most inconvenient moments, with sheer gusto!

Not long into the Patrol period Bayleaf was called to the assistance of a group of Yachts, who were becoming increasingly worried about the close proximity of several very fast speed boats who were getting closer to their position and seemed to be loitering with intent. It turned out to be Fishermen who often operate in the area, and were on the lookout for food. The ship stayed with the Yachts for several hours until they were content to continue their voyage west.

Bayleaf also runs a Quickdraw routine on board. This is the procedure of mustering the weapons team and Point Defence Officer at very short notice to be able to defend the ship from a water borne attack. Regular drills ensure the team works well together and would be able to respond without delay in the event of a real time emergency.

Several more live Gunnery serials have also been carried out successfully. The Captain being very impressed at the aim of all the Gunners and the manner in which all the practices were carried out.

The Deck Officers also kept alive traditional seafaring traditions by plotting the vessels position throughout the day using only the Sun, the Stars, and a sextant. Something that is not seen too often in this electronic age.

Another tradition of the Ships Barbecue was also upheld in great fashion by the CPO (Comms). Not one case of food poisoning yet! It was a huge success, and a fantastic time was had by all that attended. Even if there were some pretty hideous Hawaiian Shirts on display.

R & R in Jebel Ali

The last port visit was Jebel Ali in the United Arab Emirates, and a 5-day R&R period. This gave all onboard a chance to enjoy the facilities and hospitality Jebel Ali and Dubai had to offer once more. Many took up the opportunity of the activities arranged including Go Karting at the Dubai Autodrome. The winner by a country mile was SG1A Kevin Brown with the lap record of the day, not an easy task in the sweltering heat. It could have been a different story had SCO Danny Stather held it together and not had to retire after three-quarters of a lap complaining of feeling delicate!

You will also be glad to know that the Bayleaf continues in vain to build a Ski and Snowboard team for the next winter Olympics. Training remains in its infancy, with 2/O (SE) Pete Macleod still on the Nursery slopes and 2/O (X) Ed Barrett getting far too cocky in the early stages earning himself several large mouthfuls of Snow in the learning process!

Finally on the sporting side the MEO Bill Auld was kind enough to organise a round of Golf at the Jebel Ali Golf resort and Spa. A rather grand hotel set on the seafront with a long 9-hole course within its grounds, joined by the day spa centre for those not interested in 'hacking and thwacking'! However, there was no time for a Kiwi face pack or Mango foot scrub as battle commenced at midday on the dot. A great afternoon's golf was had by all that attended, although the Logistics Officer Kevin Oliver may disagree, opting to send several balls into the lakes! Winner of the Jebel Ali Bayleaf flagon was SCO Danny Stather (he was feeling a lot better) with a cool 15 over par.

After loading 5500 tonnes of fuel, Bayleaf was then ready for departure to carry out another patrol. With many New Joiners on board, the training process in all areas starts afresh, and the 'Quickdraw Routine' is no exception. With several new Weapons crew it was necessary to bring them up to speed with some exercises and scenarios for the maintenance of the self-defence of the ship. They have now quickly taken to the regime, and are confident, and more than competent in their fields. The next step is conducting more live shoots in the coming weeks.

So, the future programme for Bayleaf looks as busy as ever with plenty more Replenishments, ships internal training and the forthcoming port visit next week where, again, the ship will say Goodbye to some well known, and very tanned, faces, and 'Hello' to some new ones. Hope they bring their Factor 50 - with temperatures now reaching 40 degrees Celsius, they're going to need it!

Many thanks to 3/O Tanya Warner and those who have contributed to the story of the BAYLEAF.

Down Mexico Way

RFA Sir Bedivere deployed in the Arabian sea went " Down Mexico Way" recently when the Galley team decided to have a moustache growing contest culminating with a "Mexican theme night".

It all started when LH Cook Andy Pringle joined, the rest of the galley team (CPO Cook Joe Martin, PO Cook Steve Clarke, Asst Cooks Jimmy Partington, Jimmy Murray & Kevin Tuck) all decided to grow some hair round their lips and within a few weeks the galley resembled a scene from "The Good, the Bad & the Ugly".

Before they shaved the moustaches off a Mexican theme night was organised & the ship's company enjoyed an assortment of Tacos, Burittos & Fajitas followed by an "Acapulco Tropical Surprise". As the photo shows the cooks took the Mexican way of life a bit too seriously with a well earned "Siesta" on the Flight deck.

SIR BEDIVERE AS MOTHERSHIP TO IRAQI NAVY

1st April 2007 was a momentous day for the Iraq Navy and the Naval Transition Team (NaTT). It marked the day when the Royal Fleet Auxiliary Sir Bedivere began acting as a mother ship and afloat training platform for the Iraq Navy and Iraq Marines.

RFA Sir Bedivere, a veteran of the Falklands campaign, is ideally suited to this task. Recently refitted, she has ample accommodation for both instructors and students; a Bridge large enough for navigation training; the logistics capacity to sustain the Iraq Navy's Patrol Boats and Fast Aluminium Boats (FABs); as well as plenty of deck storage space for the FABs. As a result, vessels with a normal endurance of 48 hours may avoid a daily three hour transit to their operating area, and remain on task almost indefinitely.

Strategically, this allows the Iraq Navy to increase its military presence in the important waters off its coastline and around the two Oil Platforms, which together account for 95% of the country's wealth. This increased presence will consequently lead to a reduced requirement for coalition forces in the area.

NaTT instructors will accompany the Iraqis out to her each week but the emphasis is very much on the Iraqi instructors to lead on the training and afloat Command and Control. Commodore Thamir, the Iraq Navy's Operations Commander, stated that *"These are really exciting times for the Iraq Navy. RFA Sir Bedivere will allow us to take another step closer to taking responsibility for the defence of our territorial waters and our country's oil platforms. We are very grateful to the Royal Navy for this opportunity."*

RFA Sir Bedivere will bridge the gap between the current capability of the Iraq Navy and the arrival of their new Offshore Support Vessels and Patrol Ships next year.

Many thanks to Captain Shaun Jones and the team on the SIR BEDIVERE.

To follow the comprehensive stories of both ships operating in the Gulf please see the website, www.rfa.mod.uk

Left: Iraqi Officer briefed by the ME Officer
Below L-R: Arrreeebaaaaaa! Sea King Operations from Sir Bedivere. Second Sea Lord is briefed on the Bridge. Iraqi patrol boat approaches SIR BEDIVERE

Gunline Summer07.qxd 15/6/07 16:24 Page 16

LANDS END - JOHN O'GROATS THE STORY SO FAR

Paul left RFA Mounts Bay only 15 days ago and is now well in to his Charity Fund raising walk. After a hectic weekend of last minute prep, and a bit of serious drinking (bitter shandys from now on) I got the train down to Penzance on Tuesday 8th May, then got a taxi to St Just youth hostel near Lands End. Spent the night there then got up the next morning and got a taxi to Lands End, arrived around 9am and went to the hotel to get my verification papers stamped then went down the famous sign only to find that they dismantle it each night because people keep nicking bits of it, so had to hang around for an hour to get my photo taken next to it at 10am. I then walked down to the first and last house and stood on the point by the sea to make sure I was the first and last person in Britain. Finally 10.15 9th May 2007 I set off, which by a pure coincidence was the exact time and date the Cornish monsoon season started. So I trekked through wind and rain, and at around 1.30pm made it to Penzance, took a couple of photos of St Michaels Mount, then for the second time in a week turn my back on Mounts Bay and headed up the hill, if all goes well this would the last time I see the sea till, I cross the Forth bridge. Finally made it to Redruth at 7pm.

The next day was pure hell, as the rain got a lot worse and I spent the whole walking up the side of the A30, and my blister proof socks don't seem to work when they're wet. Got to a campsite in Bodmin at 9.30pm my feet and legs trashed. Day 3 was another day of bad weather and the A30, but made pretty good time to Launceston.

Day 4 started with the first bit of sun I'd seen for 4 days, and about an hour after setting off I crossed the Taymar river, I didn't click what this meant until I saw a sign on the other side "Welcome To Devon" flippin' 'eck I'd just lugged myself and a 28lb rucksack the full length of Cornwall in a tad over 3 days. Anyway got to Okehampton that night, though only after being bitten on the knee by a dog, I wasn't worried about my knee but the 100 quids worth of Gortex he was biting through.

Day 5 and woke to the worse rain so far, so as you do I headed up on to Dartmoor just as the Army was evacuating all their people on the 10 Tors off it. Despite the rain made good time to Crediton even had time to stop for a pint in a pub voted the best in Britain.

Day 6 was mainly along the Exe valley way which seems to be a guided tour of Devon's sewage plants, got to Tiverton, then followed the Grand western canal to the Somerset Border, and camped just the other side of it.

Day 7 Had an absolute nightmare trying to following the West Deane Way, and got completely soaked trying to fight my way through chest high grass, so gave up and hit the country lanes to Taunton, couldn't find anywhere cheap to stay so headed on and ended up camping in a farmers field a few miles up the road.

Day 8 more chest high grass along the river Tome crossing the Somerset levels, (at least they're flat) but an early start meant I made it to Glastonbury by 3.30pm.

Day 9 was the first and only day that it has not rained once and I made an epic walk to Bath of 32 miles traversing the Mendips, the worse bit being the end, I know Baths a Roman city, but I didn't know it was built on 7 hills, or at least a number of bleeding big ones.

Anyway that's the story so far, yesterdays epic meant I could have a rest day in Bath today, so I went to the spa and stuff. Overall things are going pretty well. I had no real idea how my body would cope with the 22+ miles everyday, the first 5 days were complete hell every part of my body below the waist hurt like hell, but now the soles of my feet are like Rhino skin and the other pains seem to have eased. The Medtech's advice about Vaseline on the bum cheeks is working really well; maybe the chefs in the galley who suffer the same problem (they know who they are!) should try it. Anyway hitting the Cotswold Way tomorrow, looks pretty tough.

MARINERS PARK RETIREMENT HOME STAFF VISIT TO ORANGELEAF

Orangeleaf has recently hosted staff from one of Wirral's leading retirement homes whilst in the port of Liverpool awaiting refit on the Mersey.

Mariner's Park is situated in Wallasey on the Wirral and run by merchant navy union Nautilus UK. It cares for mostly retired merchant seaman and the staff were keen to experience life on board a ship to understand and appreciate why their residents like certain thing done in certain ways! Even in retirement seafarers still seem to keep shipboard routines.

3rd Officer Paul Harris with Mariners Park staff

The first visit consisted of nurses, care assistants and maintenance staff who all seemed quite taken aback at the size and scale of Orangeleaf, perhaps because most of their seafaring experience consisted of a trip across the river on the "world famous" Mersey ferry.

After the usual formality of welcomes, introductions, coffee and the obligatory safety brief the staff were given a full tour of Orangeleaf, accompanied by the local press, by 3/O(X) Paul Harris on the deck side of life and 2/O(E) Martin Peet for the engine room.

Suitably impressed by the tours they were then given a presentation on the RFA and life at sea by the ships commanding officer, Captain Rob Dorey, before being treated to a Thai green curry expertly produced by CPO(Ck) John Donaldson and his staff.

Without a doubt, on leaving the staff were far more aware of what their residents used to do for a living and why they have some that insist on a cup of coffee at three thirty in the morning just prior to taking up the 4-8!!!!

A NEW AFFILIATION FOR RFA WAVE KNIGHT

On 22nd February RFA WAVE KNIGHT, cemented her affiliation with the Worshipful Company of Fuellers at Harwich. WAVE KNIGHT is the first operational ship to be honoured with the affiliation.

Captain Ian Pilling receives the Worshipful Company of Fuellers flag from the Master, Mr Nigel Draffin

After an opportunity to meet the Captain and Officers of WAVE KNIGHT, Commodore Thornton, head of the RFA, offered his personal warm welcome and gave a presentation on the RFA. Following the presentation, the Fuellers were given a tour of the ship and sampled the delights of a very impressive RFA buffet.

RFA WAVE KNIGHT finally became affiliated with The Worshipful Company of Fuellers with an exchange of crests between the Master of the Fuellers, Mr Nigel Draffin and the Commanding Officer of WAVE KNIGHT, Captain Ian Pilling. Captain Pilling was also presented with a Fuellers flag which will take pride of place on the yardarm as WAVE KNIGHT's RAS flag.

The WAVE KNIGHT's Commanding Officer Captain Ian Pilling: *"RFA WAVE KNIGHT has become the first ship to be affiliated with the Worshipful Company of Fuellers, a Livery whose history can be traced back over 600 years. It is a great honour for WAVE KNIGHT to be chosen for this affiliation. Today marks the beginning of a close, friendly and highly valuable association"*

The history of the Company can be traced back to the Livery Company of Woodmongers and Coal Sellers, commonly known as 'The Fuellers'. The earliest known references to that Company appear in 1376 and its Royal Charter was granted by King James 1 in 1605. Responsible for collection of coal dues and taxes, the Company handled the monies used to rebuild much of the City after the Great Fire of 1666, including St. Paul's Cathedral. It surrendered its Charter in 1667, but references to 'The Fuellers' continued until the mid 19th century. Various bodies continued to represent the interests of the coal trade until the combined efforts of The Society of Coal Merchants, The Society of Coal Factors and the Coal Meters reformed a City Company. Granted City Status on 13th October 1981, Livery Status on 15th May 1984 the Company received its Letters Patent on 17th October 1984.

The Worshipful Company of Fuellers is 95th in the distinguished roll of Livery Companies of the City of London. While its history is steeped in coal, with its origins going back to the Woodmongers in the 14th century, it has diversified and as such represents all sectors of the energy industry, originating from the coal industry with roots dating back to the ancient Woodmongers. Membership is restricted to those engaged in any of the energy industries. Present membership includes representatives from the coal, oil, nuclear, gas, electricity and renewable energy industries and from all sectors of those industries including production, supply, distribution, marketing, research, finance, education and major consumers.

As an active Livery Company it endeavours to fulfil the aspirations of the Corporation of London which are that every Livery Company shall play its part in fostering their trade, serving the community and supporting modern skills in their profession.

The 107 Livery Companies are trade associations based in the City of London, each known as the Worshipful Company of the relevant trade or profession. The Livery Companies originally developed as guilds and were responsible for the regulation of their trades, controlling, for instance, wages and labour conditions. Some Livery Companies (for example, the Scriveners) continue to have a regulatory role today, and some (for example, the Longbow Stringmakers) have become inoperative. Most Livery Companies, particularly those formed in recent years, are charitable foundations. The active Livery Companies also play an important part in social life and networking in the City of London.

The RFA Centenary Wedgwood Bowl is awarded annually for Humanitarian Aid and International Relations. The recipient for 2006 was RFA WAVE RULER which was presented to Capt Tait on behalf of the Ships Company by Cdre Thornton. During his visit to the ship in March, the Cdre passed on his congratulations to all members of the Ships Company. The award was made in recognition of the variety of roles and operations the ship has been successfully involved in throughout the last year. These roles include presence and readiness for Humanitarian Aid Operations as well as International Operational Tasking surrounding counter-narcotics within the Caribbean. RFA WAVE RULER was also instrumental in the interdiction of illegal immigration into the Turks and Cacaos Islands. The contribution has been exceptional and deserving of the highest commendation.

X-WORD ANSWERS Across: 1-EDDYFIRTH 6-TEAKOL 7-OLGA 8-MAINE 10-OLIGARCH 13-ROSELEAF 14-KEA **Down:** 1-ELMOL 2-FORT LANGLEY 3-RETAINER 4-BELGOL 5-SPA 7-OLNA 9-OLWEN 11-HEBE 12-KOS

Printed by Holbrooks Printers Ltd, Portsmouth P03 5HX