FLY THE RED ENSIGN
FOR MERCHANT NAVY DAY
3rd SEPTEMBER 2016
Message
from HRH The Earl of Wessex 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; I want to see local veterans and Sea Cadets involved, and I would implore civic leaders to be present, adding their own messages of support.

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!
Fly the Red Ensign
For Merchant Navy Day
3rd September 2016

Introduction
from Nick Harvey, Campaigns Manager, Seafarers UK

Merchant Navy Day, 3rd September, provides a perfect opportunity to show your support for the seafarers on which the UK depends by proudly flying the Red Ensign as publicly as you can, and for all to see.

Since the start of this century, 3rd September has been the UK’s designated Merchant Navy Day. The UK’s prosperity has of course been dependent on the Merchant Navy since the beginning of international trade. But only during the two World Wars did the British public realise that without merchant ships and brave seafarers, the UK would soon be starved of food and other essential supplies.

In recent years our island nation’s dependence on the Merchant Navy has actually increased. More than 90% of our imports are carried by ship, including half the food we eat. Without regular fuel imports our power stations would soon shut down. And with more sea ports than any other European country, we depend on the Merchant Navy to ship more than 75% of our exports.

That’s why we believe the debt we owe merchant seafarers should be publically recognised on 3rd September by flying the Red Ensign atop Town and Village Halls, Civic Centres, Museums, Libraries and other public buildings, and also on prominent flagstaffs wherever possible.

All Local Councils and Authorities taking part will be added to a Merchant Navy Day ‘Roll of Honour’ on our website and promoted via our PR and social media channels. We also expect national and local media to follow our campaign, which has attracted widespread and welcome support this year (see page 8).

We have made it easy for councils large or small to participate – please see page 7 of this guide. With your support we can make 3rd September truly a day to remember.
The British Merchant Navy

The Merchant Navy is the maritime register of the United Kingdom, and describes the sea-going commercial interests of UK-registered ships and their crews. Merchant Navy vessels fly the Red Ensign and are regulated by the Maritime and Coastguard Agency. King George V bestowed the formal title of ‘Merchant Navy’ on the British merchant shipping fleets — formerly known as the Mercantile Marine — following their vital service in the First World War.

As an entity in itself, the Merchant Fleet can be dated back to the 17th century, when an attempt was made to register all seafarers as a source of labour for the Royal Navy in times of conflict. That registration of merchant seafarers failed, and it was not successfully implemented until 1835. The Merchant Fleet grew over centuries to become the largest in the world, benefitting considerably from trade with British possessions in India and the Far East.

In the First and Second World Wars, the Merchant Fleets suffered heavy losses from German U-boat attacks. A policy of unrestricted warfare meant that merchant seafarers were at constant risk of attack from enemy ships and submarines. Nearly eight million tons were lost to U-boats in the First World War, and 14,661 merchant seafarers were killed. It was the effect of those casualties and their bereaved families - together with those from the Royal Navy and Fishing Fleets - which led to the formation in 1917 of King George's Fund for Sailors – now known as Seafarers UK.

When the UK entered the Second World War in September 1939 George VI issued this message: “In these anxious days I would like to express to all Officers and Men in The British Merchant Navy and The British Fishing Fleets my confidence in their unfailing determination to play their vital part in defence. To each one I would say: Yours is a task no less essential to my people's experience than that allotted to the Navy, Army and Air Force. Upon you the Nation depends for much of its foodstuffs and raw materials and for the transport of its troops overseas. You have a long and glorious history, and I am proud to bear the title Master of the Merchant Navy and Fishing Fleets.”

In the Second World War, German U-boats sank 2,828 Allied ships, amounting to nearly 14.7 million tons. The United Kingdom alone suffered the loss of 11.7 million tons, which was 54% of the total Merchant Navy fleet at the outbreak of the conflict. In that war, 32,000 merchant seafarers were killed – a higher casualty ratio than for any branch of the Armed Forces – but fighting alongside their Royal Navy escorts, the seafarers of the Atlantic convoys successfully imported enough supplies to allow an Allied victory.

Following many years of lobbying to bring about official recognition of the particular losses made by merchant seafarers in the World Wars and since, Merchant Navy Day was first recognised on 3rd September 2000.

In 2015, six Red Ensigns were flown on Tower Bridge in London
Seafarers UK is a charity that helps people in the maritime community by providing vital funding to support seafarers in need and their families. Seafarers UK does this by giving money 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 nearly £2.5 million to more than 70 maritime welfare charities and organisations.

As an ‘island nation’ we depend on our 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 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 their 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 or who has subsequently passed away that requires 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.

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 Seafarers UK is able to provide today and that last year gave hope and help to more than 170,000 seafarers and their families when they needed it most.

Merchant Navy Fund

The Merchant Navy Fund is a collaborative initiative by Seafarers UK and the Merchant Navy Welfare Board. Both organisations recognise that many people with a Merchant Navy background want to see their donations and legacies used specifically in support of British Merchant Navy seafarers and their families. The Merchant Navy Fund is administered by Seafarers UK (King George’s Fund for Sailors).
How To Take Part

1. Please arrange for the Red Ensign to be flown on a public building or prominent flagstaff on Saturday 3rd September 2016.

2. Organise a ‘flag-hoisting’ ceremony, involving local dignitaries and VIPs, Merchant Navy veterans, Sea Cadets, etc. Where possible this should be held in the morning on Merchant Navy Day. Promote the event using local media and social media channels. Arrange for photographs to be taken on the day. You may wish to read out the message from HRH The Earl of Wessex, President of Seafarers UK (see page 2).

3. Confirm your involvement by registering online at www.merchantnavyday.uk or by emailing the following information to nick.harvey@seafarers-uk.org
   - Name of Council (or other organisation)
   - Name of contact or co-ordinator
   - Contact email address
   - Contact phone number
   - Postal address
   - Location of building or flagstaff where the Red Ensign will be flown (please include a Postcode).

4. Order a Red Ensign. Red Ensigns are available from flag suppliers and online sources. You may wish to consult the Flag Institute (www.flaginstitute.org) who also provide advice on flag flying protocol. Please note that the Red Ensign can be flown in the UK on any day of the year. For ‘Fly the Red Ensign for Merchant Navy Day’ our preferred supplier is JW Plant & Co Ltd (http://the-flag-company.co.uk/merchant-navy-day), 39 Ashley Road, LEEDS, LS9 7AJ. Phone: 0113 248 0454. Email: Pauline@jwplant.co.uk. Red Ensigns may be ordered in a wide range of standard sizes. Examples (with costs including delivery but excluding VAT) are: 108” x 54” - £36.02  •  90” x 45” - £29.99  •  72” x 36” - £21.82. (Inglefield clips available at extra cost). Orders should be placed no later than 22nd July (for delivery in week commencing 22nd August).

Parish, Town and Community Councils: Please note that Seafarers UK may be able to cover the cost of a Red Ensign if funds are unavailable locally. To enquire please email mnfund@seafarers-uk.org or phone Carole Hunt on 020 7932 5986.

5. On Merchant Navy Day use social media including Twitter (#MerchantNavyDay) to publicise your involvement. Send a copyright-free photograph to Seafarers UK (see page 8 for contact details).

6. Merchant Navy Day provides an opportunity to raise funds for Seafarers UK’s Merchant Navy Fund (see page 6) that exists to support British Merchant Navy seafarers in need and their families. If you are able to support the charity in this way and require collecting tins, etc, please email mnfund@seafarers-uk.org or phone Carole Hunt on 020 7932 5986.
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.

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 fifty years since the end of WWII little was understood of the Merchant Navy and the suffering and sacrifice of thousands of wartime merchant seafarers.

Launched in 2004, the Federation of Merchant Mariners brought together associations and organisations connected to the Merchant Navy. Its aim was and is to gain recognition for the role merchant seafarers have played in the defence and development of our nation.

Seafarers UK is grateful to these organisations that are kindly promoting the ‘Fly the Red Ensign for Merchant Navy Day’ campaign to their members:

National Association of Local Councils
Local Government Association
London Councils
Scottish Community Councils

Contact
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