



# Gunline



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## OUNTS' OLYMPIC CHALLENGE

'RFA Mounts Bay' – The Olympics' discreet yet fully supporting silent partner in Portland

If one was to have believed all the media reports surrounding the military presence in Portland in support of Dorset Police and the Olympic Games, one could have been forgiven for thinking there was only one ship present, a warship, from which the whole military contribution was run. The truth of the matter and the Police will be the first to support this, was that there were two ships in Weymouth and Portland, one at sea and one alongside.

From the 2nd July through until the 27th August Mounts Bay was berthed alongside Deep Water Berth in Portland Port, docked down with two and half mexeflotes joined together and secured on her outboard side serving as a giant berthing pontoon for the variety of boats including Offshore Raiding Craft, a workboat from 17 Port & Maritime Regiment, numerous Naval RHIBs, two P2000 patrol crafts, an assortment of police boats and a couple of Sea Cadet craft acting as a 'meal delivery service'. Throughout the period Mounts conducted an amphibious operation alongside acting as the beach head, the forward logistics site, a floating hotel for 468 personnel, a feeding station for the majority of these personnel, a fuelling station for the small boats, armoury and accommodation for the police, the handover point for the armed response vehicles and the police maritime patrols, an extension of the harbour office for the control of boats and the host venue for a number of VIP visits including HRH the Princess Royal, HRH the Earl of Wessex, the Secretary of State for Defence and the First Sea Lord.

Some might say what a wonderful position to be in, ringside seats for the sailing events. Unfortunately, the truth of the matter was that

most of the events were conducted outside the breakwater and it was only the windsurfing and other smaller classes that were run on the inner harbour circuits that we were able to see. There was, however, an impromptu visit by the Mexican and Israeli windsurfers who took a wrong turn and proceeded at speed towards Mounts Bay with a LOCOG boat in hot pursuit. Notwithstanding our inability to see many of the events from the ship, some of those onboard managed to get tickets to view the sailing from the Nothe and there was a general party atmosphere in Portland. The Australian team took over The Cove and they do know how to party! After Ben Ainslie won his gold medal and celebrating his victory in town he walked back through Portland, following dinner with the Princess Royal in Portland Port and was met outside The Green Shutters by a BBC TV crew – and half of Mounts Bay's company, which was all perfectly captured on Gabby Logan's late night Olympic Special later that evening.

All that said this was an immensely busy period. Across the board all departments were stretched. The catering department were feeding all the embarked personnel and a few others who managed to find their way into the queue at meal times, as well as preparing daily bag meals for those on the water. The bag meal count alone peaked at 1200 on one day!

It was only a few days after that it became clear that the bag meals were so good that some of the police in vehicles were collecting them in large quantities, along with RN divers, police divers, police boat crews and RN boat crews. The culinary reputation of the RFA "bag rat" had clearly spread far and wide. Over and

above the routine of feeding the large numbers of embarked personnel, there were the occasional visits and feeding of sea cadets and a number of high profile lunches and dinners, including a formal dinner for the First Sea Lord who was accompanied by a number of influential business leaders.

The ship's medical compliment of one MedTech was augmented by a Surgeon Lieutenant to assist with the potential additional medical loading. Their medical responsibility extended from Mounts Bay's crew and those embarked, to the military personnel ashore in Chickerel Camp providing the venue security force for Weymouth & Portland. This took the potential patient footprint up to near 1000 personnel!

boats, all during a 3½ week period. To support this effort Mounts Bay used three full mexeflotes supplied by 17 Port & Maritime of Marchwood to build a 2½ mexe berthing pontoon whilst the other half mexeflot was positioned on Sir Tristram as a spare berthing station. Four additional large fenders, formerly of Diligence, were embarked and deployed between the pontoon and Mounts Bay. Two reefer containers were loaded for additional food stores; one alone housed the components for the bag meals! A CIVGAS container was carried to provide support for the few petrol boats on the water and finally, a gangway tower and brow from Plymouth were erected on the jetty to provide VIP access and a second means of escape.



Statistics always seem to make the headlines and Mounts Bay can be proud to claim the following: 468 out of her 485 bunks were filled, 20 different groups embarked, over 650 VIPs transited through the ship, over 250 armed police officers accessed the armouries, over 10,000 bag meals were made and issued, 66 tonnes of diesel was issued to the small

To ensure the infrastructure ashore in the immediate vicinity of the jetty was all in place, the XO took a short course in car jockeying with NCP Car Parks. The myriad of vehicles from all the various organisations as well as ships' staff vehicles created a parking headache, especially when the port decided to fence off half the adjacent jetty to facilitate two cruise liners who

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Someone out there enjoyed the Summer weather, but they must have been in ARGUS or FORT ROSALIE in the Caribbean or WAVE RULER or DILIGENCE crossing the Med. If you were in FORT VICTORIA or CARDIGAN BAY in the Gulf you were too hot and if you were family, on leave, or working in the HQ it was too wet, apart from the brilliant couple of weeks of the Olympics.

There were no RFA competitors but individuals took part and there was a great contribution by the team in MOUNTS BAY in Portland. Chief Officer Chris Locke acted in the opening ceremony, which must have been an unforgettable experience. No amount of persuasion would get him to reveal the secret of the stunning final act of the ceremony!

We're at last taking forward some of the major projects needed to operate inside our budget and to recover from the reduction in our numbers. Promotion boards are in full swing which ought to encourage everyone we're back on

track. We are talking to teams in ships and maritime trades unions about Tailored Schemes of Complement, a ROTA appointing system to meet the more exacting levels of efficiency we have to achieve, a Pay and Reward system meeting both statutory and government requirements and our business needs. We have also re-invigorated the review of the way the stores and munitions loads are managed in the Forts and future stores ships. We expect to be in consultation on all of these as the Autumn progresses and then to start introducing them progressively in 2013.

We all believe in the RFA and the way we operate, but we have to stay a cost effective, what we are planning to put into place will set us up for the future, making life better for everyone involved in seagoing and ashore. All the plans have been generated with a sustainable future for the RFA and our people in mind. I believe passionately in the people of the RFA, the way we operate and our place in the Nation's life. We would not be putting ourselves through this unless convinced it is both good for the future of the RFA and the taxpayer. We have a fantastic and world wide reputation in our field, we must stay ahead.

2012 was always going to be a busy year for refits and we knew we would have challenges managing the manpower. As it turned out we found ourselves trying to man three ships, FORT AUSTIN, WAVE KNIGHT and BLACK ROVER at the same time and ended up having to move people around on leave, in other ships and from staff appointments to get the ships out of Cammell Lairds and back into service, not to mention seriously hard work in Birkenhead, Whale Island and Abbeywood. I want to thank everyone who went the extra mile to help, in a ship or ashore, and to reassure them that we are working hard on a number of fronts to stop this happening again.

This has been another really successful period for the RFA. Our reputation has been enhanced by everyone but particularly FORT VICTORIA acting as flagship for the Royal Thai Navy command of the counter piracy effort off Somalia, and ARGUS, representing the UK at the 200th Anniversary of the American Navy, and finally well done to FORT ROSALIE for a very successful deployment as ATP(N). Everyone, at sea and ashore, has pulled together to get through a gruelling, busy, interesting and rewarding few months, well done and thank you. Enjoy the Indian Summer, did someone mention Christmas?

## Olympic Pandemonium – The Isles of Wonder

*'Be Not Afraid, the Isles are full of noises, sounds and sweet airs, that give delight and hurt not'.* Kenneth Branagh's words from Caliban's speech in Shakespeare's The Tempest set the scene for the beginning of the London 2012 Olympics Opening Ceremony.

With the Olympics becoming a distant memory it's only now that the realisation of the enormity of the experience are being reflected on by Chief Officer Chris Locke, whose part in the Opening Ceremony as a cast member stemmed from a desire to be involved in the Olympic story.

The transformation of England's Green and Pleasant Land into the power engine of the Industrial Revolution set the theme for showcasing British achievement throughout the ages to the current Technological Revolution. Danny Boyle, the artistic director of the Opening Ceremony used the vehicle of lights, music and mass choreographed dance to tell this story; it was a privilege to be a part of it.

My involvement began after joining the Royal Naval Theatre Association (RNTA) in 2010 while working at RFA HQ in Portsmouth. Interested in the technical side rather than acting the RNTA gave me the opportunity to design and operate lighting sets for a number of productions in the Portsmouth area. However, last August the RNTA sent its

members an invitation from LOCOG, the London Organising Committee of the Olympic Games, asking for volunteers to take part in the opening and closing ceremonies of both the Olympics and Paralympics. Although they were looking for performers and not 'techies', I applied.

After two separate auditions in the East End of London, which included routines similar to leadership training a Dartmouth Cadet would undergo and a number of mass choreographed movements to demonstrate time and spatial awareness, I received, to my surprise, an offer to be a cast member for the Opening Ceremony.



Full rehearsals began in Dagenham at the old Ford Car works where two mock up Olympic Stadiums had been constructed to enable different sequences to be rehearsed simultaneously. Each weekend thousands of cast members would descend on this tented



village, check in, receive their 'bib' numbers and then prepare for hours of rehearsals. As these developed my role became more defined as one of the industrial worker's of the 1800s.

Our segment featured a 1,000 strong cast; we were first taught choreographed routines that would provide the basis of stage movement followed by the more tedious but still important choreographed procedures for moving stage props. Danny Boyle's vision of transforming the stage from the Green and Pleasant Land of England into an industrial landscape would thus fall to us.

Predominantly we were responsible for clearing the stage of grass, fences and animals to replace them with beam engines, chimneys and the Olympic Rings all to the accompaniment and booming sound of one thousand drummers and an evocative soundtrack by Underworld. This was all to be undertaken in 15 minutes in front of an estimated audience of 80,000 spectators and up to four billion viewers on worldwide television.

The complicated part of the sequence was removing the grass and fences in the right order to ensure the chimneys and beam engines could be raised at exactly the correct time. Each grass section having its own number and allocated cast member's to remove it. For those who watched the Opening Ceremony this may have appeared to be a seamless and simple evolution. It was however far from straightforward requiring in total over 180 hours of rehearsals to get it right. Transferring rehearsals into the stadium, which became our

home for most of July, added the impetus required to get the choreography right aided by the use of individual headsets which enabled movements to be called by the choreography staff and a metronome sound to be layered over the soundtrack.

The night of the first dress rehearsal cemented our efforts although there were still changes to be made, the most significant requiring the reduction of the performance time from seventeen minutes to fifteen as a result of changes to the overall running time of the ceremony. Although only two minutes, this made a significant difference to the time left to undertake the stage transformation.

The highlight for all of us in 'Pandemonium', the Industrial Revolution sequence, was forging of the Olympic Rings and performing underneath the firework cascade; but nothing can prepare you for the 'wall of sound' that 80,000 people make when you enter the stadium, this was my most vivid memory of the whole performance, knowing that the audience were supporting you with such enormous enthusiasm was extraordinary.

To be part of the opening ceremony will always be a lifetime high, not just the taking part but the whole Olympic experience which was positive, uplifting, and quite unlike anything I had experienced before. The UK, but particularly London was caught in the Olympic spirit with the Olympic Park as its epicentre. I believe the Olympic ideals of 'faster, higher, stronger' applied to the Ceremonies and Volunteers as much as the athletes, it's not the winning that counts, it's the taking part.

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were visiting. Thankfully, although possibly tempted none of the Deck Officers on this occasion visited the cruise liners for a "tour". They were all kept too busy on Mounts! As well as the XO's new found interest in cars, the police also took an interest in the vehicles saying officially they were conducting security checks, although the tax discs did seem to be of great interest to them!

No sooner had the Games begun, the closing ceremony was upon us and the athletes all departed Portland and Weymouth to return home and a degree of normality returned to Mounts Bay, sort of. There was still a requirement to support the police, as the security footprint remained in place for the inter games period, in preparation for the Paralympics. With Bulwark departing for leave, the role of Maritime Force Commander Dorset was transferred to Mounts Bay, but not before Bulwark held a BBQ and fun evening to which all the Team GB Olympic Sailors, along with their families, were invited. The

guests all paraded through Mounts Bay as they departed, proudly displaying their medals.

So much has been said about it being a 'once in a life time experience'. If you had asked my team in the middle of the event they would probably have said it was an experience they would rather not wish to repeat, bearing in mind the loading on some of the departments. However, I would like to think that in months to come the experience will be looked back on as one in which we can all hold our heads up high and say we were there. For me, at the end of my 'ownership' of Mounts Bay, it was a 'once in a life time experience', it was challenging, but it was also a huge success on so many levels. Unfortunately or fortunately, life has to get back to normal and Mounts Bay came back down to earth with a bump with the arrival of the BLI Team for a Logistics Inspection the day after the closing ceremony. Oh well...



# Argus joins massive bicentennial celebrations in the USA



More than one and a half million people got the chance to see RFA Argus in June when she spent six days in the world's biggest naval base. The aviation training and casualty treatment ship attended her second major maritime festival, named OpSail 2012, in a matter of weeks; the event was to commemorate 200 years since the War of 1812 between Britain and the USA – now the strongest of allies.

With a flash of flame from one of her two saluting guns, RFA Argus sailed into US naval base in Norfolk, Virginia, the biggest naval base in the world to join scores of other warships, sailing vessels and other craft for six days to partake in a series of commemorations for a massive waterfront and seaborne festival to mark the bicentenary of the War of 1812, marking the last time Britain and the USA went to war.



Argus was one of scores of warships, sailing vessels and other craft which spent up to six days in Norfolk, Virginia, for a massive waterfront and seaborne festival to mark the bicentenary of the War of 1812.

An estimated 1.5 million people descended on the Hampton Roads and Chesapeake Bay area to watch festivities, which included parades of sail, and the opportunity to look around visiting vessels attending OpSail 2012.

Personnel from Argus – which included not just her regular RFA and Royal Navy contingent, but also a Lynx flight from 815 Naval Air Squadron and a 30-strong disaster relief team drawn from MASF at Culdrose, who were on board ready for when the ship departs the celebrations to head for the

Caribbean on standby for the hurricane season to assist UK dependant territories in the event of them being hit by a hurricane – took part in festivities aboard the 28,000-tonne ship and ashore.

Events aboard included celebrations to mark Queen Elizabeth II's Diamond Jubilee, which was highlighted by a ceremonial sunset, while on land Argus' Royal Navy contingent joined in a sunset parade which ended with a hugely-impressive 15-minute drill demonstration by the US Marine Corps at Norfolk's Town Point Park.

Not to be outdone, her RFA crew flew the flag for the Service's culinary branch: chefs CPO(Cook) Matt Rowberry and LH(Cook) Adam Syrett were the British competitors at an international cook-off.

Joined by local chef Troy Camacho from the Culinary Institute of Virginia, the trio were given a basket of the finest Virginian fare –

plus the best British ingredients from the ship's pantry. Troy was particularly impressed by the invention shown by the RFA cooks "putting a British spin on locally-sought produce".

The result of their culinary experience was a starter of steam sea bass, parsnip chips and white wine oyster and cream reduction; a main course of poached chicken breast stuffed with Scottish haggis, ham and potato hash, braised red cabbage and a black pudding faggot. For dessert: pickled rhubarb and ginger on a shortbread base with oat crumble and crème Anglaise and rhubarb jus.

Just the thought of being able to sit down to enjoy the feast sounds mouthwatering. Even better was the praise of one the judges who said of Team Argus that it "was by

far the best menu and presentation".

Unfortunately his fellow judges outvoted him with just half a point separating the top two in the five-ship cook off with the final result seeing the chefs of Denmark's HDMS Esbern Snare edging out the Brits to first place. Nevertheless a silver position in such a fiercely competitive culinary battle was no mean fete and the team from Argus are to be congratulated on their achievement.

"We were robbed," said a despondent Matt, from Ross-on-Wye.

"We thought the clean plates were a good indication of our success. To have missed out on the final by half a point was a great disappointment."

His shipmate Adam from Hastings added:

"I really enjoy the challenge of competitions and we stuck to the parameters set by the hosts. Unfortunately, the reindeer steaks used were too good."

So that's a top tip for next time...

Festivities in Virginia focused on the second huge event of the War of 1812 which had involved Argus in a matter of days. Before sailing into Norfolk, the ship spent a week in the Big Apple for the 25th annual Fleet Week – another international naval celebration, which this year had an early-19th-Century twist.

The 1812 conflict, it actually continued until 1815 is often hailed by the Americans as a victory – although a 'draw' would be a more accurate description. More importantly, the war's end laid the foundations for two centuries of ever-closer ties between London and Washington.

Away from things ceremonial, the ship conducted training serials with the US Navy; two helicopters from HSC-2 squadron flew from NAS Norfolk to meet the ship off the Eastern Seaboard and conducted a series of landings – a precursor to further training scheduled with American helicopters later in Argus' deployment.

On completion of her visit to the USA, Argus, which serves as both an aviation training ship for helicopter crews, maintainers and handlers and as a state-of-the-art floating medical centre thanks to its Primary Casualty Receiving Facility, will continue on into the Caribbean to be ready to provide aid to British citizens in the hurricane season.

# RFA Fort Rosalie in Rare Visit to Havana

## SHIP'S COMMAND DISCUSS COUNTER NARCOTICS OPERATIONS



Arrival ceremony Cuban Naval band and Guard of Honour

Fort Rosalie in June made a rare visit to Cuba to discuss the fight against the drugs trade and mark an historic anniversary. Fort Rosalie visited Havana to strengthen counter narcotics collaboration work between UK and Cuban authorities.

The visit coincided with Cuba's British culture week and the 250th anniversary of the Battle of Havana. British forces laid siege to Havana in June 1762 during the Seven Years' War with Spain as it was an important colonial military base.

Fort Rosalie was welcomed to the Caribbean capital with a Cuban Navy band and Guard of Honour including senior naval officers. The ship's commanding officer, Captain Martin Gould, made several diplomatic calls as the ship provided a strong symbol of Britain's bilateral engagement with Cuba.

Last year a declaration was signed which included co-operation on Counter Narcotics work and is linked to a wider aim to boost UK political and commercial engagement in Latin America. Cuba's Minister of Foreign Affairs, local dignitaries and the British Ambassador and Defence Attaché used Fort Rosalie as a location for business meetings. The ship hosted a productive meeting on board with the Cuban Ministry for Interior to discuss some of the details of Counter Narcotics work.

The ship's company took time to lay a wreath at the Jose Marti Memorial in Havana, which honours a martyr of the revolution against Spanish control. Members of the ship's company visited a cigar factory and historic buildings and in exchange more than 900 Cubans visited the ship – the open day coincided with Her Majesty The Queen's Diamond Jubilee celebrations.



Jose Marti Memorial

RFA Fort Rosalie's Commanding Officer, Captain Martin Gould, said:

"Our visit to Havana, coinciding with British Culture Week, has helped to cement relations between our two countries. The counter narcotics operations run by the international community in the Caribbean region are supported by Cuba's positive approach to the reduction of trafficking through their territorial waters; we hosted useful meetings on board to facilitate greater understanding of joint roles and capabilities. Seeing Cuba, being given front-row prominence in the port and making a large visual impact meant the visit was a roaring success. Our Ship's Company made outstanding efforts and engaged with the local population during official functions on board and ashore."



# The Royal Navy's Response Force Task Group – the UK's Very High Readiness Maritime Force

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

The UK's 2010 Strategic Defence and Security Review (SDSR) provides the framework and requirement for UK forces out for the next decade and beyond. One key conclusion from the review was that UK Forces should have the ability to deploy highly capable assets quickly when we need to, but also to prepare a greater scale and range of capabilities if required. Noting the enduring maritime advantages of freedom of manoeuvre, flexibility of access, mobility, sustainability, reach and poise, the Royal Navy has developed the Response Force Task Group (RFTG) concept to deliver the UK's scaleable, very high readiness maritime force capable of responding with a range of capabilities to crisis and world events.



Apache attack helicopters preparing for Operations from HMS Ocean in support of the NATO mission to protect the Libyan civilian population operating as part of the RFTG in 2011.

This scaleable Task Group will be tailored to the task in hand but will typically comprise amphibious shipping with embarked Royal Marines and aviation, a mix of frigates and destroyers to provide force protection across all environments and the significant logistic support embarked in RFA units fully integrated as part of the Task group and able to operate in whichever threat environment the Group finds itself in. Submarines will be attached to the Task Group as required by the nature of the operation. Through its fully constituted Command Staff, the RFTG provides an advanced capability able to plan and execute the full range of maritime operations across the globe. Additionally the RFTG offers significant flexibility through its ability to have elements forward deployed on other tasks whilst remaining at very high readiness for contingent tasking.

To deliver a credible intervention force, the RFTG is based around a Royal Marine Commando Group of approx 1800 personnel and precision strike capability through the submarine launched Tomahawk Land attack Missile, Apache Attack helicopters and naval medium-calibre guns. This capability is able to deploy and operate without restriction on the high seas to within 12nm of any of the world's coastal states and can be held at readiness or utilised as required in support of Her Majesty's Government (HMG) aims. This freedom of manoeuvre allows the UK to act wherever it is in our strategic interest to do so.

Flexibility and agility are also key attributes of the Response Force Task Group,

able to simultaneously deliver a wide range of effects across the military spectrum. These effects would include:

- deterring adversaries and reassuring allies
- conducting maritime security operations
- support to Special Forces
- conducting international engagement to build partnerships with regional powers
- conducting capacity building as part of wider Governmental and international (including International Maritime Organisation (IMO)) initiatives.
- Assist with stabilisation of fragile states again in support of cross-government and international initiatives.

This ability to simultaneously deliver a range of effects over a disparate geographical area was clearly demonstrated in 2011 when during the key delivery of the military campaign to protect the civilian population in Libya, the RFTG demonstrated the following simultaneous capabilities:

- Ability to evacuate over 500 entitled civilians from alongside
- Conduct Mine-Clearance in harbour approaches and Fairways
- Control and support UK air assets
- Naval Gunfire to engage shore targets that threatened civilian populations
- Launch Attack Helicopter missions from the sea
- Launch precision Land-attack strikes from submarines.

Concurrently, the RFTG also delivered:

- Poise at sea to provide options for HMG given ongoing unrest across North Africa and the Middle East following the Arab Spring. Options to evacuate UK and EU entitled persons from this area would have been executed by the RFTG if HMG had so directed.
- Engagement and amphibious exercises to develop relationships with new NATO partners such as Albania.
- Engagement and exercises with key regional partners such as Saudi Arabia, Oman and UAE.
- Capacity building to the Somaliland Coast-guard as part of a wider Governmental initiative to bring stability to this region.



Amphibious training in the Mediterranean in Summer 11 with HMS Albion and RFA Mount Bay in the background. This forward-deployed training was undertaken by the RFTG operating in concert with regional partners while other elements of the Group conducted operations off Libya

This ability to remain deployed to provide persistent presence in those regions of the world where the UK has interests helps to develop regional influence and assist with conflict prevention. Fundamental to this sustainability at reach are the forward deployed RFAs, permanently on station at

very high readiness. The logistic independence, guaranteed by the presence and capability delivered by the RFAs, enables a minimal footprint ashore, minimal reliance on third-party infrastructure and is achieved at marginal additional operating costs.

In conclusion, as directed by UK Defence Strategy, the Royal Navy's Response Force Task Group is:

- At Very High Readiness
- Delivers a credible intervention capability of Troops and precision strike
- An integrated force of ships, submarines, aircraft and RM Commandos
- Flexible and scaleable – able to be tailored to a range of tasking
- Forward deployed, on task conducting operations but able to respond quickly to developing crises.
- Adaptable, being able to operate as a discrete force or as a Joint UK effort with Army, RAF and other Agency elements

fully integrated. Similarly it can operate in a Combined environment with allies and partners becoming part of a multi-national Task Group to operate in support of the international community.



This picture shows elements of the logistic train required to keep the RFTG forward-deployed and independent of a large shore-based footprint with RFA Wave Knight (Left) supplying Diesel fuel, aviation fuel and Fresh Water to HMS Albion (Centre) while RFA Fort Rosalie (Right) takes station prior to supplying ammunition, food and engineering spares.

## Recognition to a Changing Abbeywood

The Afloat Support Team, now Commercially Supported Shipping, based in Abbeywood has recently been recognised by receiving two Chief of Defence Material awards. These awards were presented during a ceremony held in MOD Main Building in London.

The first was presented to the Fleet Time Support and Design and Construction groups for the delivery of a substantial AMP that included several capability upgrades including the fitment of SCOTT. The award was presented to C/O Nigel Sim, 1/O Jules Pearson, C/O Stephen Smith, 1/O Nicolas Machin, 1/O Tim Henshaw and Mr Norman Usher.

The award read:-

*"This award recognises the team's role in the delivery of an enhanced capability package for RFA Fort Victoria which enabled the vessel to perform in a number of high-profile anti-piracy successes off the coast of East Africa. Your professionalism and dedication ensured the delivery of a complex project that has demonstrated the capabilities of Director Ships, Afloat Support teams partnering arrangements with industry via established life support contracts."*

The second award was presented to the Design & Construction group (under CSS now known as the Capability, Safety and Design Authority group) and in particular to Mr Grant Blackwood who led a small team of three in successfully delivering a full programme of Ship Aviation Safety Reports (SASRs) and Class Safety Case Reports (SCRs) for all RFA vessels in only 15 months.

*"This award commends that starting from an immature position where only three of eight RFA classes held a sufficient baseline, the work has led to numerous design improvements and mitigations to*

*ensure the RFA are now operating safer ships. In completing this activity there are now reduced operational restrictions in operating these ships which enables increased Capability. In particular, the comprehensive analysis and management of aviation hazards, has provided a greater degree of operational tasking and Operational Fleet Training (OFTs) by FLEET Commitments, which previously had been greatly affected by the lack of Aviation Letters of Release (LORs). Mr Blackwood managed and was supported by a small team from industry. This comprised Tommy Mason of QinetiQ who led the generation of the Ship Aviation Safety Reports, and Steve Vickery of SR3C Ltd who produced the Class Safety Case Reports.*



(L to R) 1/O(SE) Nick Machin, CDM Mr Bernard Grey and FTS team leader C/O(E) Nigel Sim

*The SCRs demonstrate a comprehensive safety argument for maintaining and operating the vessels consistent with MoD policy and employing a cost-effective mix of commercial and military best practice, and the delivery of the SASRs has now enabled AF Sup to facilitate the regeneration of the RFA's flying capability thereby directly benefitting RFA commitments to the fleet."*



# Diligence Homecoming after Two Years of Operations in the Middle East

After two years providing support to the navy's submarines (SSN) and Combined Task Force (CTF) 150 in the counter terrorism and narcotics roles, Diligence returned to the UK on the 12th of May. Providing the eyes and ears for CTF 150, predominately within the Gulf of Oman, she steamed the equivalent of twice around the world and conducted 31 port visits in support of the SSN or undertaking wider regional engagement including Dubai, Bahrain, Fujairah, Muscat, Seychelles and Goa.

Diligence paid a short four day visit to Malta on the way home where she hosted the British High Commission, Maltese Sea Cadets, the Maltese Naval Historical Society; members of the UK sponsored multi national Emerging Nations course and the Malta branch of the RFA Association.

The Malta RFA Association lunch and tour was a particularly enjoyable event with a dozen sprightly retired RFA personnel providing our younger officers with some salty tales of their time at sea from the 1950's to the 1970's, accompanied by enough lamp swinging to keep a Cornish wrecker in business for a lifetime. Many offers of assistance for the remainder of the passage home were regrettably declined and the



Members of the Malta RFA Association

day concluded with the presentation of a ship's plaque for their new meeting room.

Arrival in Portland to undergo a refit enabled us to welcome our new Lady Sponsor, Mrs. Angela Pritchard on board. Angela was formerly Lady Sponsor of RFA Bayleaf and is the wife of Ken Pritchard who named Diligence in 1984. The day's event commenced with an overview of the ship's capabilities from the ship's Navigator/Operations Officer, Dougie Cook. This was followed by lunch and a tour of the mighty Diligence before Angela and Ken bade farewell and headed back north. We look forward to hosting



Captain Donkersley with Diligence's Lady Sponsor, Angela Pritchard and her husband Ken

Angela and Ken again in the autumn when the refit is complete.

The ship is currently mid way through her refit at Camell Laird which includes elements of a ship life extension package and enhancements to her submarine support capability.

## CHANGING THE WAY WE WORK – STARTING AT THE TOP

The Naval Service is reducing by 5,000 to just over 30,000 military personnel, as well as by 400 to some 2,000 RFA personnel. As the First Sea Lord said at his recent Clear Lower Deck "our greatest challenge is to change our ways of working ... as Navy Command is going to get smaller".

In his Command Intent for 2012 the Fleet Commander sets us the challenge of *simplifying the way we do business, thinking creatively and aggressively about how best to prepare for the unexpected, and how best to deliver on the tasks ahead of us. He also expects us to Challenge Red Tape with the Red Card and Prioritise Work – only do what needs to be done*. One way in which the Navy Command Review (NCR) team is supporting this intent is by ensuring that the Naval Service makes best use of lessons learned and the experience of the workforce.

Improvements to our ways of working are being developed in NCHQ, where the RFA is well represented, and will be refined in the coming months. This work has concentrated so far on:

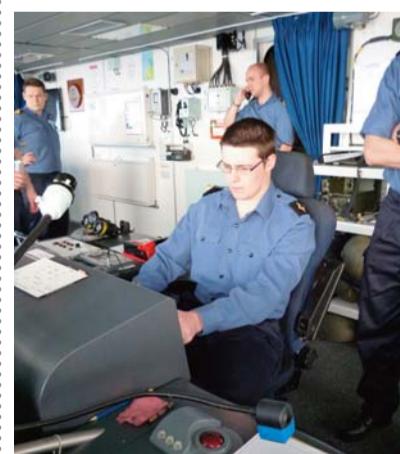
- **"10 Small Steps" to Better Working.** Under the headings of "Better Motivation" and "Doing Things Better", this reminds busy people how to increase their day-to-day efficiency whether in an office or dealing with admin while on operations.
- **Coaching.** This is being provided to refresh those essential skills that help us to deal with change and improve performance and communication. Coaching skills can also be used to help motivate and support staff outside of the office.
- **Induction & Continuation Training.** The current programme is being transformed in October to give everyone the best possible training in preparation for their time in the Headquarters.

The NCR team is also looking closely at how we can make more use of our **Information Management** systems to improve our Electronic Ways of Working. Local Information Managers are going out and showing staff how to make their computers work for them rather than the other way around!

After this initial rollout in NCHQ and with lessons learnt, the NCHQ behaviours team will be engaging with Establishment Command teams ahead of rolling the project out across Navy Command throughout 2013.

## A Dauntless Experience

When the Navigator, 2/O Duncan MacColl informed me that there was an opportunity not only to fly in a Lynx Mk 8, but also to visit the Type 45 HMS Dauntless, one of the Royal Navy's newest, most technologically advanced warships, Cdt(E) Jo Darcy and Cdt(E) James Wallace and I, all first sea-phase cadets, couldn't wait to accept the invitation and get across to visit the ship.



After a short flight from Gold Rover to Dauntless we were warmly welcomed on board by the crew and shown to our cabins. After settling in we were then taken on a tour of the ship and introduced to other members of the ship's company.

## First Sea Lord visits RFA Mounts Bay on operation Olympic duties

Admiral Sir Mark Stanhope, First Sea Lord of the Royal Navy, visited Mounts Bay alongside in Portland Port as the ship played host during the 2012 Olympic Games to numerous elements of the maritime security force which secured Dorset's 2012 Olympic sailing venue and coastal approaches to Weymouth Bay.

The Navy's most senior officer toured the Royal Fleet Auxiliary's large amphibious vessel and thanked Captain Kevin Rimell and his Ship's company for providing the large, highly versatile, and accommodating and yet secure logistics hub for the people deployed to this impressive security operation and all the myriad force elements within. The First Sea Lord also met the Harbourmaster, Captain Mike Shipley, and Royal Navy Harbour Control Officers.

The towering Mounts Bay, a multi purpose port within a port loomed large over the pier in Portland on which she was berthed. She has enormous flexibility, with embarked Royal Marines from 43 Commando she was able to operate as a highly secure zone within the wider port area. The ship can also provide a mini heli-port on the flight deck, and she has vast internal dock and huge vehicle deck space within. When the ship is docked down, smaller inflatable boats and passenger craft operate to and from the cavernous docks within the ship.

The ship is capable of accommodating hundreds of embarked forces in her primary role which is to deliver the Armed Forces, either, Navy, Army, Royal Marines and their equipment to the shores of a troubled land and bring security and safety to those in need of protection. These capabilities made her ideal to undertake the roles assigned to her for the Olympics.

At the 2012 Olympics in Portland Harbour, the ship was multi-tasking to a whole new level – it was a hive of activity with Police Officers and military personnel from forces or units drawn from all over the country all passing through the ship on their way out to sea. Royal Marines occupied the ship literally, filling every available bunk space on board and munching their way through enormous quantities of energy packed dinners. By day they operated their powerful Offshore Raiding craft, inflatable boats and landing craft at sea and at night could be found powering away in the gym to improve their fitness levels or running furiously around the steep rocky hills of Portland.

Over the next four days, we were shown just what it takes to keep a multi-million pound warship at sea in a busy operational theatre.



In order to maximise the benefits of our visit, we were each assigned to a watch, which due to the number of Officers onboard, meant they were on a 1-in-4 watch pattern. There were similarities between how the crew of Dauntless and Gold Rover go about their day-to-day routines, however, unsurprisingly the bridge of HMS Dauntless resembles something more like a futuristic sci-fi movie.

The Ops Room of Dauntless was a sight to behold, they have the technology to closely monitor all the activities unfolding whilst deployed – both at sea and in the air and are ready to react accordingly when the needs arise. However despite all the highly advanced technology of Dauntless, Gold Rover, with all her

charm is still my preferred ship.

During our time on watch, we took part in various training serials including machinery break down drills and were made to feel most welcome throughout our time on board. Both officers and crew alike all took a keen interest in the RFA and were eager to learn more about Gold Rover and life onboard an RFA vessel. That's not to say there wasn't a little bit of healthy banter either.



We all had a fantastic time onboard Dauntless and we would like to thank once again, Captain W.J. Warrender RN and his crew for the hospitality shown over the four days. Hopefully, the opportunities to conduct CROSS-POL to Royal Navy vessels especially the Type 45 will become a routine procedure and we look forward to welcoming some of our Royal Navy colleagues onboard RFAs.

CDT(X) Sean Woodcraft



## RFA Gold Rover – Remembering HMS Sheffield

On the 4th May 1982 HMS Sheffield was attacked by the Argentinean armed forces and sustained the impact of an Exocet missile. The first tore through the hull amidships, eight feet above the waterline on 2 deck, tearing a gash in the hull. The missile did not detonate but it managed to sever the high pressure fire main onboard, which had a significant impact in the ship's company being able to fight and contain the fires that followed. The second missile splashed into the sea half a mile away.

HMS Sheffield, was taken under tow, and was taking on significant amounts of water which resulted in her being slowly flooded, ultimately

May. The weather was relatively calm with the winds from the West and the outside air temperature a cool bracing six degrees centigrade.

The ship's company were mustered mid morning in preparation for the service of remembrance. The mood was sombre, which was even more apparent in the chilled crisp sea air, several members of the ship's company having served on ships or ashore during the conflict back in '82, the calm silence that was experienced, giving all, time to reflect on fallen friends and colleagues.

During the attack many of Sheffield's crew were seriously



causing the ship to sink on the 10th May 1982. This tragic loss resulted in the loss of life and the ship being the first Royal Naval vessel to sink since the end of World War II.

In memory of the loss of HMS Sheffield and the men who went down with her, 30 years later, on the 3rd May 2012 RFA Gold Rover conducted a boat transfer of Choiseul Sound in the Falkland Islands, to enable her to pick up BFSAI Padre Rev, Flt Lt J M S Holland and CDR R Curry RN Assistant Chief of Staff, who sailed with Gold Rover to enable them to take part in the memorial service the next day.

Following an overnight transit, Gold Rover arrived at the grave site early on the morning of the 4th

injured but tragically 20 men paid the ultimate losing their lives in service of their country and in the service of others. We will remember them: -

Lt Cdr David Balfour, POMEM(M) David Briggs, CA Darryl Cope, WEAI Anthony Egginton, S/Lt Richard Emly, POCK Robert Fagan, Ck Neil Goodall, LMEM(M) Alan Knowles, No 1 Boy Lai Chi Keung, LCK Tony Marshal, POWEM Anthony Norman, CK David Osborne, WEA1 Kevin Sullivan, CK Andrew Swallow, ACWEMN Michael Till, WEMN2 Barry Wallis, LCK Adrian Wellstead, MAA Brian Welsh, CK Kevin Williams, Lt Cdr John Woodhead.

Article written: - by 2/O(X) T A Warner – RFA Gold Rover

## FORT VICTORIA COMMEMORATES SINKING OF RMS TITANIC

Fort Victoria whilst working with the Combined Task Force (CTF) stationed on patrol in the Gulf of Aden on April 15th conducted a ceremony to commemorate the 100th anniversary of the sinking of RMS Titanic and those who perished with her.



Third Officer Niall Gordon, RFA, leads a memorial ceremony for the 100th anniversary of the sinking of RMS Titanic attended by the officers and sailors of Royal Fleet Auxiliary Fort Victoria and the battle staff of Combined Task Force (CTF) 151.

At sunset, on a calm balmy evening, the ship's company mustered on deck and a moment of silence was held to remember the 1,517 lives lost, the sad and tragic loss having taken place 100 years ago to the day.

Rear Admiral Tanin Likitawong, Royal Thai Navy, who was embarked in Fort Victoria as the Commander of CTF 151 attended the event. Also present at the commemoration were the officers of the ship's company and the staff of the multinational combined task force of CTF 151.

Third Officer Niall Gordon said, "This event was particularly poignant for the officers of Fort Victoria. Our roots are firmly set in the Merchant Navy and Fort Victoria was built by Harland & Wolff in Belfast, the same shipbuilder who constructed the Titanic."

Many of the improvements in maritime safety which came about after the disaster, most notably the International Convention for Safety of Life At Sea (SOLAS), still govern and regulate safety on board merchant vessels around the world today.

Fort Victoria's Commanding Officer, Captain Ian N Pilling, said, "The terrible loss of life on RMS Titanic resonated around the world 100 years ago today and the subsequent lessons learnt from the tragedy have been adopted by all the maritime countries. It is fitting and a privilege that the CMF Staff of CTF 151 gave their full support in participating in this poignant remembrance ceremony in respect of all who died in this tragic event on this day in 1912."



Officers and Sailors of Royal Fleet Auxiliary Fort Victoria and the battle staff of Combined Task Force 151 attend a memorial ceremony for the 100th anniversary of the sinking of RMS Titanic.

Fort Victoria assumed the role of flagship for CTF 151 led by Rear Admiral Tanin Likitawong, Royal Thai Navy, with Thai command staff and representatives from the U.S., South Korean, Danish, Dutch and Italian navies. CTF 151 is a multi-national mission-based Task Force, working under the Combined Maritime Forces to conduct counter-piracy operations in the Red Sea, Gulf of Oman, Somali Basin and Arabian Sea.

## Falklands Veterans Reunited During Olympic Security Operation

In 1982, Martin, then a Junior Cook and Baker, was serving on RFA Fort Austin in San Carlos. Commodore Miller was serving nearby as a Spanish interpreter on board HMS Coventry, when the ship was hit and sunk on 25th May 1982.



L to R: Cdre Jamie Miller, CPO(CK) Martin Etwell, Capt Kevin Rimell

He was one of about 270 survivors and 19 dead who were rescued and evacuated the next day by the landing craft of 4 Assault Squadron Royal Marines to RFA Fort Austin.

Commodore Miller, Naval Regional Commander Wales and West of England, said:

"The landing craft that transferred us to the loving care on board RFA Fort Austin was sadly sunk a week later in San Carlos."

"Her crew of six, who were all killed, is still remembered to this day by 4 Assault Squadron who always name one of their landing craft "Foxtrot Juliet" after Colour Sergeant Johnson, holder of the Queen's Gallantry Medal, who died that day."

The landing craft of 4 Assault Squadron are embarked with the Fleet Flagship, HMS Bulwark, operating as the Command and Control vessel for Operation Olympics and the Paralympics.

The reunion between the two Falklands veterans took place on board RFA Mounts Bay as Commodore Miller transited through the ship, hosting a group of distinguished visitors, en route to HMS Bulwark to witness the Olympic security operations.

Reminiscing on their previous meeting, Chief Etwell, who has served in the RFA for 41 years, remembered that each person on board shared their cabins with a survivor and that meal routines were changed to accommodate the survivors. He said:

"Our team of 11 chefs cooked up a daily pot mess (casserole) instead of the usual evening meal in order to eke out our rations to feed 140 people."

Cdre Miller said:

"It is good to see Chief Cook Martin Etwell still doing his cooking job, feeding 463 people everyday, while staying cheerful, humorous, and a good leader."

"He represents everything we had in the Falklands and it is still here today, off the coast of Dorset, as we conduct our Olympic security duties led by the Fleet Flagship."



# RFA ARGUS IN NORFOLK, USA TO CELEBRATE 200 YEARS OF PEACE AND PARTNERSHIP



In June, Argus completed a six day visit to Norfolk, Virginia USA.

During her visit she had over 600 people attend ship open to visitors. The chefs took part in a cooking challenge. The ship hosted a Queen's Diamond Jubilee celebration which included a ceremonial sunset and the Royal Naval personnel on board attended a sunset parade and drill demonstration in Norfolk's Town point park.

The Argus is currently touring the northern US as part of the American war of independence 1812 celebrations. The 1812 is a celebration of 200 years since the war of 1812 with the British, but it needs to be stressed as a celebration of 200 years of peace and partnership, rather than a defeat of the British.

With more than two thirds of her length taken up by the flight deck, she has the

ability to accommodate most helicopters, and to operate several at once. She is regularly used to train aircrew, pilots and observers.



Above: Crew of the RFA Argus fire a 21 gun salute as they enter Norfolk.

Right: Royal Navy crew from the RFA Argus, led by Lt Karen McCullough RN, take part in a sunset parade in Norfolk's Town Point Park.

RFA Argus is manned by a combined crew of RFA, Permanent RN, embarked lynx flight and a 30 man Humanitarian Disaster Relief team ready for the Hurricane season.



RFA Fort Victoria earlier in the year embarked a multi-national battle staff to take command of counter-piracy operations in the Gulf of Aden and Somali Basin. Rear Admiral Tanin Likitawong, Royal Thai Navy, relieved Commodore Aage Buur Jensen, Royal Danish Navy, as Commander Combined Task Force (CTF) 151 whilst alongside Muscat, Oman.

The change of command ceremony ended the Royal Danish Navy's first command of CTF 151, which consisted of a multi-national staff embarked on guided-missile destroyer USS Halsey (DDG 97). The three month operation strengthened ties with other counter-piracy naval forces on operations in the region, and further developed communication and collaboration within the merchant shipping community.

This was an historic collaboration for both Thailand and the United Kingdom because this was the first time that the Royal Thai Navy assumed command of a Combined Task Force and the first time a Royal Fleet Auxiliary has acted as Flag Ship for a foreign-led Task Force.

Fort Victoria's primary role is logistical support and replenishment of fuel, stores and ammunition and remains one of the most versatile ships in the British Fleet. Her military capability includes an advanced

communication system, the ability to operate up to five helicopters and the capacity to accommodate a full command staff.

Captain Ian N Pilling RFA, Commanding Officer Fort Victoria, commented: "This is a unique opportunity for Fort Victoria in a role we are fully capable of supporting in order to contribute to the Combined Maritime Force. Having a multi-national staff in a UK asset typifies the co-operation and professionalism that exists between the maritime nations."

As the ship sailed from Muscat, Oman for her tasking, Fort Victoria's bow was decorated with a traditional Royal Thai Navy floral wreath tribute. The custom takes place whenever a ship sails from port and gifts are offered in respect of the angels and spirits that will protect her and help her to complete her mission successfully.

Whilst Fort Victoria was deployed as the Flag Ship for CTF 151 she hosted a conference for key influencers and politicians in the region. The Prime Minister of Thailand, Yingluck Shinawatra met via teleconference with 16 Thai naval officers deployed in the Gulf of Aden on counter-piracy operations. The teleconference with the officers attached to the UN Security Council sanctioned multinational Combined Task Force 151 (CTF-

151) was held during her four-day visit to Bahrain and Qatar between May 13th and 16th. Ms Yingluck also met with businessmen in the two countries to discuss energy cooperation, medical services and other economic development issues.



Rear Admiral Thanin Likitawong in his role as The Royal Thai Navy's Counter Piracy Task Group Commander, as well as commander of the CTF-151 told the Bangkok Post by phone that the 16 Thai naval officers were on Fort Victoria undergoing anti-piracy training with

multi-national naval officers in the Arabian Sea near Madagascar.

During the prime minister's visit to the Bahrain headquarters of the Combined Maritime Forces (CMF), a multi-national naval partnership led by the United States, on May 15, Fort Victoria was carrying the Thai naval officers located in the Arabian Sea near Yemen. The officers reported on the Thai mission to her via teleconference. The 16 Thai naval officers joined the CTF 151 last March and their deployment ended in July. They were tasked with gathering intelligence on piracy, said the Admiral.

He said it was likely the government will send the Royal Thai Navy's counter-piracy task unit, which consists of both naval officers and ships, to participate in next year's CMF.

The final official visit to Fort Victoria was on May 20, when the Supreme Commander, Gen Thanasak Patimapakorn and Navy Chief, Admiral Surasak Runroengrom met with the Thai naval officers on board the British ship.

CTF 151 is one of three task forces under control of Combined Maritime Forces (CMF), based in Bahrain. CTF 151 was established in

2009 to deter, disrupt and suppress piracy, protect maritime vessels of any nationality and secure freedom of navigation for the benefit of all. CTF 151's area of operation encompasses 1.1 million square miles in the Gulf of Aden and Somali Basin.



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

### RFA MEMORIAL CAMPAIGN

National Arboretum

TO REMEMBER THE PAST AND LOOK TO THE FUTURE



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

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

Making a donation is easy, log on to: [www.RFA-ASSOCIATION.ORG](http://www.RFA-ASSOCIATION.ORG)



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

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

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

Thank you

Bill Walworth

## Mailing List

With GUNLINE now available in electronic format on the RFA page on the [www.royalnavy.mod.uk](http://www.royalnavy.mod.uk) website and the RFA Community website [www.rncom.mod.uk](http://www.rncom.mod.uk) there is now the opportunity to reduce the amount of unwanted mail. If you would like to read GUNLINE on line and stop receiving it in the post please e-mail me at [mark.mundy307@mod.uk](mailto:mark.mundy307@mod.uk)

## OUNTS BAY DEMONSTRATES HER DUTCH VERSATILITY

Mounts Bay was recently fortunate enough to have enjoyed a rare opportunity to support and work with the Royal Netherlands Marine Corps (RNLMC) whose motto is Qua Patet Orbis, "As Far As The World Extends".



Mounts Bay berthed in central Rotterdam

The ship sailed to be off Rotterdam to support the amphibious exercise between the 18th to the 26th of June and acted as the amphibious platform to enable the RNLMC to conduct a certification exercise, revalidating their amphibious capability.

The Korps Mariniers (KM) as they're also known is the marine corps and amphibious infantry component of the Royal Netherlands Navy. The marines are trained to operate anywhere in the world in all environments,

under any condition and circumstance as a rapid reaction force. The KM can be deployed to a given location within 48 hours.

Having recently returned from Afghanistan the renewal of amphibious skills was an essential requirement for future Dutch Marine anti-piracy deployments in the Indian Ocean. After an initial planning phase, landing serials were conducted close to the city of Rotterdam. Predictably the weather had its say and some elements of the exercise were curtailed, but valuable experience was gained nevertheless.

Mounts Bay's Commanding Officer, Captain Kevin Rimell said " This was an excellent opportunity for the RNLMC and the RFA to practice and demonstrate UK/NL



CPO(CK) Martin Etwell oversees a Dutch Marine in Mounts Bay's Galley



1/O(X) Steve Pickering briefs the RNLMC Amphibious Operations Officer.

interoperability. Mounts Bay was able to provide a platform to conduct serials and the ship's recent experience in trooping activities was utilised by the Dutch planning team onboard. I was particularly pleased to see how my team and the Marines interacted so well".

## Let's Celebrate

In what has been an incredibly busy year for high profile spectacular events and celebrations throughout the land, it was only fitting that the RFA sought to play its part and so in June this year, 3rd Officer(X) Hannah Vickers certainly partook in a spectacular event with her own celebrations when she tied the knot with CPO(WE)ET Stewart McGregor of Fort Victoria Phalanx fame.



Hannah and Stewart originally met in 2010 when they both sailed in Fort George but it wasn't until they met again in Fort Victoria whilst the ship was in Dubai where they were both working as O0Q's that things truly blossomed.

So it was two years later that Hannah and Stewart tied the knot and Hannah was totally awestruck from the beginning of her big day, when the vintage Rolls Royce arrived to take her to and later returned the happy couple from the church, the car being kept as a surprise until the big day. With an RFA theme running throughout the day's festivities the wedding cake was a fantastic sculpture of Fort Victoria accompanied in true RFA tradition with copious quantities of Champagne to toast the bride and groom.

After the partying and celebrations the

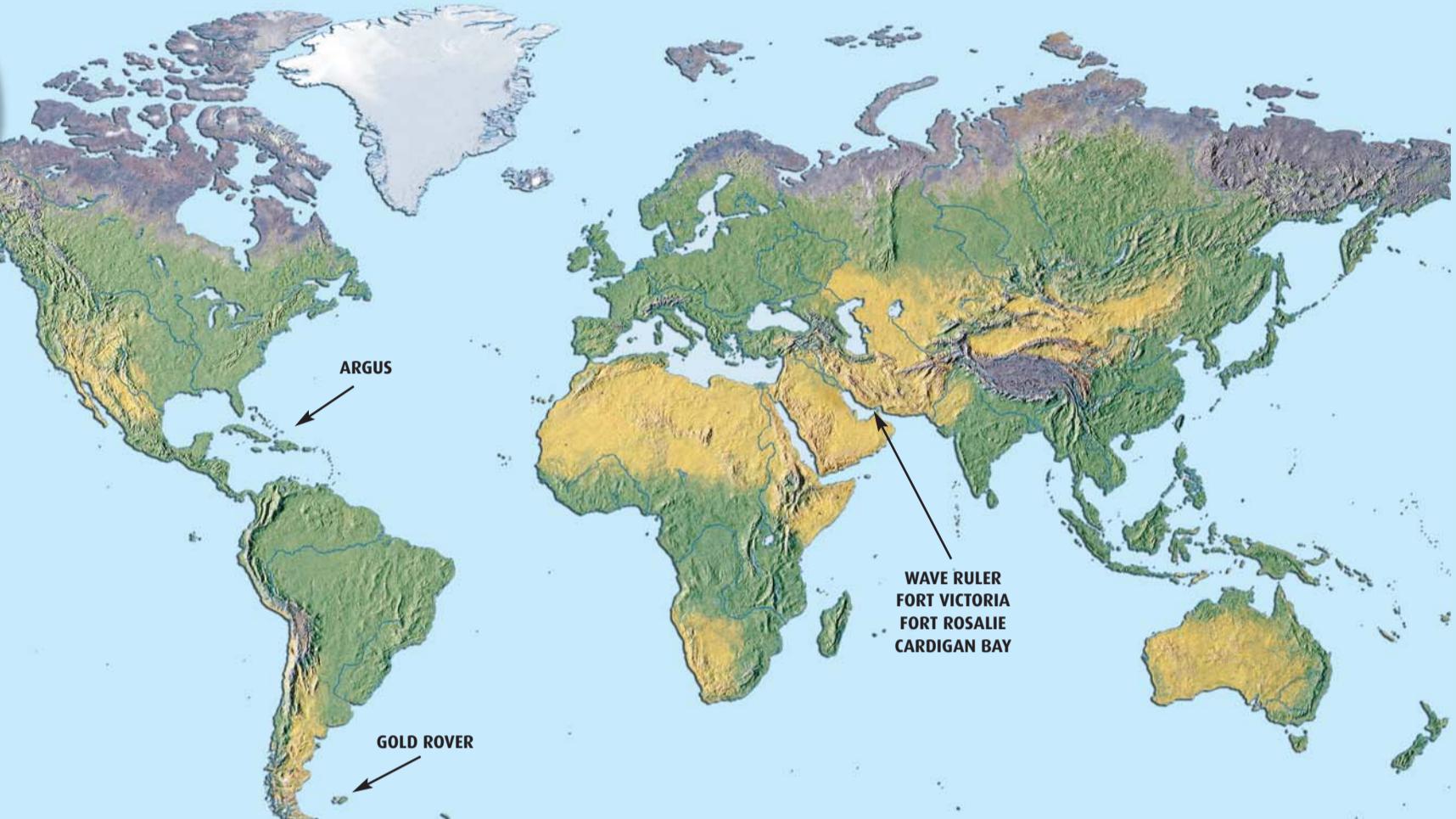
couple escaped the wet summer being experienced at home and headed off to Lake Garda in Italy for their honeymoon

The new Mrs McGregor can be seen with her parents, her father who has copious amounts of knowledge about RFA traditions





# Around the World



## WAVE KNIGHT

Conducting training in SW Coast Exercise areas.

## WAVE RULER

East of Suez in support of coalition forces.

## BLACK ROVER

Undergoing a refit in Birkenhead.

## GOLD ROVER

Conducting APT(S) duties in the South Atlantic.

## ORANGELEAF

Running as FOST tanker in support of training serials.

## FORT VICTORIA

Deployed east of Suez in support of coalition forces.

## FORT AUSTIN

Alongside east coast of Scotland re-storing.

## FORT ROSALIE

Deployed east of Suez in support of coalition forces.

## CARDIGAN BAY

Deployed east of Suez in support of coalition forces.

## MOUNTS BAY

Off south coast in support of operational flying training.

## LYME BAY

Refit in Falmouth.

## ARGUS

APT(N) in support of disaster relief during the core hurricane season.

## DILIGENCE

Refit in Birkenhead.



# RFA PERSONNEL OPERATIONS

Your patience is appreciated..

Many of you will be aware that the RFA Personnel Operations Division is re-brigading as part of wider Navy Command Headquarters restructuring following the Strategic Defence Review and the Treasury led VFM programme. Some internal reorganisation has already taken place in RFA Training, Business Management, Travel Cell, Casework Cell and Manpower Planning areas of the division. In the appointing area however, we still a little way to go because of the depth of change and staff rebalancing required to introduce the new structure. The changes will build upon new ways of working that will adopt a branch specific approach to appointing. This will comprise three teams encompassing Operations and Comms, Logs Supply and Medical and Engineering. The RFA Occupational Health area led by Sharon Kitwood will also have closer ties with HR outputs to provide a structure that seeks to improve the importance of people well-being, health and fitness and medical case work etc.

The three branch teams headed by Band D staff are already known to many of you and are Vicki Ferguson (Ops and Comms), Kedi Clutton (LS and Med) and Annette Corkett (Engineering). They will be supported by nine Band E1 personnel managers who should all be in place by mid October. Please bear with us during the early months as some of the staff are new to the organisation and there will inevitably be a settling in period as they develop understanding of their new role, similarly during the coming weeks your patience is appreciated as we relocate personnel in West Battery and complete the

recruitment and induction process of new staff. Contact details for appointers and other offices across Personnel Operations will change over the coming weeks and we will keep you advised of the interim changes through various means as we move to the permanent structure and locations in West Battery.

Alex Hardy and Keith Evans remain within the HR area continuing to provide essential office management support and will take on an increased role in performance and wider capability outputs, working with the recently arrived Capability Manager and Chief of Staff, Chief Officer Colin Grylls, who will co-ordinate cross Pers Ops divisional matters for DACOS Pers Ops Captain John Hood. In the future greater utilisation of Magellan will be a key factor in our desire to improve manpower planning and ensure the personnel are available to meet capability requirements and aid planning for the individual concerning appointment, training and leave balance.

Other changes in the training area will see First Officer Graham Barrett responsible for Personnel Development, a role that seeks to match professional training requirements to RFA business need and there will be more on this in the coming months once Chief Officer Russ Farquhar returns to his Pers Ops training manager role following his temporary secondment to Fort Rosalie. There is also a change in direction for Lou Formby, currently Comms appointer, who is moving to a new role in the training area with Andrea Parkin. Afloat and Cadet Development including RTOs will continue under the watchful eyes of First Officer Chris Jordan and Second Officer Phil Gregory.

The Business Manager or in 'new money' Financial Controller, Liza Buckingham will continue to support the business from a resource perspective and will oversee Travel, Case management and Manpower requirements supported by First Officer Clive Martin.

A more detailed 'who's who' of Personnel

Operations will be published when remaining posts are filled. In the meantime we will inform you when the changes are complete with the aim of delivering better support to the Ships and an improved personnel / appointing service to you.

C/O Colin Grylls  
CoS RFA Personnel Operations

## SYSTEMS ENGINEER OFFICER CADETSHIPS

The RFA Management Board has recently endorsed the strategy for the future identification and recruitment of Systems Engineer (SE) Officers through a Systems Engineer Officer Cadetship Scheme.

Initially the SE Officer Cadetship scheme will run in parallel with the recruitment of direct entrant SE Officers. It is intended that two places will be reserved on the 3 year Foundation Degree in Marine Electrical / Electronic Course commencing in September 2013 at South Tyneside College which will lead to a STCW approved Electro Technical Officer (ETO) Certificate of Competency (CoC).

The benefits from adopting this approach to the recruitment of future SE Officers are:

- Begin to address the demographic trend within the SE Branch and enable experience gained by existing SE Officers to be retained within the Branch.
- Provide for a more structured and predictable avenue for the recruitment of SE Officers given the difficulties in recent years in identifying and recruiting suitable qualified and experienced entrants.
- Ensure the SE Branch is populated with suitably qualified and experienced (SQEP) personnel who are independently assured and on an academic level similar to that of the Marine Engineering Branch.
- Enable the added option of progressing from the Foundation Degree to a BEng (Hons) Degree in Electronic Design Technology.
- Provides the mechanism for RFA Pers Ops to have more confidence in meeting the profile for recruitment for SE Officer in future years.
- Enable the RFA Service to grow SE Officers within the ethos, culture and work ethic of the RFA.

The accreditation of existing System Engineer Officers/ ETOs within the maritime industry has yet to be quantified by the MCA.

As soon as more information becomes available, it will be included in the Cascade Brief.

**Seafarer  
SUPPORT**

**0800 121 4765**  
[www.seafarersupport.org](http://www.seafarersupport.org)

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

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

With over 100 maritime charities offering assistance, knowing where to start can be challenging, so let Seafarer Support do the hard work for you!

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



## RFA FORT VICTORIA EMBARKS U.S. HELICOPTER

Fort Victoria has been incredibly busy over recent months in support of UK international support working under the Combined Maritime Forces. In being so busy she has been able to undertake a couple of firsts for the RFA, firstly as the flagship for Commander Combined Task Force (CTF) 151, hosting Rear Admiral Tanin Likitawong of the Royal Thai Navy and his multi-national battlestaff. She has also played host to members of Helicopter Maritime Strike Squadron Seven Seven (HSM-77) "Saberhawks" aboard United States carrier USS ABRAHAM LINCOLN (CVN 72) embarked on Fort Victoria back in May.

The embarkation of HSM-77, led by Lieutenant Commander Aric "Bull" Edmondson, U.S. Navy, is the first U.S. helicopter detachment to be embarked on

a Combined Maritime Forces (CMF) asset in this area of operation, and also the first time on a Royal Fleet Auxiliary.

The MH-60R Seahawk is fitted with advanced surface search radar and provides enhanced capability in counter-piracy operations.

Captain Ian Pilling, commanding officer, RFA Fort Victoria stated: "This is a great opportunity to explore the UK/U.S. interoperability whilst providing a significant force multiplier to the embarked CTF151 battle staff."

CTF 151 is a multi-national mission-based Task Force, working under the Combined Maritime Forces to conduct counter-piracy operations in the Red Sea, Gulf of Oman, Somali Basin and Arabian Sea.





# BISH GETS HIS FEET UNDER THE TABLE



RFA Chaplin James Tabor

Firstly I would like to introduce myself to those in the RFA I haven't had the chance to meet yet and to say hello again to those I have met previously. I'm James your recently appointed "Bish". As I've been in this job for a few months now and I thought it was time to put pen to paper. A few "first impressions" if you like, of life as Chaplain to the Royal Fleet Auxiliary.

I have managed to get to the Gulf very briefly but have since spent most of my time in the South Coast Exercise Areas, generally under the watchful eye of the FOST organisation. I anticipate spreading my wings a little further soon, and am keenly aware of the numbers of ships I need to see, and the constraints on travel that we work under.

Many of you may wonder why the RFA has a Bish (Chaplain) at all. That seems a wholly reasonable question. The days when the Church engaged with seafarers by right have long gone. Nevertheless, there are few with experience of peril at sea, or war, or other kind of danger that would prefer to do without a chaplain.

I have often wondered why this is; certainly there is a bit of folk superstition (not that sailors suffer such things) that suggests that having the "Makers Rep" in the boat with you must count for something. Certainly sailors have preferred to have a chaplain with them on sea voyages throughout history; even St Paul was a Ship's Chaplain for a while.

But in these more modern and rational times, surely there is no need for any divine insurance policy. As modern, thinking seafarers, with the MCA, and Lloyds certification to sustain us, surely a chaplain is slightly outdated; quaint, even.

There are two answers to this. If we understand the chaplain to be just the bloke who does God on board, then if individuals really don't do God, the role is irrelevant at best and a waste of rations at worst. Of course the chaplain is no longer just the professional Christian on board. The role has expanded to include welfare, social work, healthcare, and advocacy. The chaplain is the one person on board who is paid to be everywhere, talk to everyone, to be getting around the ship. The chaplain really is the "friend and advisor to all onboard".

The second answer is even more interesting. In our modern post-Enlightenment world, we increasingly see faith as a matter of choice and preference. There are many parallels between church and football, not least because they

compete for our attention on the weekends. On the one hand we have rousing hymns, and fervent prayers, the faithful calling on God for divine assistance. Sometimes it is in small huddles of the faithful and sometimes thousands all sing their hearts out. On the other hand we have the church.

The irony isn't lost on those in my profession, and it leads me to suggest that the capacity to "believe" exists in the heart of us all; sometimes it's David Beckham's right foot, and other times it is God. In fact, far more people believe in God around the world than believe in Beckham, or any other footballer for that matter. So we can get to choose which football team we support, or whether we believe in God and most choose God. We are fortunate that we live in a society that allows us this choice.

What is important though, is the recognition that belief in something is the default position for humanity. Our upbringing, our values and our experiences of life will determine what we believe in, but we all believe in something. Even atheism is a kind of belief!

So, why does the RFA have a chaplain? I believe it is because a ship should represent the society from which it comes and should embody the values of the society that relies on it (in our case) for the security of that society. Our society values welfare, good health and the rights of the individual. It also values morality, the right to belief, and respect for faith. The chaplain on board is the assurance that society extends those values and rights to those at sea. Likewise, a chaplain is the assurance that God extends his care, love and concern to those at sea.

If you believe in something other than God, Man U, for example, or Beckham's foot, then your focus will be on the first of these two assurances. If you believe in God, or in the possibility of God, then you might focus on the latter. At its simplest, a chaplain is proof that society and the Naval Service, who sends the chaplain, cares for all those on board and that God, who recruited the chaplain, does too.

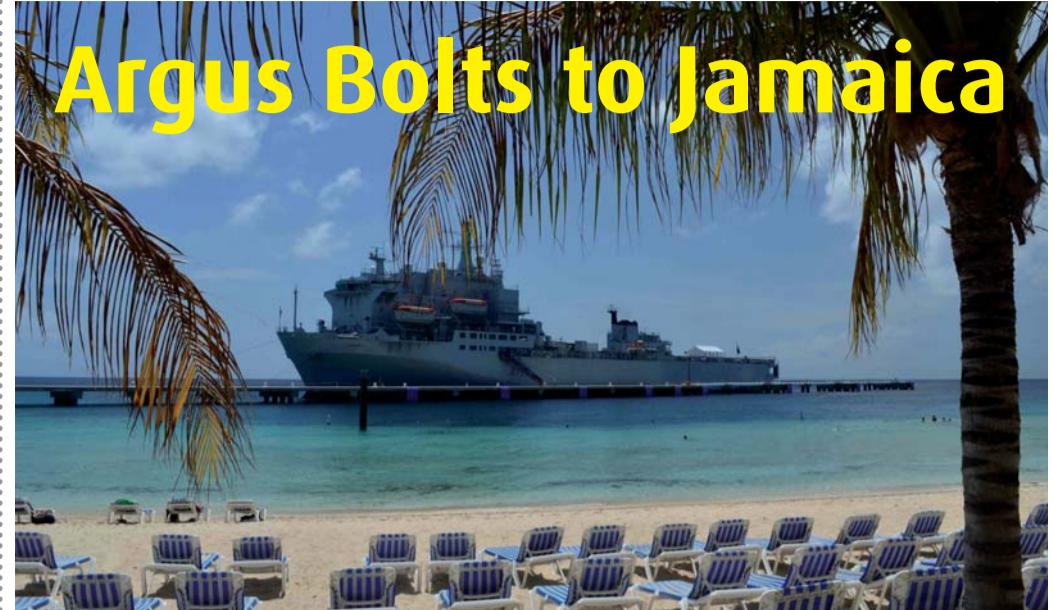
Of course chaplains are not unique to the RFA or to the RN. Most modern navies of the world sail with chaplains, and many shipping companies use the services of embarked chaplains or organisations like the Missions to Seafarers.

But enough of the sermon!

Recently we have remembered the thirtieth anniversary of the Falklands War. Many in the RFA served in that conflict, and many of us are old enough to remember with a certain dread the first days of that conflict and the relief and vindication that flowed from the final victory. That victory was secured with a significant loss of life; it falls to all of us to remember with thanksgiving the lives of those who paid the ultimate price, and those who still suffer today.

So far this year we have also had a number of deaths from within our own ranks and amongst our retired brethren. We give thanks for their lives, and for their service, and offer condolences and prayers to those who mourn them.

I hope to get out to see everyone in the remainder of this year. In the meantime, stay safe, and may God's blessings be upon you and yours.



## Argus Bolts to Jamaica

Argus, currently deployed on APT(N) to the Caribbean for six months, has as part of the Government's regional engagement with the British territories and former territories visited Jamaica to partake in celebrations to mark the 50th anniversary of independence.

Argus looking forward to arriving in Jamaica and joining the island's population to take part in several events marking the anniversary. Unfortunately, Mother Nature had other plans. The close proximity of Hurricane Ernesto on its passage West towards Mexico led to the closure of the port of Kingston and a 48 hour delay in Argus arriving.

Despite the delay, the ship was still able to come alongside for 24 hours, which enabled meetings between key members of the on board Humanitarian Aid and Disaster Relief Team (HADR) and Jamaican disaster management committee to take place. Demonstrations from the light rescue teams of the HADR organisation highlighted the impressive capabilities of the ship and her crew in responding to natural disasters in the region.

The short stop also gave an opportunity for visiting politician RH Ken Clarke, Lord Chancellor and Secretary of State for Justice, to come aboard for a tour of the unique and

highly versatile ship. Fitted out with a 100 bed hospital complete with CT scanner and operating theatres, Argus acts as the UK's Primary Casualty Receiving Ship and is on high readiness to sail for any hot spots and provide support to UK forces in maritime and littoral environments.

Mr Clarke, who was visiting Jamaica as part of the 50th celebrations, toured all areas of the ship, with a key interest in her role during APT(N). Her mixed crew is augmented by a 30 man team with niche training in areas of HADR Ops. Mr Clarke went away with a much greater understanding of the ship, and the role she will be playing for the next four months within the Caribbean.

The brief stop in Kingston also allowed members of the ship's company to visit Tracks and Records, a local sports bar owned by none other than Usain Bolt, the fastest man in the world. Unfortunately Mr Bolt was not available during the visit, as he was engaged with a small sporting event in London.

Argus sailed from Jamaica to continue her patrol in the Caribbean. With weather systems lining up in the Atlantic it promises to be a busy season, but one for which the combined RFA and RN crew are trained and ready to deal with.

## Baie Geluk Kelly!

On 18th July LH(HC) Kelly Duff, accompanied by her "support team", ventured out to run 5k for the Charity "Race for life" in Simons Town, South Africa. Initially this was not the intended venue for the event, but the glorious backdrop of the South African setting sun and observing penguins lining part of the route made it as good a substitute as any for raising sponsorship for such a worthy cause.

The past year has been especially difficult for Kelly while serving onboard Argus, after her "Granda" lost his battle with cancer and sadly passed away on the 9th April. A strong and healthy man throughout his life, Kelly found it difficult to see how frail he became as the illness took over.

The original date for the run had been set for 1st July on Aberdeen Beach Boulevard, where Kelly had been given race number 979. This coincidentally, would have been her Granda's 89th Birthday. Was this a sign? Kelly believed so, and this kick started her determination to try and make a difference. She decided to drum up the necessary support from family and friends at home to run the race at home when she received the dreaded call from NCHQ in Portsmouth.

*"Kelly, could you please join the Gold Rover in Ascension Islands in 5 days time?"*

Not wanting to disappoint her friends and family back home and still determined to help in the fight against cancer, Kelly chose Simons Town as the venue to undertake her challenge. Despite being several thousand miles away, Kelly on completion of her sponsored run thanked everyone back home and the fantastic support of the crew of RFA Gold Rover for their support, encouragement and sponsorship.

*"I have managed to raise over £700 for the charity, which is amazing. The run/walk took me 39 minutes 21 seconds to complete. I know, it's not the greatest time in the world but it was never about the time. It was about doing something for a brilliant person who had a great impact on my life"*

Baie Geluk Kelly! (Well done Kelly!)

<http://www.royalnavy.mod.uk/sitecore/content/home/news-and-events/latest-news/2012/july/25/120725-baie-gelluk-kelly>



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**Solent Branch**  
[www.freewebs.com/rfaasolentbranch/](http://freewebs.com/rfaasolentbranch/)

**London Branch**  
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# RFA ASSOCIATION

## Chairman's Dit

Frank Andrews



The annual reunion this year was held at the De Vere Grand Harbour Hotel in Southampton. The Solent Branch did a superb job of giving us a dinner that was a delight and great fun. Our patron His Royal Highness the Earl of Wessex arrived on schedule and spent



some time meeting the Solent team, RFA Association trustees and then all the other guests. Not only were many memories exchanged but everyone enjoyed seeing so many friendly faces in one place. Commodore Bill Wallworth described where the current RFA is after the Defence Cuts and gave us hope for the future. The raffle prizes were spectacular and along with



### London Branch BBQ



The London Branch have recently enjoyed a BBQ hosted by Gillian Downham - in her back garden in Steyning. A good time was had by one and all. A talk was given by the Vice-Chairman of the London Branch on the workings of the RFA and also the work of the Association, especially the welfare work (Gillian is our welfare officer). The sun shone and birds sang, and a vote of thanks given to Gillian for all the effort and thought that went into the event. £250 was also raised for the RFAA.

### Thailand Rescue



Mick Spear, former Supply officer, came to the rescue of a former colleague, a young rating, when he noticed he had overstayed his welcome in Thailand and faced a period in a Thai jail. Mick recognising the name in the local paper and quickly came to the lad's rescue and paid his fine and return air fare to UK out of his own pocket.



corporate donations that Captain Brian Waters and his team collected allowed a fantastic profit of £6,500 to be given to support the work of the Association. This is sorely needed in a year that has included the extra costs of moving the office and all our many artifacts from the North of England to the South. My heartfelt thanks to Brian and all his team for putting on a truly excellent event. The pictures tell the story.

As usual the dinner was preceded by our AGM where thanks were given to Mike Day who has now stood down after serving six years as a



### Memorial Progress

Plans for the RFA memorial dedication at the National Memorial Arboretum are now well advanced. The date has been set for 11th October and the service is likely to commence at midday. The Royal Marine Band have been engaged and our patron HRH The Earl of Wessex KG GCVO ADC will be in attendance.

The idea for a memorial for all RFA personnel lost in conflict began in 2008 when Captain Tony Pitt and myself visited the NMA, near Alrewas in Staffordshire. We submitted a report on what could be done and discussions began on how the idea could be taken forward. Commodore Bill Wallworth also visited the NMA and asked if a project could be undertaken. This resulted in a small 4 man team with representatives from both RFA and RFAA being formed. The team consisting of myself, Captain Robin Lock, Captain John Sail and Rob Langford first met on site in 2010 and a number of ideas were considered. Eventually a sketch drawn by Rob Langford and enhanced by Keith Rackham from Perfitts Ltd, our contractor, gained the necessary approval of the Arboretum authorities.

trustee. The remainder of the committee remain the same except that Chairman and Deputy Chairman have swapped jobs. Pat Thompson who has chaired us excellently for 4 years now gets some slight respite as he becomes Deputy Chairman and I have taken over as the Chairman. It probably isn't realised just how much day to day work is involved in running the Association and Pat retains responsibility for our



website and ceremonial events to my huge relief! Association work is definitely better when responsibilities are shared.

One very pleasant task was to be formally introduced to our patron in Buckingham Palace.

On the 27th June, three of us met at the palace; Pat, our membership secretary Dawn Reay and I. We met HRH The Earl of Wessex in his private office and enjoyed chatting about life in the RFA, sailing with the Royal Yacht and his recent time in Fort Rosalie. Then Pat, Dawn and I enjoyed a celebratory drink in the Victory Services Club before heading home.

Our next trustee meeting will take place in our new office in Semaphore Tower and I will report on that in our next issue.



Sketch: Drawn by R M Langford

### Crossed the Bar

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

**Mac Cunningham** Radio Officer  
28th May 2012  
**John Scott** Engineering Superintendent  
5 July. 2012  
**Michael Sandry** Engineering Officer  
17th July 2012 aged 77

**Mac Cunningham** died 28th May 2012. He is survived by his wife Julie, daughter Katrina & son Neil. Mac served as a radio officer in many RFAs but started life in the Argyll & Sutherland Highlanders. He was posted to Korea after volunteering to serve in the Black Watch who were defending South Korea against the North Koreans. During an action in the latter part of 1951 a shell landed close to Mac completely burying him. With his trusty issue spade he managed to dig himself out completely; amazing his fellow soldiers. After this action Mac was offered but refused recognition because he wasn't allowed to say he was Black Watch

**Michael Sandry** Throughout his life Michael maintained his interest in golf, cars, motorbikes, steam railways and even added aviation by gaining his private pilot's licence, which he used to fly the family to France. All who spoke of him emphasised his honesty & integrity and he has been a stalwart supporter of the Association since the Plymouth Branch was formed.



# FOR SERVICE, SEAFARERS AND FAMILIES

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

## Armed Forces Weekend - Plymouth

National Armed Forces Day was this year celebrated in Plymouth on the 30th June 2012. Unusually for this Summer it was a fine day although a bit windy. The main celebration consisted of a parade from the Citadel to Plymouth Hoe after which there was a Drum Head Service which was attended by an estimated 30,000 people on the Hoe. In the afternoon there was then a steam past of the Hoe by HMS Argyll and RFA Mounts Bay and finally a display by the Red Arrows after which the Plymouth Pipe Band lead everyone down to the Barbican.



The parade assembled at the Citadel and nearly had it eardrums burst by a Typhoon displaying over the Hoe at 10:30. The parade which marched off at 11:15 consisted of the Band of Her Majesty's Royal Marine Plymouth leading contingents of the three services followed by the Central Band of the



Royal Air Force leading the Veterans and the Plymouth and Cornwall Wing, Air Training Corps, Corps of Drums leading the cadets. The Veterans section consisted of the SAMA National Standard out in front, as it is thirty years since the Falklands Conflict, followed by 100 National and Branch Standards, the RFAA National Standard being carried by Richard Walker in the second row and the Plymouth and District Branch standard being carried by Ray Jago a few rows behind. Then came about 125 SAMA Veterans among



whom were Tony Pitt, Dennis Barker and Alan Johnson, these were then followed by 250 other veterans including, Darby Allen & Charlie Rodgers, and bringing up the rear were 30 disabled Veterans, including Jack Evans & Dougie Lewis who joined the parade on the Hoe. The salute was taken by the Earl of Wessex and the Lord Mayor of Plymouth Councillor Michael Wright, the Prime Minister, David Cameron, was in attendance with many other dignitaries including the



First Sea Lord Sir Mark Stanhope GCB, OBE, ADC. Once the parade had assembled on the Hoe there was a moving Drum Head Service on a large stage at the East end of the Hoe conducted by the Bishop of Plymouth and the Chaplain-General Her Majesty's Land forces. Readings and prayers were said by the Lord Mayor of Plymouth and the Deputy Lord Mayor of Plymouth Councillor Chaz Singh and a member of the Reserve, Veterans, and Cadets. After the Service the Lord Mayor of Plymouth then spoke to welcome all to Plymouth and the First Sea Lord replied, after which there was a signing of the Armed Forces community Covenant. The parade was then stood down and many other activities took place on the Hoe.

As well as taking part in the parade the members of the Plymouth and District Branch RFAA had a stand in the Veterans Village which was a large plush carpeted Marque containing stall of many Veterans organisations from Campaign Associations to the RNA and MNA. David Gerrard and his team set up the stall on the Friday and manned it all day Saturday to spread the word about the RFAA and the RFA. David also met our Patron, the Earl of Wessex and showed him the stall and introduced other veterans in the village. Others manning the Stall included Tony Pitt, Alan and Myrna Johnson, Jan Reid, Maurice Mann, Martin Ellam, Keith Escott, Anne Cleife, Joe McCrorie and Colin Bevan.



On the Sunday, Armed Forces Week was completed by a Sea Sunday Service in St Andrews Church at 1115. Many standards were paraded including the MNA National Standard and the Plymouth and District Branch standard was again carried by Ray Jago. The service was taken by the Reverend Nick McKinnel and attended by the Deputy Lord Mayor of Plymouth Councillor Chaz Singh, Brigadier Martin Smith RM of 3 Commando Brigade and many other dignitaries. The Lessons were read by Vivien Foster, National President of the Merchant Navy Association and Nicci Pugh, Senior Nursing Officer, QARNNS who gave a fascinating talk about life on the Hospital Ship UGANDA during the Falklands in 1982. Prayers were said by Commodore Barry Bryant, Director General Seafarers UK. Thanks should go to Commander Charles Crichton RN retired for his superb efforts in organising Armed Forces Week and the Sea Sunday Service.

Richard Walker

## LSLs Remember Falklands Conflict.

Thirty years on and the Falkland Island conflict is still fresh in many RFA minds. 3 LSLs have organised separate events to celebrate the anniversary. Sir Galahad, Sir



Tristram and Sir Percivale. The events have been attended by the crews who sailed in the ships in 1982.

8th June. Sir Galahad Members of the RFA Sir Galahad Association & Marchwood Parish Council held a short Memorial service for the RFA personnel lost during the campaign. This was followed by reunion



dinner the next day in HMS Excellent. Captain P. J. G. Roberts RFA retd. presided and Captain Roger Robinson-Brown RFA retd was the Guest of Honour. He recounted the second RFA Sir Galahad's exploits leading up to the docking in Umm Qasr Port, Iraq, 28th March 2003, when the ship provided humanitarian support during the Iraq war. — John Brindle



15th June. Sir Tristram members gathered at the Memorial by Marchwood church at 1600 to hold a short Service of Remembrance then following a quiet pint at the Pilgrim, moved onto the Sgts' Mess before returning to the Officers' Mess for pre-dinner drinks. Byams House always hosts our reunions and they do a splendid job. We are made most welcome with afternoon tea on arrival, a marvellous mess dinner, a bed for all then breakfast before we disperse! I would like to



take this opportunity of thanking Debbie, the Mess Manager and her team, for always taking good care of us and providing a wonderful meal! We enjoyed a splendid dinner in the dignified setting of the small dining room, dressed with Silver & Crystal and served with the usual military precision! At 2100 we paused, raised a glass and toasted

"Absent Friends" a thought for those who did not return, have died subsequently and those who simply couldn't make it this time! Perhaps a highlight this year was when our Mexi Man, Jonny Lowe, turned up with a surprise offering. He had returned to the Tris a few days after our bombing when we had to abandon her, and, seeing the Jack fluttering up in the bows, "Rescued" the flag and repatriated it. Forgetting about it for 29 years, it only resurfaced when he was packing to move to the Middle East. So he very kindly brought the flag and presented it to the Association! A Very Big Thank You! To Jonny! — Dave Palin

23 June. Sir Percivale The Sir Percivale team meet every five years in Byams House Mess, Marchwood Military Port, and each reunion dinner is every bit as good as the one before. The ships were Chinese crewed in 1982 but the Sir Percivale dinner includes



members of the embarked RM flight, and Army Liaison Officers. This year we reviewed what each of us had done over the last 30 years. There were some amazing life stories. — Frank Andrews

### Editor's Note.

*Those of us who have happy memories of Marchwood Military Port may be interested to know that due to Defence cuts it is intended to sell the port, it will however remain Britain's only military port albeit in commercial ownership.*

## London Member Visits Malta

London Branch member Derek Pevier made contact with members of the Malta RFAA including President, Mr Tony Farrugia, and the Secretary, Mr Vincent Grima, who were able to visit him at his hotel.

Derek was invited by Vincent to visit a lock up garage owned by his cousin, Mr John Zarb, in Senglea. John was in the R.F.A. many years ago and started collecting ships crests, models and other nautical paraphernalia. He now has over five hundred crests, large models of RFA vessels and cap tallies from RN ships.

Shortly after arriving home the Malta RFAA Committee were invited to visit RFA DILIGENCE which was making a courtesy visit to Valletta. Derek is hoping to return to Malta next year.

Pic: L-R: Derek Pevier, Vincent Grimes, Tony Farrugia, John Zarb.





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

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#### Services to RFA personnel

The Marine Society is the world's most experienced seafarers' charity. No organization has more experience of delivering learning at sea.

The Marine Society is the leading and most experienced not for profit supporting the well being, professional development and lifelong learning needs of maritime professionals.

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

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

It caters for all levels of learning, and accommodates all ages, abilities and aspirations. So whether you simply wish to improve those GCSE grades from school or whether you're a senior officer seeking civilian recognized qualifications in preparation for coming ashore, the Marine Society will have something to offer.

#### GCSE/A Level results

We offer a wide range of subjects at GCSE and A Level. All come with full tutor support, and are entirely suitable for study whilst deployed. And when the time comes to sit the exam you can leave it all to us - we'll be pleased to look after the paperwork, and even arrange for you to sit onboard if needed.

In the summer just gone we entered 238 seafarers for GCSE/A Level exams.

The results were outstanding. Overall pass rates and the proportion of learners achieving the highest grades were well above the national average, reinforcing the widely held view that we offer unmatched levels of service and quality.

For those studying with us the overall pass rate was 94.4% - that's almost 25% above the national average. A full breakdown of the results is in our website.

RFA Stwd Lisa Ross has studied with Marine Society on several occasions.



**Books@Sea.** From this autumn all RFA libraries will be paperbacks you'll want to read - carefully chosen and provided by the Marine Society.

Lisa told *Gunline*:

"I've found the Marine Society to be extremely helpful. Not only with subjects I am taking but with information on subjects I might be interested in studying in the future.

They're very flexible with regards to sitting exams onboard ship, as I have done twice, so there's no hassle of trying to plan being home and finding an exam centre.

There's something for everyone; from GCSEs and A Levels to Degrees and Postgraduate, and they also offer an instalment plan to spread the cost. I would recommend the Marine Society to anybody wishing to further their career, whether in or out of the RFA."

Marine Society is pleased to confirm that from this autumn seafarers can enrol online for its courses.

So it's simpler than ever before to continue your education with a quality provider that's dedicated to serving seafarers.

#### Other subjects

At the Marine Society we like to offer seafarers courses they want.

Many want good pass grades at GCSE, particularly in English and Maths for promotion and their future, and that's fine.

But we also have a range of other subjects seafarers have told us they like to explore.

So, for instance, there's a popular course called **Business Start-Up**. If you're thinking about setting up your own business or need to improve your management skills, this course begins by helping you decide whether self-employment is right for you.

It goes on to cover the knowledge and skills you need to start up your own business drawing up a business plan; obtaining finance; legal requirements; marketing and selling.

We also offer a course in **Creative Writing**. It's perfect for anyone who wants to discover or develop their writing skills. You'll have a chance to try out a wide range of styles, including novels, plays, poems, magazine articles and writing for young people, and

as being hopelessly misleading. They may not know the answer to your query and instead of saying so upfront and pledging to find the answer, they will try to flannel you.

But did you know there is a Government kitemark of quality for organisations that offer information, advice and guidance?

It's called the **Matrix Standard**.

So far as we're aware only one maritime sector charity holds the coveted standard - the Marine Society, and it was re-inspected again in July this year. It passed with flying colours. The inspectors wrote:

"The Marine Society has again demonstrated that it meets all the requirements of the Matrix Standard. The services it provides are relevant to, and highly valued by, today's seafarers, and are delivered in appropriate ways".

The full report is available online. It could not be plainer: if you seek advice about any matter of concern then your first port of call ought to be the Marine Society.

You can be assured of a response that is tailored to you personally, is unbiased, and completely confidential.

Best of all the service is provided free of charge to all seafarers as part of its charitable remit.

#### Crew Book Service

A much-loved service the Marine Society has been providing to RFA personnel for generations is about to get better.

From this autumn libraries delivered to RFA ships will be on a 'fire-and-forget' basis. You've told us that you don't want to worry about having to return them to us and that you'd prefer the books to be in paperback format.

So now we're offering an exciting selection of paperback books to every RFA ship. It's up to you, the seafarer, as to the titles that make up the selection. So be sure to let us have your feedback or requests. You can email us at [books@ms-sc.org](mailto:books@ms-sc.org)

Happy reading!

Visit [www.marine-society.org](http://www.marine-society.org) to find out more or email [education@ms-sc.org](mailto:education@ms-sc.org) to request a free prospectus.

You can also follow us on Facebook or keep up to date via Twitter.

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

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

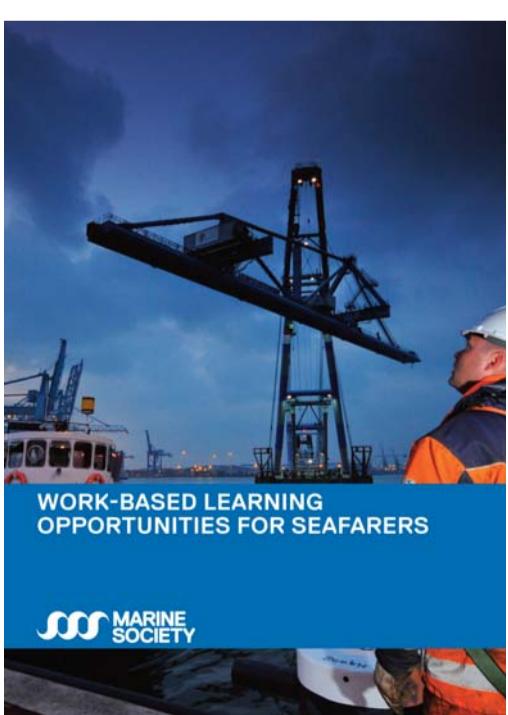
Working with education and training providers to deliver seafarer-focused opportunities for quality-assured personal and professional development.

Supporting seafarers is our strength.

Find out more at: [marine-society.org](http://marine-society.org)

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# ROSS WATTON NAVAL BROADSIDES ARTIST



RFA WAVE KNIGHT replenishing HMS Westminster in the Arabian Gulf painted by Ross for Captain Chris Clarke RFA Commanding Officer of RFA Wave Knight



'SHAMAL' A painting by Ross Watton showing RFA LYME BAY, one of the MCM Force support vessels in the Arabian Gulf.

By 1974 Ross Watton, aged 16, had set his sights on becoming a Naval Artist. It was to be a long road, as, unlike other artists that apply for a place at Art College straight from school, Ross decided to join the Royal Navy, as he felt this was the best way to both experience and study his chosen subject up close. Much of his spare time was spent drawing ships at the various naval dockyards. His talent was soon noticed and put to use - usually painting the pennant numbers over the ship's side. He did receive the occasional commission from Commanding Officers, but began to realize he was never going to become an artist from within the service.

He eventually left in 1981, to attend Art College, where he was chosen to paint a large cutaway illustration of the World War II cruiser HMS BELFAST, to be displayed onboard. This took up much of his college time and three years of painstaking work. It also led to the commissioning of a book, about the ship, first published in 1986. Over the next four years, Ross went on to write and illustrate another three books about other famous ships, but soon had a fulltime career as a freelance illustrator of books and postage stamps.

It was not until 2006, when, having seen the ship cutaway illustrations featured in the Navy News, he decided to contact the paper. Suitably impressed by his work, they commissioned him to produce cutaways for

their centre pages. By chance in 2008, the members of editorial staff at the Navy News were asked if they could recommend an artist to paint HMS CUMBERLAND for the ship's rededication ceremony and, more importantly, produce 500 prints for the ship's company and guests. Two names were put forward and Ross got the job. It was a tight order, as he had less than two weeks to complete not only the painting, but also the prints, which were all supplied in mounts. Fortunately they arrived the evening before the ceremony.

This was the catalyst for Ross to start Naval Broadsides, which as its name suggests, was originally going to be side views of ships, as he thought these maybe more popular than paintings, but the artist in him won the day. Particularly when he discovered that 'Broadside' was also an old term for a large piece of paper printed on one side.

Ross continues to work hard and over the past four years has built up an impressive portfolio of work, a reputation for quality paintings and many admirers of them. He hasn't confined his talent to Royal Navy vessels either and this year has completed paintings for RFA WAVE KNIGHT and RFA LYME BAY, with he hopes, more to follow. His work can be seen online at [www.navalbroadsides.co.uk](http://www.navalbroadsides.co.uk) where contact details can also be found.

## Spud Peeler Rises to the Charity Challenge

Yes, you've read that right, an Assistant Cook raising funds for charity. My name is Scott Dearden and for most of you who know me, you'll know I'm a miserable, non fun, keep fit freak. However as opposed to keeping fit and trying my best to hang on to what youthful looks I have left, I am doing the Great North Run in September for charity to make a difference in people's lives and would be grateful for your help.

The Great North Run is the most well known half marathon in the world and televised on the BBC. The race is entered by people from all over the country, often with a common goal of raising funds for various charities, for personal achievement or competitively, but personally I don't see myself in the latter group. The run has also had a few celebrities attempt it in the past with a variety of success.

The charity I am running for is the Evening Chronicle Sunshine Fund. The Evening Chronicle Sunshine Fund is a registered charity and provides specially adapted equipment, custom built apparatus or special learning aids, for children with disabilities or special needs, to improve the quality of their lives. The fund is helping North East children in

special schools, learning units, hospitals and also individual families.

So your help, without the risk of sounding like a Comic Relief presenter, will be gratefully appreciated in helping me achieve my personal target of £300. I will be in Mounts Bay from June the 8th and will be taking the opportunity when not peeling potatoes or washing down galley decks to train in Portland for the race. Portland, it has to be said is ideal for training for a half marathon with its steep hills and rugged surroundings. In light of this physical regime I'll sadly have to exclude The Shutters from my routine, but with all that's gone on with the Olympics and Paralympics, I don't think I'll be missed. Also, whilst we are at sea in Mounts, I'll find time to sit on a running machine along with the Royal Marines who can regularly be found in the gym maintaining their physique in order to achieve my training target and not let my sponsors down.

If you would like to donate please visit my Just Giving page which is [www.justgiving.com/Scottie-Dearden](http://www.justgiving.com/Scottie-Dearden) I would like to take this opportunity to say thank you very much to everybody who sponsors me. Your help is greatly appreciated.

## HRH Prince Edward & The Countess of Wessex visit Mounts Bay

The Earl of Wessex, HRH Prince Edward accompanied by his wife Sophie, the Countess of Wessex paid an informal visit to Mounts Bay over the weekend of Saturday 4 August whilst the ship was in Portland Harbour, Dorset in support of the Olympics sailing events. The ship was clearly visible next to the Olympic sailing venue.



The Earl of Wessex as the Honorary Commander in Chief of the Royal Fleet Auxiliary, it was an ideal opportunity for the Earl to see first hand the work the RFA

delivers in support of the country's superb effort in delivering the Olympics on the world stage and specifically what Mounts Bay did as part of the Olympic security support to the Dorset Police.

The Royal couple was met by Captain Kevin Rimell and Chief Officer Miles Lewis who hosted them on a tour around various departments of the ship. The Royal tour commenced on the bridge, where they were served light refreshments and sandwiches followed by a tour of the main communications office, the forward logistics site, flight deck, hospital, galley and vehicle deck.

The ship's Logistics Officer, First Officer Kelly Taylor said:

"This was a fabulous opportunity for the Ship's Company to discuss first hand their involvement in work to support the security plan for Olympic venue. The Royal couple's down to earth approach was appreciated by all. It was a pleasure to have them back on board RFA Mounts Bay where they took a real interest in all that we were doing."

## Martyn's No Longer Accounting for Stores

As I head off to pastures new and enjoy my retirement, I would like say to all shipmates through the pages of Gunline how much I have enjoyed working with you all over the last 36 years and I am now looking forward to having some time at home.

Over the years I have had some great voyages and been fortunate to see most of the world on my travels. As a result of my

long career in the RFA I have also seen many changes in the service. So as I become a landlubber I would just like to say to everyone thanks for helping to make my time at sea so interesting. May I wish you all clear skies and calm seas wherever you sail.

Martyn Westbrook CPO(SA)  
[martynwestbrook@tiscali.co.uk](mailto:martynwestbrook@tiscali.co.uk)



## Mounts Bay Supports Armed Forces Day



The annual National Armed Forces Day was a great opportunity for Mounts Bay to demonstrate the capability of the ship and the support that the RFA delivers to the wider naval service. The ship and her company recently played a central role in the National Armed Forces Day celebrations as part of a weekend visit to Devonport prior to starting her Op Olympic duties. The opportunity to demonstrate to the general public what the ship is capable of which was greatly enjoyed by all those onboard who took part.



Mounts Bay participated in the Royal Navy's "sail past" the Hoe in Plymouth in full view of thousands of spectators including the RFA's Commodore in Chief, HRH The Prince Edward, Earl of Wessex; Prime Minister David Cameron and the First Sea Lord, Admiral Sir Mark Stanhope. With over 140 local school children onboard, Mounts Bay sailed in blustery conditions and cautiously sailed past

a loud and appreciative audience berthing in Devonport Dockyard on completion of the sail past.



Mounts Bay's Commanding Officer Kevin Rimell said, "I'm delighted that Mounts Bay was able to participate in the celebration of Armed Forces, combined with the opportunity to provide a unique day out for our important young guests. With the challenges of the Olympics ahead this has been a proud day and pleasant diversion for the crew"

The school children who accompanied Mounts Bay were drawn from a range of local schools, and all had a connection in some way with the Armed Forces. The smooth operation on the day presented itself as an unusual managerial challenge for C/O(X) Miles Lewis and his team of hosts, however they all rose to the challenge and coped admirably with an excited and inquiring group of passengers.

Kelly Taylor

## HOISTING THE FLAG AT THE OLYMPICS AND PARALYMPICS

An opportunity of a lifetime was made available to members of the Ministry of Defence and not content with having Mounts Bay in Weymouth for the Olympics Leading Hand Steward Matt Burton decided he wanted to ensure that he made the most of the Olympics being hosted in Great Britain and applied to take part in the historic event. It didn't take long before Matt decided to apply to become involved in the games as a flag bearer and he was selected through a Ministry of Defence nomination process which was keen to highlight those with sporting or operational achievements, or those who are involved in their local communities. Matt competed at National level in Judo and represented the country in 1998 in Holland. He is now the senior coach in Bath Judo Qwai and keeps himself fit onboard with circuits and teaching Judo to the ship's company.

Matt was involved in the combat events at the games and said, "It was a fantastic opportunity to be selected to be involved at

the Olympic Games and an honour to represent the Royal Fleet Auxiliary, as a flag bearer and raiser for the judo and wrestling victory ceremonies."

He was part of a team consisting of six flag-



bearers and one flag-manager. There were eight Royal Navy teams, nine Army teams, eight RAF teams and an overall commander who sat centrally with the London 2012

## Argus Visits the Cayman Islands

Argus completed a whistle stop visit to Grand Cayman, principal of the Cayman Islands in the Caribbean.

As part of her current deployment to the Caribbean on undertaking the tasking of Atlantic Patrol Tasking (North), the UK's year round commitment to the region to provide assurance and support to the UK's Overseas Territories, particularly in response to natural disasters, Argus called into the island to meet with local disaster management teams, local

and constraints and allowing full preparation in the event that assistance is required.

The brief port visit also gave the ship's Company and opportunity to represent the ship in several sporting events. Argus' football team were victorious in a friendly match against the inmates of HM Prison Northward, narrowly securing the win with a 5-4 victory, impressive considering the intense heat of play under the intense Caribbean sun. Team Captain LMA Dean



Members of RFA Argus football team with their opponents from HM Prison Northward after the friendly match.

police and health services to discuss the actions that could be taken in the event of a natural disaster.



AB Farmery shoots during the friendly game against HM Prison Northward.

The opportunity to discuss contingency plans face to face with islanders was invaluable in identifying the potential needs

Keating said "Taking into account the environment and temperature that we played in, the team performed above and beyond what was expected of them. The players gave a good example of themselves as players and ambassadors".

Unfortunately the ship's netball team were less successful, after being challenged by the Grand Cayman International squad. Rising to the challenge, the team performed admirably, but unfortunately could not secure the win, losing 55-12.

All in all the visit proved highly successful in securing ties with the islands community and firming contingency plans if Argus is required to render assistance during the hurricane season. Argus sails on for other port visits in the region to continue her mission of Wider Regional Engagement, and no doubt there will be plenty of other opportunities to line up the ships' sporting teams against the local communities.

Stock images of the ships are available at [www.defenceimages.mod.uk](http://www.defenceimages.mod.uk).



Team Welcome and Victory Ceremonies Team.

The team welcome ceremonies were designed to formally welcome the athletes and team officials to the Games and included the protocol of raising flags. There were over 100 team welcome ceremonies which took place on the days leading up to the opening ceremonies of the Olympic and Paralympic Games.

Victory ceremonies took place when a medal event finished; after the awarding of medals, the national flags of the gold, silver and bronze medal-winning athletes were raised while the national anthem of the country or territory of the winning athlete was played. Matt decided to join the RFA in 2006 from the civil service after he spent time on an RFA ship as part of the Supply & Transport Office (Naval) Department embedded within RFA stores ships. He said: "Serving in the RFA has enabled me to visit many different countries whilst undertaking a wide variety of tasking. Being chosen to be part of the

Olympics will add to one of the many fantastic experiences that this job continues to offer."

A highlight of the Games for Matt was raising the Union Flag for Gemma Gibbons when she won a Silver Medal in the under 78kg category. Matt went on to say, "I had the pleasure of meeting Gemma to congratulate her and I was fortunate enough to be invited to be photographed with her."

As well as Matt's involvement in the Olympics, Mounts Bay played an important part in supporting the games when she was tasked with supporting the sailing events off Portland. The RFA can feel proud in its involvement in an event which is unlikely to occur again in the next 50 years in Great Britain.