The Royal Fleet Auxiliary

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The Royal Fleet Auxiliary has much to offer—not only to school leavers considering a sea-going career, but also to experienced merchant service officers who feel that they could make a change for the better.

In this booklet you will learn something of the unique nature of the RFA, its worldwide responsibilities, its training schemes for Deck and Engineer Officer Cadets, and the career opportunities the Service can offer.

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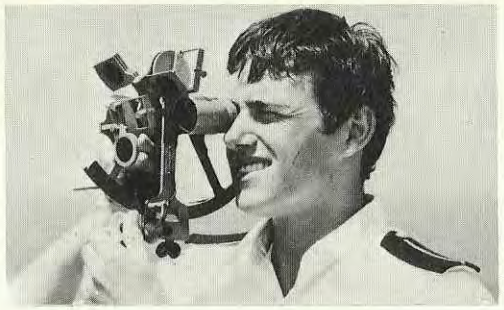

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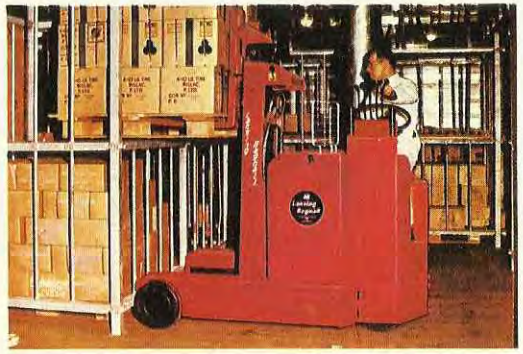

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A. A Deck Officer Cadet "shoots the sun."

B. A 'RAS' rig used in the transfer of fuel lines to the "client" ship.

C. The hold in one of the RFA's stores support ships.

D. RFA Olmeda refuelling HMS Blake in the Indian Ocean.

Careers available with the RFA

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A. A cruiser approaches RFA Resource prior to a replenishment operation.

B. Controlling an underway replenishment operation.

With the modern Royal Navy following a sea-borne strategy which concentrates on strike power and mobility, the Royal Fleet Auxiliary has undertaken an extensive new construction programme to meet today's requirements. The ships that now comprise the RFA fleet are the best of their kind in the world. This is true not only in the design of replenishment systems, but also in the actual storage and handling facilities which include closed circuit television for control of cargo and vehicle movement in stowage spaces. A wide range of propulsion and auxiliary machinery, both steam and diesel,is in use.

Certainly the role and commitments of the RFA demand Officers of the highest calibre. You should be of British Nationality and have been resident in the United Kingdom for at least 5 years. You must be medically fit for service on a world-wide basis.

Deck and Engineer Officers usually join in one of two ways.

1. Direct entry as trained Officers, transferring from other merchant fleets.
2. As Officer Cadets, direct from school.

Direct Entry Deck Officers

You need to hold a Department of Trade (DOT) Foreign Going Certificate of Competency. You carry out all the usual navigational and watchkeeping duties. But, the nature of the job being what it is, you'll find yourself doing other more unusual—and far more interesting—duties such as controlling helicopters by radar and radio as they approach for replenishment work. Or visually directing, from the flight deck, helicopters landing and taking off (a crucial operation when in heavy weather). Exercising closely with RN warships on exercises, practising close formation work or, if in LSLs, beaching landing ships and their load of troops, tanks and vehicles, are other ways in which an RFA Deck Officer's life differs considerably from anything you would experience serving with another company. Working with the LSLs provides a rare occasion when a Deck Officer can beach a ship and receive praise, not the sack!

In our tankers (which carry products and not crude oil),store freighters and LSLs, Deck Officers are entirely responsible for the cargo. But on the underway replenishment stores support ships, Deck Officers are involved with cargo only in the actual transfer at sea; other Navy Department personnel look after the day-to-day management of the many thousands of items of stores carried. So you get plenty of chances to see the sights of the many foreign ports that are visited.

Engineer Officers

Certificated Officers will find extremely varied experience in our fleet. There is a good cross-section of motor ships with modern diesels such as Sulzers and the latest Pielsticks. The RFA also has steamships with various turbine installations. Our ships feature automated machinery control rooms, variable pitch propellers, bow thrusters and a variety of other equipment. In the main, the propulsion units are more powerful than those found in other merchant ships of similar size.

You could be responsible for the smooth working of diesel, diesel-electrics, geared turbine and turbo-electric machinery and you will find all the experience you need to help you get your Certificate endorsed for Steam or Motor.

There are also a limited number of vacancies for uncertificated officers. You need to have completed an apprenticeship as a fitter or fitter/turner and to have had experience in heavy mechanical engineering.

Radio Officers

You will find a much wider range of electronic equipment in RFAs than in any commercial vessel and this will give you an incomparable opportunity to widen your experience.

You will require a MPT (General) Certificate and to have been or expect to be, successful in the Department of Trade (DOT) Radar Maintenance Certificate Examination. If you have previous sea experience, you should hold at least a 2nd Class PMG Certificate with a DOT Radar Maintenance Certificate. On entry you will be graded as Junior Radio Officer or Radio Officer (B) according to previous sea experience and appointed to one of the larger RFAs to train to become part of a team of highly specialised communications personnel comprising both officers and ratings.

After initial sea training and suitable experience in the various types of ships which comprise the RFA fleet, you could then be selected for further intensive training in the operation and maintenance of specialist equipment at HMS COLLINGWOOD, the Royal Navy's Electrical Training Establishment at Fareham. Radio Officers attend various other Company training courses as required throughout their RFA career. You get the opportunity of keeping abreast of technological advances in the communications sphere as most of our ships have the latest commercial and military systems operating in tandem. Promotion is awarded on merit. On promotion from the basic grade to Radio Officer (A), an officer becomes responsible for the maintenance of the most modern communications equipment. He has at his disposal a maintenance room equipped with a comprehensive range of test instruments and tools. The RFA offers an unusual career to those officers whose enthusiasm and hard-earned qualifications deserve more than the day-to-day repetitive routine of a Radio Officer in a commercially operated ship.

Electrical Officers

In this specialization you form part of the Engineering Department of the ship. On the largest RFAs a team of three is carried, led by a Senior Electrical Officer. You would be expected to have served an apprenticeship and to have an Ordinary National Diploma (OND) in electrical engineering, or the Electrical

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A. RFA Stromness replenishing a frigate at sea. Note the purpose-built flight deck for vertical replenishment work with helicopters.

B. RFA Resource in Far Eastern waters leading a Steampast of RFA ships.

C. Transferring stores by jackstay.

C

Technician's Certificate (T.4 or T.5). Initial ship training is given to new entrant Junior Electrical Officers to enable you to develop your skill and knowledge. Our Electrical Officers are responsible for the maintenance of modern sophisticated electrical machinery in installations developing power capable of supplying a small town. As in other departments of the ship, the RFA gives you much wider scope.

Pursers

The Purser Department performs a most important function at the very heart of the ship's life—a high standard of food is recognised as vital for an efficient ship. As a Purser, your responsibilities fall into two main categories—managing the Catering side and running the Pay Accounts/Cash for personnel within the ship. Recruits are expected to have a good educational background and hold a minimum of 4 'O' level passes at grades A, B or C including English and Mathematics. Preference is given to applicants who also possess Catering or Cookery qualifications such as City and Guilds 706/1, 2 and 3 or equivalent. The ability to type and some experience in accounts work are valuable assets. On entry, Assistant Pursers are given initial training both ashore and afloat. Your duties would include carrying out all the varied tasks of the Ship's Office and the management and direction of considerable numbers of Petty Officers and Ratings making up the catering staff responsible for food preparation and service upkeep of all ship accommodation, etc.

Ships Surgeons

UK registered medical practitioners with an inclination towards a sea-going life are employed in many of our ships as Ship's Surgeons. Duties comprise the medical care of the ship's company. Additionally, as the Ship's Surgeon, you have an important rôle as a senior officer in general ship activities and contribute in a significant way towards the overall management of the ship.

Facilities and equipment of a high standard are provided on board each ship. Ship's Surgeons are able to call upon the support of the Royal Navy whenever necessary and utilise extensive RN medical facilities in RN Hospitals both at home and overseas.

You should preferably be under 55 and have served for at least 2 years as a GP. For young officers in particular a sea-going career provides an excellent opportunity for further study to gain additional qualifications and for acquiring wider experience generally.

Deck Officer and Engineer Officer Cadetships

Our training schemes are based on age and qualifications, as set out in the following paragraphs.

Deck Officer Cadets

'A' Level Course (age at entry under 20 years). This is a 2½-year Deck Officer Cadetship, including 24 months at sea plus a period in a training ship as part of a cadet unit. You need 4 GCE 'O' level passes at grades A, B or C including English Language, to have studied to 'A'-level in Mathematics and Physics and to have passed in at least one of them.

Opportunities exist for suitably qualified cadets to embark on a Higher National Diploma (HND) Course on completion of their cadetships and after success in the 2nd Mates Certificate of Competency.

Ordinary National Certificate (ONC)/Ordinary National Diploma (OND) Course (age at entry under 19 years). A 3-year Cadetship plus 24 months at sea including a period in a training ship as part of a cadet unit. You need at least 4 'O' level passes at grades A, B or C including Mathematics, Physics and English.

For entry as a Deck Officer Cadet it is essential that you have normal vision in both form and colour.

Engineer Officer Cadetships

Higher National Diploma (HND) in Engineering (age at entry under 20 years). A 3½ year sandwich course including 9-12 months at sea. You must have 5 'O' level passes at grades A, B or C and have studied to 'A' level in Mathematics and Physics, passing in at least one of these subjects.

Ordinary National Diploma (OND) in Engineering (age at entry under 19 years). A 4-year cadetship, including 9-12 months at sea. You must have at least 4 'O' level passes at grades A, B or C as necessary, including Mathematics and Physics.

Marine Engineering Technician (age at entry under 19 years). A 4-year cadetship including 9-12 months at sea. You need at least 3 'O' level passes at grades A, B or C including Mathematics and Physics.

Note: Recognised GCE equivalents are accepted.

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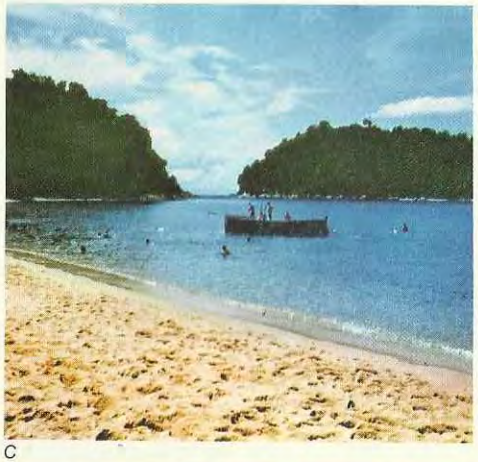

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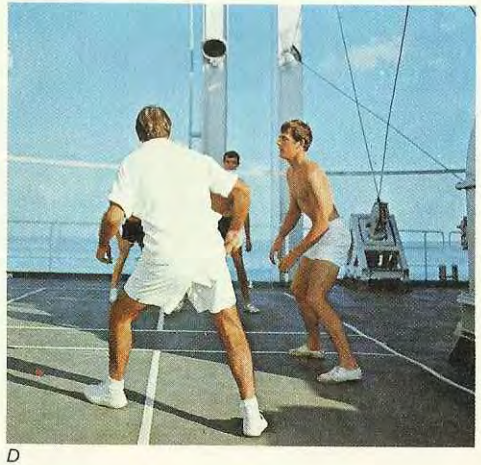

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A. Sampans in Hong Kong waterside scene.

B & C. Beach parties – or 'banyan picnics' as the RFA calls them – are extremely popular.

D. Keeping fit on board; a game of deck quoits.

E. Radio Officer tuning equipment.

F. Cadets assisting on the bridge.

G. Engine control room scene on RFA Tarbatness.

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An RFA Officer-a rather special way of life

An RFA Officer—A rather special way of life

Afloat. The work you do will be varied and far removed at times from anything you could expect while serving with other merchant navy fleets. There are far fewer long boring passages and,although on some ships you may have a routine job of freighting fuel or stores to top up Navy stocks at some shore base, you may even then find that your ship is required to meet and top up a front line RFA replenishment tanker at sea. On the next voyage you may find yourself in a front line tanker or fleet replenishment ship operating in support of a group of warships including anything from aircraft carriers to frigates and submarines, and accompanying them wherever they may go. After that you may have a spell operating out of Britain's finest sea training base at Portland helping to train RN and other NATO warships in the technique of replenishment at sea, and carrying out other jobs which you might experience only once in a lifetime elsewhere.

Underway replenishment work, whether in practice or in earnest, calls for split second judgement and total concentration throughout the operation. All Departments of the ship are involved. Deck Officers liaise with their RN counterparts in taking up ship positions and then keeping station (the ships are only some 150 feet apart) and control the complex vertical replenishment procedures. The Purser and his staff need to be geared to providing meals at short notice, and at unconventional hours. The Engineer Officers must check and monitor all machinery that operate the pumps, auto-tension winches, and steering motors, as well as tend the main propulsion units. The Radio Officers man the equipment that links into Royal Navy networks.

When taking part in Fleet exercises, every RFA Officer will find his job that much more demanding. Exercise conditions can involve the whole ship's company in Nuclear, Biological, Chemical and Damage Control—NBCD, an organisational procedure to combat any form of attack or damage caused to the ship which, as a spin off, helps the RFA to be better prepared than most for 'normal' emergencies.

Ashore. Our ships go where the Navy goes and even sometimes where the Navy doesn't. And this can mean anywhere on the oceans of the world. So the well-worn shipping lanes are not for you. You'll visit ports that other merchant fleets rarely see. There are less swift turnarounds necessary in our business and, apart from the calls that the Duty Officer rota makes on you, you will have ample time in which to enjoy ports and their surrounding countryside. You also get 'freedom of the port' treatment as part of your duty is showing the flag! The social doors that open for the Royal Navy open for you, too. This means you'll share in all the social and sporting facilities and the massive hospitality that RN Officers receive on visits abroad. Even when back at sea, this sense of 'belonging' is still retained.

In short, out-of-the ordinary work and out-of-the ordinary landfalls ensure that an RFA Officer's life is eventful and enjoyable as well as very worthwhile.

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Ship Secondment

Every effort is made to enable officers to take full advantage of the enormous variety of experience the Royal Fleet Auxiliary has to offer.

Normally you serve in any one ship for six months before taking leave. This, of course, is dependent on operational requirements and the nature of the duties. It is the policy of the RFA to give the longest possible notification of relief arrangements, and to issue a programme covering the voyage and duties of RFAs, looking ahead as much as possible. And we are probably better than most at getting you back quickly if a compassionate situation demands your presence at home.

Pay

Pay is comparable to that of leading commercial companies and pay scales are listed separately at the back of this booklet.

Allowances

Station Allowances are payable, in addition to salary, to contract officers in ships attached to stations abroad for 3 months or more. Uniform Allowances are made to all contract officers to meet the additional costs of upkeep of RFA uniforms. The distinctive uniform of the RFA has received the approval of HM the Queen and no one but an RFA Officer is entitled to wear it. So here, too, the RFA is different.

Leave

Leave is given at the standard National Maritime Board rate, details of which can be found listed separately in the pocket at the back of this booklet. In addition, payment or leave is given for weekends worked in port under the terms of the NMB agreement and RFAs gain more from this than most commercial ships.

Career Planning

With the unrivalled opportunities for developing one's skills as a seafarer, there go hand-in-hand excellent prospects of promotion and eventual advancement to the highest ranks in the Career Service. The RFA has a Commodore and Commodore Chief Engineer. You also have the possiblility of a shore appointment for a spell in the Headquarters Management Organisation in London. All suitable officers are offered—and nearly all sign—Company Service Contracts which carry with them many benefits, including increased pay.

Welfare

Afloat there is a high standard of accommodation—most ships are fully air conditioned and there are recreational facilities. Ships are fitted with TV and the latest films are shown for off-duty entertainment. There are swimming pools on most ships, libraries and first class wardrooms with the highest standards of feeding. Opportunities exist for wives of contract RFA Officers to accompany their husbands, and often for children, too. Medical facilities are available for all personnel and we take pride in our welfare arrangements, particularly in cases of family sickness or other domestic emergencies.

The Royal Fleet Auxiliary provides a full career of interest and variety and, ultimately, after a specific period of employment, one can look forward to the prospects of retirement with an excellent pension, which is non-contributory, and tax-free gratuity. Provision is also made for widows and children in the event of the death of an officer during service or after retirement.

Further details on the Royal Fleet Auxiliary can be obtained from:

The Careers Office
Royal Fleet Auxiliary
Room 603
Empress State Building
London SW6 1TR

or by telephoning 01-385 1244 Ext. 2192.

Come and find out what the RFA can offer you. It's a thousand to one it will be more than you ever expected.

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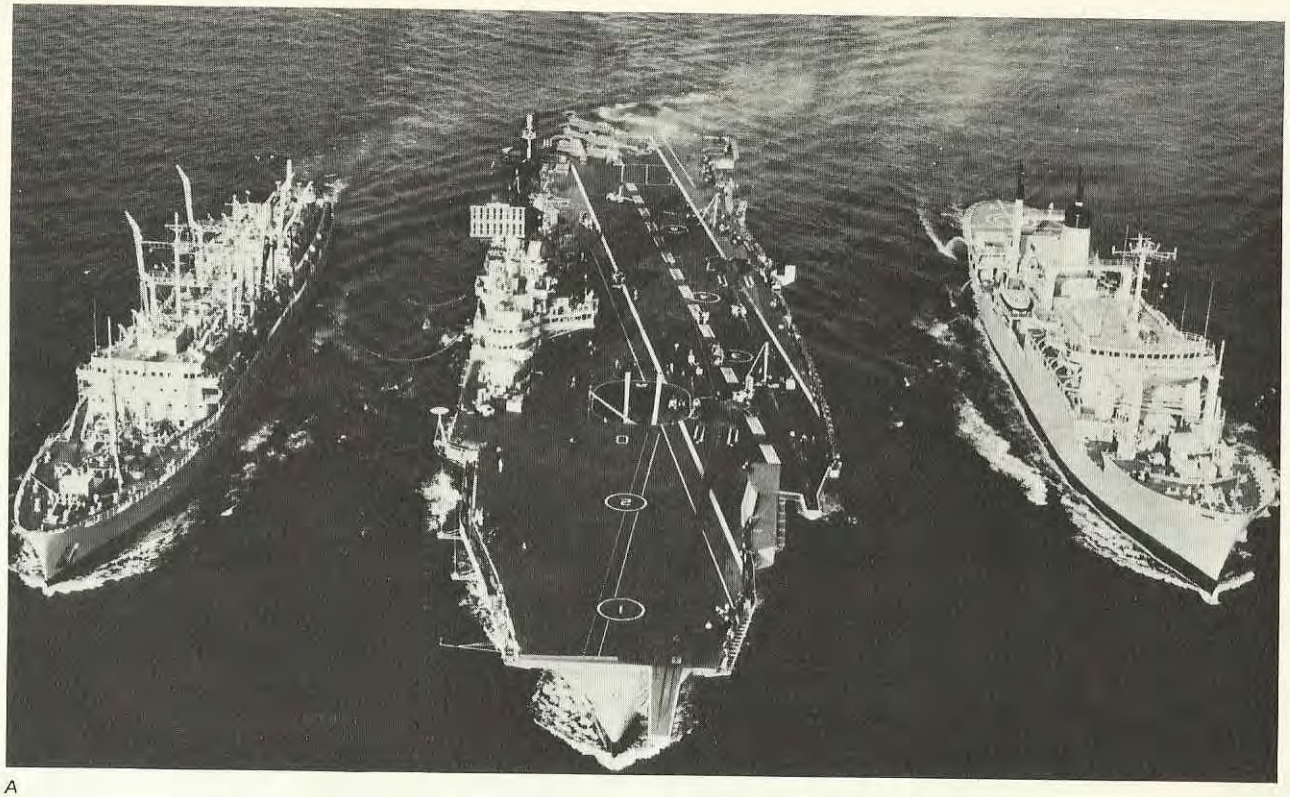

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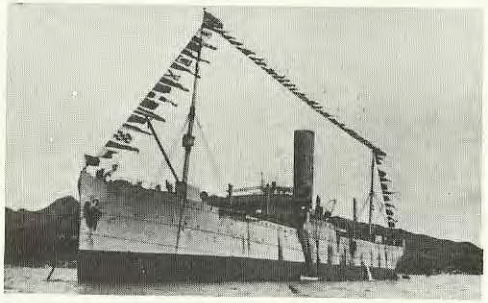

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A. Simultaneous replenishment. HMS Ark Royal receives fuel and stores from RFA Tidereach and RFA Lyness.

B. An LSL (Landing Ship Logistic) disembarking military vehicles.

C. Early RFA days. 1908: coaling the battleship HMS New Zealand.

D. 1921: RFA Ruthenia at Wei-Hai-Wei.

How the RFA was developed

Supplying the Fleet is a task as old as the Royal Navy itself. Ships laden with stores and known as 'pinks' accompanied the squadrons of Drake and Frobisher to distant waters. Supplies of beer and bullocks were carried from Plymouth to Brest during Hawke's siege of 1759. During Nelson's Mediterranean campaigns, stores were brought to his ship by sea from Gibraltar. It was not, however, until oil fuel came into use early in this century that the Royal Fleet Auxiliary was formed. The term RFA was first used in front of a vessel's name on 3rd August 1905, to differentiate between HM ships and auxiliary vessels and was officially constituted by Royal Charter in 1911. As oil-burning warships replaced coal-burning vessels before and during World War 1, the RFA was developed to cater for this new need by the building of a tanker fleet. From that time it grew rapidly, and in World War 2 its ships served in every naval theatre of operations from the Arctic to the Pacific. Warships then often operated and fought at considerable distances from bases. The RFA was always close at hand and often in the thick of it, as during Malta, Northern Russia and other important convoy operations. Its officers and men distinguished themselves by their fortitude and loyalty, and many were decorated for their services.

During the Korean War the Royal Fleet Auxiliary supported HM ships engaged in operations in Korean waters. It also fuelled ships of Commonwealth Navies, the United States Navy and the Royal Netherlands Navy and continues to support NATO navies.

Since then, off Suez, Cyprus, Iceland, Kuwait, Borneo, and in the Mozambique channel, the RFA has added to its fine achievements and, with the Royal Navy, it has always been ready for any task. In the Mozambique Channel for example, one of our fleet tankers remained at sea for more than ten weeks without visiting a port, during which she refuelled an aircraft carrier and other warships and enabled the operation to be carried out satisfactorily.

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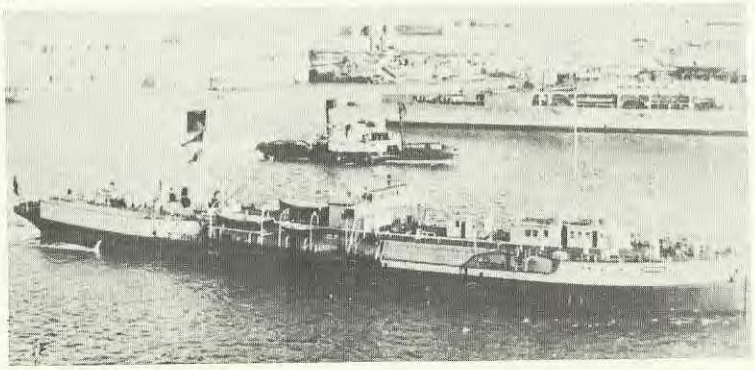

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A. RFA Green Rover, one of our highly manoeuvrable small fleet tankers, working up with HMS Sheffield off Portland.

B. RFA Dredgol at Malta during the '30s (HMS Glorious in background).

Ships of the RFA fleet

The Royal Fleet Auxiliary comprises 34 specially equipped ships ranging from a 2,222 gross registered tons coastal carrier to a 35,600 gross registered tons tanker.

Fleet Tankers

Ships of the OLWEN and TIDE Class are the principal vessels used for fuel replenishment at sea. The OLWEN Class entered service in 1965 and 1966, TIDESPRING and TIDEPOOL were completed in 1963. They carry three grades of ship and aviation fuels and fresh water and they can refuel three ships at a time with all these products, one on each beam and another astern. They can keep station at 15 knots or more, operate several fuel pumps and simultaneously run auxiliary and cargo heating machinery. All 5 ships are equipped to operate and refuel helicopters from their own fully equipped flight decks and they are powered by steam turbines.

OLMEDA ☐ OLNA ☐ OLWEN ☐ 18,600 tons gross ☐ TIDEPOOL ☐TIDESPRING ☐14,100 tons gross ☐TIDEREACH ☐13,700 tons gross

Fleet Replenishment Ships

RFAs REGENT and RESOURCE entered service in 1967 and are purpose designed for the replenishment of stores at sea. The primary function is to carry and transfer ammunition, food and ship stores to warships of the Royal Navy, in any part of the world. In addition to their specialized facilities to store, handle and transfer, they have a vertical replenishment capability by means of a Wessex 5 helicopter maintained and manned on board by RN personnel. Both ships have steam turbine machinery and can maintain a service speed in excess of 18 knots. Two further ships, FORT AUSTIN and FORT GRANGE, are now building and will enter service in the next two or three years.

REGENT ☐ RESOURCE ☐ 19,000 tons gross

Dry Cargo Freighters

RFAs HEBE and BACCHUS are designed for the carriage and handling of containers and other service cargo. They entered service in 1962 and are on world-wide freighting duties.

HEBE ☐ BACCHUS ☐ 4,800 tons gross

Support Tankers

LEAF Class ships are vessels with diesel propulsion machinery giving a service speed of 14 knots. Used mainly for carrying cargoes of fuel oils (product) from refineries abroad to Naval depots in the United Kingdom and overseas, they can also replenish ships at sea, including the fleet tankers referred to above.

CHERRYLEAF ☐ ORANGELEAF ☐ PEARLEAF ☐ PLUMLEAF ☐ 12,400 tons gross

Mobile Reserve Tanker

RFA DEWDALE is normally employed as a freighter but she is also ready to provide mobile reserve support. This ship, the largest in the RFA Service, is able to fuel HM ships and other RFAs with any of 2 grades of oil.

DEWDALE ☐ 35,600 tons gross

Small Fleet Tankers

The ROVERs are a new class of small fleet tanker which have been specially designed to replenish HM ships at sea with fuel, fresh water, limited dry cargo and refrigerated stores under all conditions whilst under way. A helicopter landing platform is also provided, served by a stores lift to enable stores to be transferred at sea by helicopter. All 5 vessels were completed between 1969 and 1974. They are fitted with Pielstick diesel engines which give them a service speed in excess of 18 knots and they are highly manoeuvrable—one was recently described as handling like a frigate!

BLACK ROVER ☐ BLUE ROVER ☐ GOLD ROVER ☐ GREEN ROVER ☐ GREY ROVER ☐ 7,500 tons gross

Coastal Tanker

EDDYFIRTH entered service in 1954, and is employed distributing the Navy's special brand of aviation fuel.

EDDYFIRTH ☐ 2,222 tons gross

Stores Support Ships

RFA LYNESS gives support with a wide range of air and ship's stores. She was the first of the NESS Class, entering service in 1966 and was specially designed for the purpose. RFAs STROMNESS and TARBATNESS give support with naval and victualling stores, and were completed in 1967. Perhaps the most successful and popular class in the RFA, all three ships are fitted with a purpose-built flight deck to receive helicopters for vertical replenishment and are powered by modern diesel engines. RFAs RESURGENT and RETAINER are stores support ships carrying armament stores. They are due for replacement by FORT GRANGE and FORT AUSTIN (see above) when the two latter are delivered.

LYNESS ☐ STROMNESS ☐ TARBATNESS ☐ 12,400 tons gross
RESURGENT ☐ RETAINER ☐ 9,400 tons gross

Helicopter Support Ship

RFA ENGADINE was specially designed for training Royal Navy helicopter crews and could be described as an aircraft carrier in miniature. The ship carries RN parties to maintain and control the helicopters embarked but is entirely operated and crewed by RFA personnel. She was accepted into service in December 1967.

ENGADINE ☐ 6,400 tons gross

Landing Ships Logistic

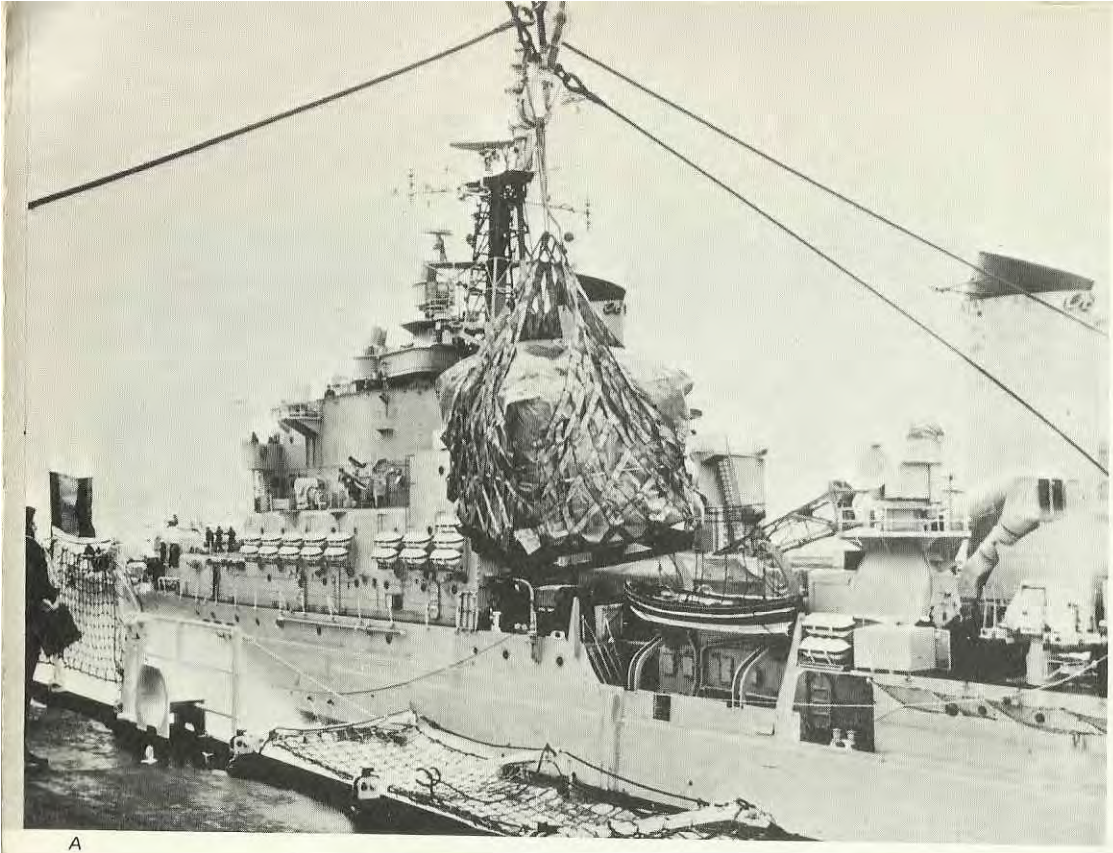
These vessels, known as the SIR LANCELOT Class were completed between 1964 and 1968. The LSL role is to provide support for an amphibious landing mounted from Commando Carriers and by Assault Ships; in peacetime they are programmed for Army tasks. They are highly specialized ships with a 'roll-on-roll-off' capability, provided by bow and stern doors and ramps. If required they can be put on to a beach to land or embark troops with their tanks and vehicles. They are also fitted with helicopter flight decks.

SIR LANCELOT ☐ 6,400 tons gross ☐ SIR BEDIVERE ☐ SIR GALAHAD ☐ SIR GERAINT ☐ SIR PERCIVALE ☐ SIR TRISTRAM ☐ 4,500 tons gross

Landing Ship Tank

EMPIRE GULL entered service in 1945 as a LST.

EMPIRE GULL ☐ 4,258 tons gross



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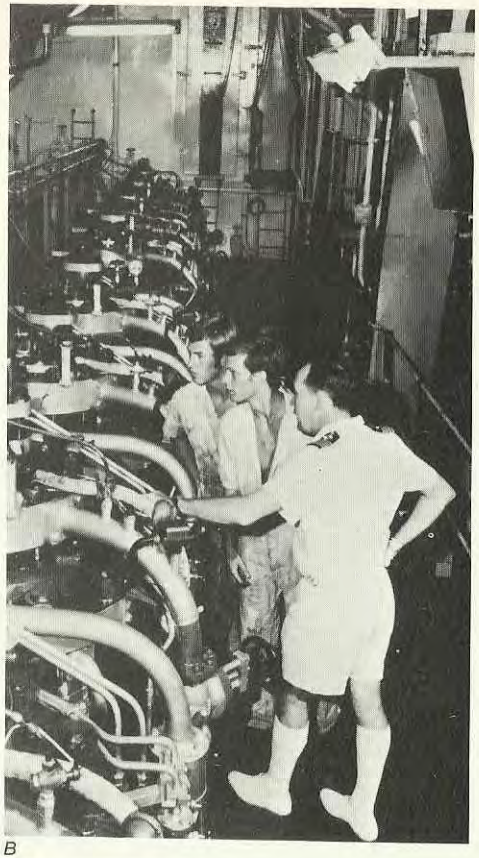

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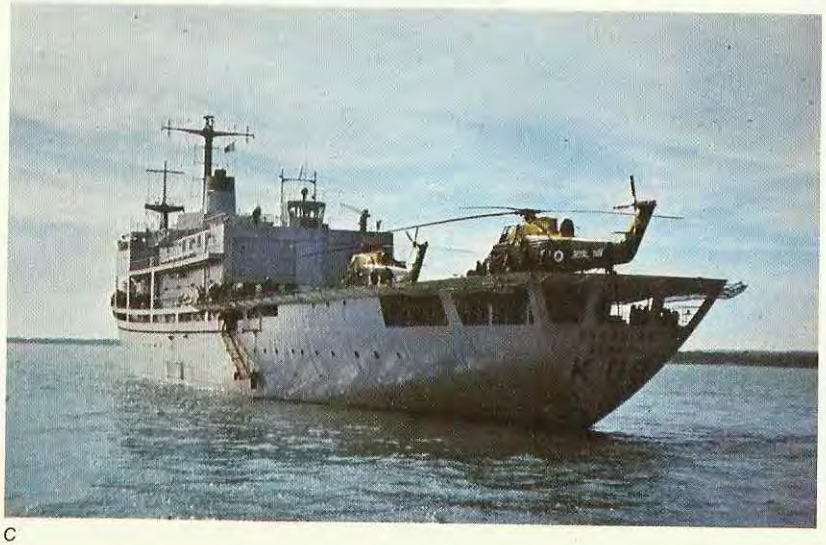

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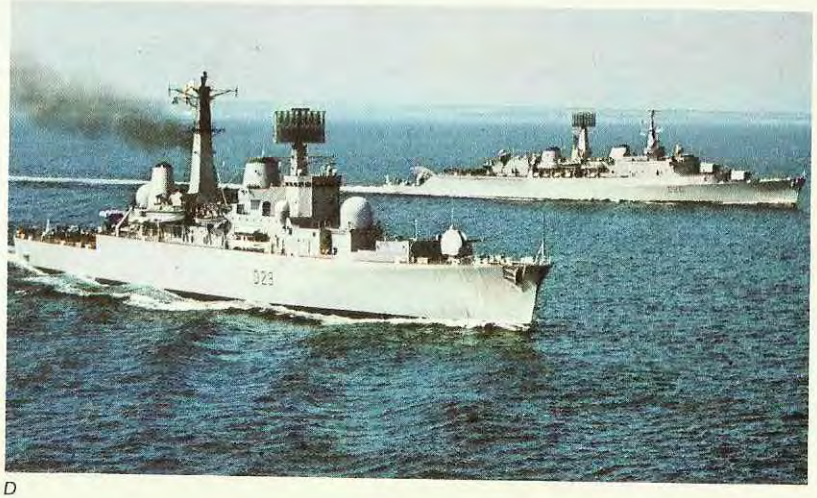

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A. RFA Stromness sending over stores to HMS Blake.

B. The engineroom of RFA Tarbatness.

C. RFA Engadine, the Fleet's Helicopter Support Ship.

D. Two of the RFA's customers – HMS Bristol and HMS Fife.

The RFA World

ROYAL FLEET AUXILIARY

RFA

The Royal Fleet Auxiliary