



FORCE 4

THE JOURNAL OF
THE RFA ASSOCIATION



Chairman's Dit



Issue 7 Autumn 2015

Message from the Chairman

We've had an excellent year so far and if you received the on-line edition of Force 4 in July you will already know the reason for this printed copy. We are concerned that especially in our kind of Association half of our task is keeping in touch with members, former ship mates and friends. We have not seen an edition of Gunline for well over a year and without this publication being delivered to our members communication has reduced to our annual Year Book, normally posted out in February. Gunline has not been cancelled by the way but we have not seen one for a very long time and have no idea when it will be resurrected. This gap in communication led to Pat's on-line Force 4s which are great and reach all our on-line members including those overseas but they don't reach our UK members who are not on-line. Now if you live in UK, no matter whether you are on-line or not you should get two "reads" a year. Please do let us know if this extra "read" is a welcome addition to your post because we really don't want to just add to the recycling!

The main event this year has been the Reunion Dinner held in the China Fleet Club, Saltash. This was an excellent and very well attended reunion. The Plymouth and Southwest Branch gave us a truly excellent evening. Commodore Rob Dorey was our guest of honour and after his speech we were able to present the 2015 Memorial Coull Award. This year it was awarded to the entire Ship's company of RFA Argus for their sterling work acting as the base ship in Sierra Leone during the recent Ebola crisis. The award was received by Captain David Eagles who joined us especially for the evening. (see dinner and Coull award pictures)

The 2016 Reunion Dinner will be hosted by the Southampton Branch and will take place at the Grand Harbour Hotel Southampton on Saturday 21 May 2016. For those of you who attended the last Southampton Reunion in 2012, it is the same venue with a slightly different name. We expect to post details to all members with the 2016-2017 Year Book.

Our constitution says Trustees should not serve continually for more than 9 years. My 9 years are up in November 2016 and Pat's at much the same time. It is therefore essential that we identify a new Chairman and a new Deputy Chairman. We have found the workload when spread between two is very manageable and hugely enjoyable but it will keep you busy during the working week. Other trustees share the responsibilities and when fund raising, welfare, ceremonial are divided up it all becomes manageable. You do also get some good invites last year the Association received 2 invites to St James Palace to celebrate the 30th Anniversary of COBSEO (Confederation of Service Charities). Stan McCabe from the London Branch joined me in these palatial surroundings and Prince Charles circulated. John Sail, Chairman of the Midlands Branch was also there representing the Merchant Navy Association. At the end of the excellent reception the Prince spoke, the COBSEO cake was cut and more champagne drunk. See picture. Ever wondered what they spoke about?



Above: Guests at the 2015 Reunion Dinner.
Below: Captain David Eagles receives the Coull award on behalf of the ships company of RFA ARGUS.



John Sail talks to Prince Charles.

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Sir Tristram Remembers



From L-R: Vicar Simon, Andy Wills, Chris Forrest, Shaun Jones, David Palin, Alan Roach, Barry Hayes, Neil Barclay, Dave Tooze, Maurice Ambrose, John Irvine

In May some of the RFA Sir Tristram veterans from 1982 met in Marchwood for a thoughtful, short, Remembrance Service with the added Spiritual support from the Marchwood Vicar, Simon. This followed a visit to the Pilgrim for traditional Remembrances! The evening culminated with a splendid Mess Dinner in Byams House where Debbie & her team, once again, did us proud! *Dave Palin*



London Branch



Members of the London Branch were invited to Trinity House - and what a day out it was! This 501 year old institution founded by Henry V111 overlooked the Tower of London and still carries out the work set out 500 years ago, and that of looking after the lighthouses, navigational aids around the country + Gibraltar. The picture shows Richard Fernley, David Cooper, Stan McCabe, Tom Adams, Gillian Downham and David plus Peter Harrison. A great day and well worth the visit

Recognise This Boat?



Back in 2010 when Grey Rover was sold for scrap the ship's work boat was saved and sold to Tony Finnigan. The craft was then lovingly worked on by Tony Finnigan who moved it to Fidlers Ferry Sailing Club. Tony worked on it himself with some valuable help from his friend David Leach. The boat has now been moved to the Mersey Motor Boat Club on the Liverpool and Leeds Canal where it is much admired and used.

The name of the boat?

Yes its Grey Rover.



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The new Tidespring



Courtesy MARS project Newsletter

Progress on Tidespring, the First of Class, continues well and she was floated out on 25th April this year. Captain Jim Collins RFA, DE&S MARS Project Manager, based in Okpo, South Korea said: "The pace of build continues to be phenomenal, from cutting steel of Tidespring in June last year, to seeing her afloat in April this year and now undergoing outfitting. We have approximately 1000 people working on board each day, with over 60% of the cables pulled and recently both diesel generators successfully completing their first runs. The pace of commissioning will now accelerate as we approach contractor sea trials and acceptance off contract".

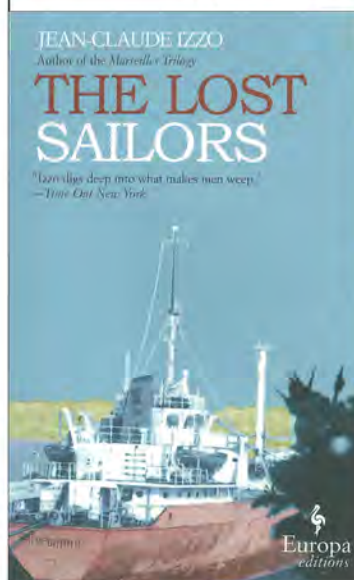
Tidespring and Tidepool served in the Falklands War. They were steam ships, as was normal at the time, with big crews of over 90 people. Diesel propulsion and extensive automation have reduced the crew size in the new Tides to around 60 or so for a much more capable class of ship.

The last Tide to be taken out of service was Tidespring, which was decommissioned in 1991. The new Tidespring will be officially named in October prior to sailing to the UK to commence Customisation and Capability Assessment Trials. The formal dedication is expected to be in June 2016.

BOOK REVIEW

The Lost Sailors

By Jean-Claude Izzo



... A good read.

This is truly a gripping story of a merchant ship that has been impounded due to the owner's bankruptcy.

If you have ever been to Port-de-Bouc then you are in the right part of the world - Marseilles.

Although a fictional account, you can understand that the author has

experience of the sea, he knows and understands the frustrations of the seafarer, the trials and tribulations experienced by the Officers and Crew.

Without giving too much of the story away, the crew of the Aldebaran are impounded in Marseilles, and onboard the men are divided, either wait for the money owed them, which might never come or accept their fate and abandon ship?

The Captain is determined to save his charge and stand by his men. Tensions arise for each of these marooned sailors.

The story is a bit racy in parts and not for the faint hearted.

A great read from someone who understands the seafarer.

Richard Fernley

Memorial 2015

The RFA memorial still looking good after its first 3 years. Thanks to Derek Smith for these recent pictures.



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Sue Banyard walks for the Association



Sue Banyard has 2 daughters Stacey and Julie. Julie is in the RFA and is a rating to officer candidate currently training to be a 3rd officer. Last year Sue joined Action Challenge with 5 friends to walk 100Km (60 miles) from London to Brighton to raise funds for the Make A Wish Foundation. She says "It was a fantastic experience which I wanted to repeat." That walk was completed in 26hrs 8 minutes.

This year Sue took on the 100KM Grand Union Canal challenge and did it to support the Association. Sue has completed the challenge within time and has also held a Burns Night, a ladies cinema evening, a cheese and wine quiz and has raised a superb £1030 for the Association.

Sincere thanks from the Chairman for this excellent effort. This not only raised extremely useful funds for the Association but raises the RFA profile too. Good luck to daughter Julie; her mother has set an excellent example to us all.....



Did you know that the RFA Association is open to all serving and retired members of the RFA, their spouses and anyone who has a close connection with the Service

Our purpose is to foster an esprit de corps, promote the traditions of service and perpetuate the memory of those who have died in the service of their country. We hold an annual dinner held at different venues around UK in 2016 it will be 21st May in Southampton.

- We help keep both serving and ex seafarers in touch with each other
- Maintain the history, culture and ethos of the service by retaining many RFA artefacts which are available to view and borrow
- Provide a presence at the numerous remembrance services across the UK and much much further afield.
- We have built and maintain the RFA memorial at the National Memorial Arboretum in Staffordshire.
- Run our own website: www.rfa-association.org.uk
- Answer questions that often arise in retirement
- Provide Service advice and assistance in times of bereavement, and the loan of the RFA ensign to dress coffins.
- Provide financial help to anyone in the RFA family in distress

Will you consider joining and help us to continue our work? Membership is just £15 per year.

Request a joining form by emailing The Chairman:
Chairman@rfa-association.org.uk or
Telephone 01772 685427 or visit our website
www.rfa-association.org.uk

The RFA Association is for all RFA's their families and the friends of RFA

Membership Secretary Graduates

Congratulations to our membership secretary Dawn Reay who has recently graduated as a Midwife

Dawn does great work for the Association maintaining our database keeping our records up to date.

She has managed to collect this degree whilst doing all this and looking after her lively family.



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