FLY THE RED ENSIGN
FOR MERCHANT NAVY DAY
3rd SEPTEMBER 2020
Message
from HRH The Earl of Wessex and Forfar KG, GCVO

On this Merchant Navy Day, I very much hope you will support this campaign by Seafarers UK to remember the sacrifices, salute the courage and support the future of the often unsung personnel of our Merchant Navy. Too often they are the forgotten or invisible service, by raising the Red Ensign you will ensure that at least on this day they are remembered. Your act will mean so much to their families and to the retired, but most especially to those at sea.

HRH The Earl of Wessex KG, GCVO
Foreword
from Admiral The Right Honourable The Lord West of Spithead GCB, DSC, PC

While many people know that the 3rd of September 1939 marked the outbreak of the Second World War, few are aware that it also marks the first major British maritime casualty, the merchant vessel SS Athenia, torpedoed just a few hours after hostilities were declared, with the loss of 128 passengers and crew. Although many hundreds of merchant ships and thousands of seafarers would meet the same fate in the years to come, 3rd September is now enshrined as ‘Merchant Navy Day’ to honour the brave men and women who kept our island nation afloat during both World Wars, and even during peacetime faced – and continue to face – the more routine perils of violent storms and mountainous seas.

The Red Ensign, or ‘Red Duster’ as it is affectionately known, has been the recognised flag of the British Merchant Navy since 1854. It has become inextricably linked with the world-wide trade links that made the United Kingdom’s fortune in the intervening years and, while there are now fewer ships on the home register, many thousands of British seafarers still work on the oceans of the world, underpinning the vast majority of the international commerce that keeps our economy buoyant. By volume, 95% of our trade comes by sea; without it, we would surely become an insignificant island off the coast of Europe.

But the majority of today’s large ports are high security operations, often miles from population centres. Many young people know little of ships and seafarers, and fail to appreciate their absolutely vital contribution to our way of life. In recent years, campaigns such as ‘Seafarers Awareness Week’ have tried to highlight this huge impact, and I strongly believe that a visual demonstration of the debt we all owe to merchant seafarers, past and present, should become an annual feature of our national calendar.

I am asking every Local Authority in the nation to fly the Red Ensign on the 3rd of September. Many of our great ports such as Liverpool already do, but we want to carry this message into the heartlands of the nation, just as surely as that essential food, fuel and clothing are carried to our shops. I hope the raising of this flag will be an occasion of pride in every community.

So, celebrate both a glorious seafaring past and a vital part of our economic future as you ‘Fly the Red Duster’ on Merchant Navy Day!
Seafarers UK is a charity that has been helping people in the maritime community for over 100 years, by providing vital support to seafarers in need and their families, and to those in education or training who are preparing to work or serve at sea.

Seafarers UK does this by giving grants to organisations and projects that make a real difference to people’s lives, across the Merchant Navy, Fishing Fleets, Royal Navy and Royal Marines. Last year Seafarers UK gave grants totalling more than £2 million to over 50 maritime welfare charities.

As an ‘island nation’ UK residents depend on seafarers to defend our shores, trade with other countries and import essential fuel and food. The job of a seafarer is therefore vital, but also demanding and hazardous, with a much greater chance of injury than many other professions.

A large number of those serving at sea will be facing problems of very different kinds; long periods of separation from friends and family, extended periods of duty, fatigue, and working heavy machinery whilst being exposed to harsh weather. Such dangers and difficulties can lead to disability, depression, debt, relationship breakdown, homelessness or even death.

Funding from Seafarers UK enables seafarers to access advice and information, adapt to life on shore, re-train and find new employment. It also improves seafarers’ quality of life by helping to provide the essentials of daily living that a small pension (or none) cannot cover. Often it may be the family of a seafarer who has been injured, held hostage or who has subsequently passed away that require assistance.

Because Seafarers UK works closely with all of the organisations that support seafarers and their dependants, the charity can target donations where they will make the biggest difference. This has been especially valuable during the Covid-19 pandemic, when the charity’s Trustees released an additional £2 million from reserves, to meet the needs of organisations supporting merchant seafarers and fishers.

Seafarers UK receives no government funding and relies on donations and fundraising to be able to carry on providing long-term aid. Without this, there simply wouldn’t be the level of support the charity is able to provide today and that last year gave hope and help to over 100,000 seafarers, their families, and those preparing to work or serve at sea when they needed it most.

www.seafarers.uk
Merchant Navy Fund

The Merchant Navy Fund is a collaborative initiative set up in 2012 by two long-established charities, the Merchant Navy Welfare Board and Seafarers UK, to exclusively support Merchant Navy seafarers.

Both organisations recognised that many people with a Merchant Navy background or connection want to see their donations and legacies used specifically in support of British Merchant Navy seafarers and their families, and the Merchant Navy Fund was established solely for this purpose. In 2019, eight grants were awarded with 771 people assisted thanks to that funding.

If you are a serving or former Merchant Navy seafarer or a family member and looking for help, the Merchant Navy Fund supports a number of maritime charity partners that may be able to help you, including:

Seafarers' Advice & Information Line (SAIL)
SAIL is a dedicated advice line for free, confidential and impartial advice about debts, statutory benefits, employment rights and legal issues. SAIL can be contacted on 0800 160 1842 or via their Online Enquiry Service at www.sailine.org.uk

Sailors Childrens Society
If you have ever worked at sea and are struggling to bring up your children get in touch with Sailors Childrens Society for help or just someone to talk to. Please visit www.sailorschildren.org.uk

The Silver Line
Seafarers UK has teamed up with charity The Silver Line that organises regular free group telephone calls for former seafarers. If you are interested in learning more about the project or connecting with others to talk about shared experiences, please phone 020 7224 2072 or visit www.thesilverline.org.uk

Please note that the Merchant Navy Fund, administered by Seafarers UK, does not give grants to individuals. If you are an organisation looking for funding, please visit www.seafarers.uk/merchant-navy-fund

Merchant Navy Day on 3 September provides an opportunity to raise money for the Merchant Navy Fund, including from participants’ staff and public donations. If you are able to assist the charity in this way please email mnfund@seafarers.uk or phone 020 7932 0000.

www.seafarers.uk/merchant-navy-fund
Merchant Navy Welfare Board

The Merchant Navy Welfare Board (MNWB) was established in 1948 and exists to assist and promote cooperation amongst organisations providing welfare services to seafarers and their dependants in the United Kingdom, together with visiting seafarers. Membership of its Council comes from ship owners, seafarers’ trade unions, nautical charities and Government.

The MNWB has, for over 70 years, been a forum where those with a vested interest in the welfare of seafarers can work effectively and harmoniously together. This work continues to evolve recognising the changes that affect both serving and retired seafarers, and their families. The MNWB welcomes the challenges and is committed to continuing its valuable work. Today the Board has around 43 member organisations subscribing to its Constitution.

Made up of a total of nearly 400 members, MNWB Port Welfare Committees (PWCs) are an essential and integral part of the Board’s work. Their contribution allows the Board and its members to work together and better understand issues that affect seafarers locally, nationally and internationally. PWC meetings also provide the platform to disseminate important information on topical welfare issues, facilities and services available to the maritime sector.

Fifteen PWCs cover the entire coastline of the United Kingdom with welfare boards in both the Port of Gibraltar and the Falkland Islands. Each committee comprises of representatives of organisations concerned directly, or indirectly, with the welfare of seafarers visiting the ports, or locally domiciled. Members are drawn from various backgrounds, including maritime charities, port owners/authorities, port health authorities, maritime trade unions and ship owners (commonly represented by shipping agents), local authorities and councils.

A significant benefit of PWCs is that of enhanced local networking. Although many members work and live locally they may not encounter one another on a regular basis. Therefore, PWCs offer an excellent opportunity for members to meet up and understand each other’s roles and responsibilities within the maritime community. This can be invaluable in times of crisis or even, for example, when trying to resolve seafarers’ access to shore leave. The MNWB sets aside an annual grant for PWCs to promote seafarers’ welfare activities within their own regions. In 2019 several organised awareness events were held throughout the UK to highlight the work of the local voluntary societies and raise awareness of seafarers.

The MNWB fully supports the ‘Fly the Red Ensign’ campaign because it not only helps raise the profile of the Merchant Navy but also the work of the maritime charities that provide such valuable welfare services to the serving and retired maritime communities. The Board also fully supports the Merchant Navy Fund; created by its previous Chief Executive, Captain David Parsons, in partnership with and administered by Seafarers UK.

www.mnwb.org
How To Take Part

1. Participation in this campaign is open to all, including individuals with their own flagpoles.

2. Please arrange for a Red Ensign to be flown on Thursday 3rd September 2020. Note that the Red Ensign may be freely flown ashore anywhere in the UK at any time of the year. For example, it is permissible for it be hoisted on or before Merchant Navy Day and/or left flying permanently.

3. If public gatherings are permitted organise a flag-hoisting ceremony, involving local dignitaries and VIPs, Merchant Navy veterans, Sea Cadets, etc. This does not have to be on Merchant Navy Day. For example, you may prefer to schedule your event for the preceding Friday or weekend!

Please feel free to read out the message from HRH The Earl of Wessex and Forfar, President of Seafarers UK, on page two of this guide.

4. Promote your event using local media and social media channels.

5. Arrange for photographs to be taken on the day. Please note that if the Red Ensign is being held for a photograph (e.g. prior to hoisting on a flagpole) it should be shown with the solid red to the right hand side.

6. Confirm your involvement by providing information to Seafarers UK, either online at www.merchantnavyday.uk or by completing a registration form that is available on request phone 020 7932 5986, email mnfund@seafarers.uk.

7. Your participation (excluding personal details) will be promoted on a ‘Roll of Honour’ on the Merchant Navy Day website at www.merchantnavyday.uk
Note: If you are already on the ‘Roll of Honour’ you do not need to register again, unless your contact details have changed.

8. Order a Red Ensign! These are available from many flag suppliers, including online sources. You may wish to consult the Flag Institute (www.flaginstitute.org) which provides advice on flag-flying protocol.

For this year’s ‘Fly the Red Ensign for Merchant Navy Day’ campaign our suggested supplier is Hampshire Flag Company, Unit 11, Pipers Wood Industrial Park, Waterberry Drive, Waterlooville, PO7 7XU. Phone 023 9223 7130. Email info@hampshireflag.co.uk. Website: www.hampshireflag.co.uk

9. On the day of your flag-hoisting use social media including Twitter (#MerchantNavyDay) to publicise your activity and be part of the national campaign.

10. Send a copyright-free photograph (high-resolution JPG please) to Seafarers UK - see back cover for contact details.
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Acknowledgements

Flags & Heraldry Committee “As Chairman of the Flags & Heraldry Committee it gives me great pleasure to support Fly the Red Ensign for Merchant Navy Day, 3rd September, to celebrate the ships, men and women that make up our Merchant Fleet and I would like to encourage all to take part in this important annual initiative.” Andrew Rosindell MP

NACO The National Association of Civic Officers supports Fly the Red Ensign for Merchant Navy Day.

Merchant Navy Association

Since 1989 the Merchant Navy Association has been seeking more recognition and respect for our seafaring veterans, life at sea and our maritime history. At that time many seafarers felt that after nearly 50 years since the end of WWII little was understood of the Merchant Navy and the suffering and sacrifice of thousands of wartime merchant seafarers.

Seafarers UK also extends thanks to members of independent Merchant Navy veterans’ groups, Royal British Legion branches and the Royal Fleet Auxiliary Association who get involved in this campaign to raise public awareness and, of course, those organisations and individuals who fly the Red Ensign every day of the year!

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