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# **GUARDIAN ENSIGN**



NEWSLETTER OF

**THE FEDERATION OF NAVAL ASSOCIATIONS,**  
NUMBER 41 Spring 2010

**A NAVAL REVIEW  
(SODS OPERA)  
1st August 7:30 pm**



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## SECRETARYS' BRIEFCASE

Our 18th AGM weekend completed and though down in numbers for various reasons it went off quite well. A rather relaxed time, with the absolute minimum of organised events. No church service neither this year due to a number of reasons, but we have a possible sky pilot for next and maybe, ensuing, years. This has to be a short brief due to the fact that I have an eye ailment at this present time and seeing is not easy, so I will alert those who were not present at AGM that MN Personnel who have served in support of Armed Forces on Active Service, such as Korea, Suez, Falklands, Gulf, to name but a few are given recognition along with Service Personnel. There is now a Priority System within the National Health for Veterans who have problems which relate to their service. I will hopefully circulate documentation through the GU where possible. **Robbie R.**

**THIS IS A PRETTY AWESOME PICTURE...CAN YOU IMAGINE THE LOOK ON THE PHOTOGRAPHERS FACE WHEN HE WENT SNAP...ONLY HIS DRY CLEANERS KNOW THE WHOLE STORY....**

**When the lightning flashes, this is NOT what you want to see. THIS IS A PICTURE THAT SOMEONE TOOK WHO WORKS ON AN OIL RIG. HE WAS GOING TO TAKE A PICTURE OF THE LIGHTNING AND WAS UNAWARE OF THE TORNADO UNTIL THE LIGHTNING ILLUMINATED IT.**

**This is a one-in-a-million photo.....**



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**H.M.S. Cleopatra Association** Mr W. B. Franklin. 127 Kit Hill Crescent St Budeaux, Plymouth, PL5 1EL 01752366611

**H.M.S. St Vincent Association** Mr K. Cast. 11 Pilgrims Way. Hill Head, Hampshire, PO14 3LX

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**Wessex O G S** Mr,B S Jarman 50 St Johns Rd, Locks Heath, Southampton S031 6NF 01489 574010

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# SALTY SAYINGS

*Many words and phrases in common use today can be traced back to the language of seafarers. The richness of the English language owes a great deal to Jack Tar! Each month a new Salty Saying will be added.*

By Kind Permission Julian Stockwin Author of The Kidd Series Naval Adventures

[www.julianstockwin.com](http://www.julianstockwin.com)



**Clean Slate** Someone who starts with a clean slate is one who has a fresh start, sometimes a cancellation or settlement of a debt.

In the age of sail all the current orders at the conn were chalked up on a special slate by the quartermaster, as instructed by the officer of the watch. Then, variations in the course to steer, prevailing winds, the set of the sails and other vital information were noted or amended. The slate was kept in the binnacle box.

The slate was wiped totally clean at the beginning of a new voyage or when the ship was safely at anchor in harbour.



**By the Board** If we say something has gone by the board, it has been neglected, omitted or discarded.

At sea "board" was a word with a variety of meanings - such as the distances which the vessel ran between tacks when working to windward. The more frequently the ships tacked, the shorter the boards, the less frequently, the longer the boards. Board also meant the side of the ship, thus "by the board" was over the ship's side. If a mast, for example, was carried away, it was said to have gone by the board.



**Taken Aback** Someone who has been taken aback has been jolted by unpleasant news and is at a momentary loss, unable to act - sometimes unable to speak.

A very real danger faced by sailing ships was a sudden shift in the wind from an unexpected squall striking the ship head on. The sails could be blown back against the masts, resulting in serious damage to spars and rigging, and in the worst scenario, the masts breaking, leaving the ship helpless.

Sails were laid aback purposely on occasion - to stop a ship's way through the water or to assist in tacking - but these were controlled manoeuvres.

**Bitter End** Talking about "the bitter end", we mean carrying on to the very end, in spite of difficulties.

Aboard ship, if the crew lets all the cable run out while anchoring, the rope will come to its bitter (inner) end. A bitter is a turn of the cable around the mooring bits at the ship's were loose, the situation was out of control.



**Three sheets to the wind** A person who is intoxicated and out of control is often said to be three sheets to the wind.

Aboard ship sheets are the lines of rope used to control the tension and position of the sails. On square-rigged ships, each sail has its own set of sheets so the sails can be controlled independent of each other. Sometimes the wind pulled the sheets out of a sailor's hands and the sails flapped. This was bad enough, but if three sets of sheets were loose, the situation was out of control

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## UK MERCHANT SEAFARING VETERANS AN AGREED DEFINITION

### Introduction

The Merchant Navy and UK fishing fleets have always been called upon to provide support to both the UK Armed Forces and the Nation during wartime, other hostilities and military operations. These actions, together with seafarers' personnel records of the ships in which they served, are well documented. There is already a broad consensus from all parties, including the MOD, that such seafarers should be regarded as veterans within the Armed Forces Community. However, the terms 'Merchant Navy Veteran' and 'Merchant Seafaring Veteran' continue to be used without understanding or a single clear definition. Consequently those civilian seafarers who are entitled to be regarded as veterans and therefore part of the Armed Forces Community occasionally have their status challenged or ignored altogether. It is considered that an officially endorsed definition would bring greater clarity to this sometimes confused area, as well as greater recognition to this often overlooked section of the UK seafaring community.

### Aim

The aim of this paper is to provide a common, agreed and endorsed definition of UK Merchant Seafarers who form part of the Armed Forces Community.

### The Armed Forces Community

The Armed Forces Community, as currently defined by the MOD, comprises individuals currently serving as members of HM Armed Forces, including the UK Reserve Forces; their families; widows/widowers; veterans and their dependants.

### Qualification Criteria Qualification by Conflict

World Wars I & II. Although there are no known merchant seafarers now alive from World War I, their retrospective status as veterans may still be appreciated by their descendants. All merchant seafarers and fishermen serving aboard any UK vessel between the first and last day of World War II were deemed to be serving "Under Admiralty Charter" throughout the conflict. While their actual conditions of service differed, these personnel faced the same dangers and should, in terms of recognition, be treated as if they were Royal Navy personnel during the period of this service. WWII began on 3 September 1939 (when the first vessel SS "Athena" was sunk) and ended on VJ Day on 15 August 1945. During the conflict a large number of merchant seafarers and fishermen found themselves onboard ships that were requisitioned by the Royal Navy. Many of these men volunteered to remain onboard as crew, working alongside Royal Navy personnel. While they remained on their civilian pay and leave conditions, they were required to sign T124X or T124T agreements which placed them under the Naval Discipline Act and strengthened their case for similar recognition to their RN colleagues. Other Conflicts post 1945. Those legally defined military operations recognised by the UK Government as those in which the Merchant fleet supported the military included, but are not limited to, Korea (1950-53), Suez (1956), South Atlantic (1982), Gulf (Kuwait Crisis) (1990-91) and Gulf (Iraq Invasion) (2003). Significantly all Merchant Navy seafarers who served in these zones are entitled to receive campaign medals following certain periods in theatre: for example, over 5000 such medals were awarded for the

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# LOST SHIPMATES

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Falklands campaign alone. Under the Protection of Military Remains Act (PMRA), two merchant vessels *Storaa* and *Atlantic Conveyor* have so far been designated as protected places, in recognition of their status in supporting UK military operations. Non UK Conflicts. A significant number of British merchant seafarers, in going about their lawful business, were required to sail into war zones not involving the UK. These include places such as Vietnam, and the Persian Gulf during the Iran/Iraq war. These were warlike areas and a number of British merchant seafarers were killed or injured as a result of armed actions. More recently, the concept of war zones and areas of warlike operations has been extended to include piracy hotspots with such areas being designated as "high risk" e.g. the UK Warlike Operations Area Committee has recently declared an area in the Gulf of Aden as "high risk". Nonetheless, it is not intended to pursue official veteran status, which implies some form of service to the Nation, for these personnel, and they are not considered to be part of the Armed Forces Community.

### Proof of Service

While mercantile marine records are not comparable with those held on behalf of the UK Armed Forces, British merchant seafarers normally have Discharge Books which contain details of the vessels in which they served including the dates. The names and dates of those ships that sailed into the operational zones are retained in the records held by the MCA's Registry of Shipping and Seamen. The Royal Naval Historical Archive holds online records, and the Merchant Navy Association and the Federation of Merchant Mariners also keep an expanding database of those qualifying personnel who have been awarded the Merchant Navy Veterans badge. Ships' Articles, crew lists and discharge books can also provide supporting evidence. Thus, proof of service is based on confirmation of the individual's ship discharge record and that ship's service in support of UK military operations.

### Royal Fleet Auxiliary

RFA personnel are merchant seafarers employed by MOD (Navy) entirely to support the UK Armed Forces. All those with RFA service are already considered as HM Armed Forces Veterans in accordance with existing arrangements and as such will continue to apply to the Service Personnel and Veterans Agency for the HM Armed Forces Veterans Badge.

### Conclusion

It is therefore concluded that, exceptionally, those civilians forming part of the veterans element of the Armed Forces Community are those who have served in commercial vessels supporting the UK Armed Forces on legally defined military operations. The actual size of this community is presently unknown, but further studies will be undertaken by MN organisations to establish numbers more accurately. Given that the definition of an Armed Forces veteran is any person who has served in the Forces of the Crown and includes those with RFA service, it follows that a comparable definition for a UK civilian seafarer from either the Merchant Navy or the fishing fleets who is considered to be an Armed Forces veteran should be: *Anyone who has served on a commercial vessel at a time when it was operated to facilitate legally defined UK military operations by HM Armed Forces*. and these personnel be called "UK Merchant Seafaring Veterans".

## REUNIONS

### **HMS Tiger Association**

**Reunion 1<sup>st</sup> to 4<sup>th</sup> October 2010**  
**Royal Hotel- Great Yarmouth**

Contact Dennis Andrew 01262 670860



### **HMS Newcastle Association**

*2010 Reunion And AGM At the*

*Ambassador Hotel*

*Scarborough.*

**Friday 15th October to Monday 18th October 2010**

FURTHER DETAILS FROM Shirley Winn

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Sandown, Isle of Wight. PO36 9JN TEL:01983 405116

Email: [enquiries@iowtours.com](mailto:enquiries@iowtours.com)



### **RNEBA AGM & Reunion Weekend**

**Friday 1st to Monday 4th October 2010**

**Tillington Hall Hotel Stafford**

Contact

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### **REGULATING & RNPA**

**REUNION W/E**

@ Portsmouth Fri 1st & 2nd Oct 2010

Contact Willie Dick 02392345228

Email:- [maawgd@sky.com](mailto:maawgd@sky.com)

## Seafarers Link

### **What is It?**

'Seafarers Link' is a two year pilot project that offers retired seafarers' an opportunity for regular telephone communication with other seafarers. Seafarers' organisations have been contacted across the UK to publicise and profile the service. Four telephone groups were set up in the first year. We will set up another four groups this year. The telephone group conferences involve 8 seafarers talking to each other for one hour, every two weeks. The telephone conferences are absolutely free of charge.

**The Aim of the Project**  
The aim is to demonstrate that regular, free telephone group participation for retired and isolated seafarers helps to increase their quality of life and alleviate social isolation.

### **The Aim of the Project**

The aim is to demonstrate that regular, free telephone group participation for retired and isolated seafarers helps to increase their quality of life and alleviate social isolation.



### **SEAFARERS LINK**

Seafarers Link is a FREE service available to retired sailors, merchant seamen and trawlermen.

Seafarers Link runs telephone support and friendship groups for those who have spent a lifetime at sea.

Swap stories, share news and views, and make new friends with Seafarers Link.

For more information contact

**Sue Robinson on 01373 451569**

or email [sue@community-network.org](mailto:sue@community-network.org)

### **Objectives.**

A total of 8 telephone groups will be set up to accommodate retired personnel across the range of maritime occupations. In Year 2, the priority will be to establish groups specifically for ex personnel from Royal Navy, Royal Marines and WRNS. All recruits will be asked to give their views on the effectiveness of the project within a two stage evaluation survey. On the basis of participant feedback, the MCFG will consider financing more permanent telephone befriending services for seafarers in the future.

### **Who Is Involved?**

Sue Robinson, Project Officer is employed by Community Network, the charity that set up the project. She is responsible for the day to day management of the project, and delivery of project milestones. Sue also has a key role in maintaining telephone contact with seafarers within the telephone groups, reporting back to stakeholders including the Programme Development Manager of MCFG, and the project evaluation process.

**Peter Castedine**, Project Officer, RSVP (Retired and Senior Volunteer Programme) CSV carries out ongoing 'field work' with Maritime organisations across the UK. Peter is usually the first person to make contact with key personnel from Maritime and Seafarer organisations, and with potential recruits. Peter and Sue work closely to ensure all contacts are followed up.

**Seafarers Link** is funded by Maritime Charities Funding Group. In 2007 they commissioned a national research study which highlighted the plight of retired seafarers, many of whom experience social isolation upon retirement, including those from Royal Navy, Royal Marines, WRNS, Merchant Navy, Shipping Lines and Fishing Fleets.