

THE MAGAZINE FOR MSSC SUPPORTERS

SEAFARER NEWS

Autumn 2023

ms-sc.org



THE RIGHT LANE?

A seafarer shares his journey, from navigating the Singapore Strait to coming ashore after years at sea

FILLING THE GAP

How Sea Cadets is helping to inspire and train the next generation of maritime professionals



FOSTERING GROWTH

A cadet and a seafarer on how their experiences have contributed to their personal growth

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Welcome to your autumn issue of *Seafarer News*. This time we bring you a career journey that has gone from sea to shore, with Marine Society's support, share the latest updates from Marine Society and find out what sea cadets have been up to. With the growing labour shortage in the maritime sector, we explain how Sea Cadets is helping to fill the gap with the next generation. As always, please share your feedback: seafarernews@ms-sc.org

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MSSC

MARINE SOCIETY & SEA CADETS

Published by MSSC

200b Lambeth Road
London SE1 7JY
Tel: 020 7654 7000
ms-sc.org
seafarernews@ms-sc.org
Marine Society and Sea Cadets is a registered charity:
England and Wales 313013
Scotland SC037808

Seafarer News is edited and designed by Our Media



Eagle House, Bristol BS1 4ST

Tel: 0117 927 9009

ourmedia.co.uk

Managing Editors (MSSC)

Denisa Costea, Thomas Saunders,
Oliver Hilliam

Editor Rachael Stiles

Senior Art Editor Steve Gotobed

Account Manager Ellen Wade

Director Julie Williams

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MSSC NEWS

A year in review

Marine Society and Sea Cadets hosted its Annual Court at Trinity House on 11 October, with a fantastic turnout of members, trustees and beneficiaries.

Our CEO, Martin Coles CBE, officially launched Marine Society's new apprenticeship promotional video, highlighting the five options on offer, along with a second new film promoting Junior Sea Cadets. This was followed by inspirational speeches by Able Cadet Sara of Southampton Unit, about her journey from joining Sea Cadets during lockdown to representing the charity at The King's Coronation, and Rachael Evans, who left the Royal Navy to find success in technology and banking, having overcome the challenges of being intersex.



The annual prize-giving also took place, with Edward Clarke winning the John William Slater Award, after building a new career in the offshore wind sector. Nazmus Sakib proudly received the Marine Society Career Progression award. This was in recognition of his successful transition from seafaring to maritime law with the Maritime & Coastguard Agency, having benefited from our new Sea to Shore placement scheme.

MARINE SOCIETY NEWS

Coming Ashore podcast launches new episodes



Marine Society has been hosting *Coming Ashore: The Podcast* since 2020 and it has proven to be a valuable resource as part of the Coming Ashore programme. Hosted by Karen Waltham,

Commissioner of the Maritime Skills Commission, the podcast has so far been an opportunity to introduce potential Coming Ashore mentees and other listeners to our mentors.

The podcast is now changing tack and will also be delving into the minds of maritime professionals from all walks of life, sharing their wisdom with our audience. The new podcast will be presented by Coming Ashore mentor Will Fuller, along with two operations managers at Carnival UK – Nathaniel Phelps and James Chalk. The first

three episodes put the spotlight on each presenter and their personal maritime journeys. Will is going to be sharing his experiences as a mentor, while all three will be going into detail about their path into the industry, and what led to them making the transition shoreside.

The podcast is available on Spotify, Google Podcasts, YouTube and Apple, and releases an episode monthly. Will, Nathaniel and James will be in your ears along with a special guest, discussing all things maritime, from the difficulties of coming ashore to sharing some amazing and unbelievable experiences at sea. The first episode is available now, along with all previous episodes. If you have any feedback or have someone in mind who would make a good guest (maybe it's you!) please email us at comingashore@ms-sc.org

Exploring the world through books

The Marine Society library service has had a very successful year, with a number of major corporate international sales, seeing major global book distributors Defisa (Malaysia) and Latunde (Nigeria) placing large orders. This reaffirms the importance of the variety on offer, covering all aspects of the maritime sector, fiction and non-fiction. A well-stocked library caters for a seafarer's work and wellbeing needs.

We also maintained contracts with the British Antarctic Survey and National Oceanography Centre, proudly stocking libraries on the RRS David Attenborough, among others.

"It's great we have such a wide range of books onboard, and to see the crew utilise this service regularly,"

says Graham Stringfellow, a Second Officer onboard the RRS Discovery. "It's a fantastic resource."



RRS David Attenborough

Apprenticeship focus at industry showcase



The biggest week in the maritime calendar, London International Shipping Week, took place in September and Marine Society

played an active role in its insightful programme of events across the capital.

From seminars to conferences, maritime organisations including Maritime UK and Trinity House hosted a number of illustrious guests. Marine Society's Director of Maritime Training and Development, Darrell Bate, and Head of Seafarer Learning and Welfare, Carla Rockson, attended events covering welfare, careers and diversity.

At the Maritime Careers and Opportunities event onboard THV Galatea, Marine Society's focus was on its apprenticeship programme, attracting significant corporate interest. Meanwhile, the Women in Maritime conference highlighted some key ways of addressing the gender imbalance in the industry, while supporting the women already working in the maritime sector.

SEA CADETS NEWS

Providing opportunities for all young people



Our outreach programme benefits young people from hard-to-reach backgrounds

Sea Cadets' outreach programme On The Water returned this summer, giving disadvantaged and vulnerable children aged 9–14 the opportunity to try a range of watersports, have fun, make friends and boost their confidence. Running from 24 July–25 August in Birmingham and London, hundreds of young people got free access to water-based activities and the chance to learn life skills through sailing, kayaking, windsurfing and canoeing.

Participants included children in care, disabled young people, children from low-income households and young carers. For many, it was the first time they had experienced something like this. We have been running On The Water since 2019, with fantastic feedback from the young people and their parents. One parent said: "My son has autism. I am so thankful to Sea Cadets for giving my child this opportunity. Seeing the pictures of him sailing made me so proud."



Cadets compete at the National Combined Regatta

On your marks..!

Sea Cadets from across the UK gathered at London's Royal Victoria Docks in September to compete in a range of waterborne activities for the National Combined Regatta. After months of training, cadets showcased their skills in sailing, rowing, kayaking and more, while meeting young people from different walks of life and making new friends.

Lt Cdr (SCC) RNR Jenny Avill, Area Recreation Officer for Eastern Area, was there. "The teamwork cadets learn here is a huge benefit," she says. "It's amazing to see cadets get on a bus with people they've never met and the immediate camaraderie between them," she explains. "They're all joining in and supporting each other – it's an amazing experience for them. I've got the best job seeing talented and passionate instructors train these cadets to the highest standard and help them fulfil their potential."

Trafalgar Day Parade

In October, cadets gathered in London for our annual event to mark the anniversary of the Battle of Trafalgar. Cdt LCpl Gurtej from Sutton Coldfield Unit took part for the first time, after five months of training: "I felt proud to be selected, excited to march down the famous route and nervous to represent my unit. Trafalgar Day is an important reminder of battles fought to keep us safe."



Cdt LCpl Gurtej led the band as Drum Major



ON THE RIGHT COURSE

Marine Society offers a wealth of support for seafarers. **Thomas Saunders from MSSC** talked to a recipient of that support about how the charity has helped his career

From a humble upbringing in the Polish seaport of Gdynia to the bustling city of London, Robert Szymeczko has flourished in the maritime sector, experiencing the full spectrum of benefits and drawbacks from being at sea and on shore, with the support of Marine Society along the way.

Since entering the industry in 2006, Robert has been an employee of BP, starting with a three-year cadetship that saw him boarding an array of sailing vessels and tall ships. He then moved to larger vessels including BP's first ship, VLCC British Pride, and a number of LNG carriers.

Eventually reaching the rank of Chief Officer, Robert decided to transition from sea to shore in January 2018, when he moved to the position of project lead for 52 vessels, working on compliance with newly introduced emissions regulations. Robert now works as a Marine Systems Advisor, with 17 years of maritime experience behind him and a portfolio to be proud of.

He highlights Marine Society's support and sponsorship of the Open University's Leadership and Management course, as part of the BP

Advanced Development Programme, as being key to succeeding in his studies and moving to a shoreside role.

"BP organised the advanced development programme that Marine Society supported," Robert explains. "The primary support I received from Marine Society was from Carla [Rockson, Head of Seafarer Learning and Welfare], who helped manage the study element of the programme with the Open University. Carla did a great job and was available in case I had any issues.

"I had no idea how to approach or arrange things, so the support from Marine Society was so valuable during this period. I didn't have to worry about anything, the process for applying to courses was all done for me."

An award-winning career

Robert was the recipient of the Marine Society Open University Studies Award, which he received for achieving his degree and doing so ahead of schedule. "Going to Trinity House and receiving an award for recognition of my achievements from Marine Society was a huge honour," says Robert.

‘The role that Marine Society has played in Robert’s maritime journey highlights the subtle yet lasting impact that the charity can have on a seafarer’s life’

Robert’s success in his career has predominantly been down to his hard work, determination and willingness to take risks. But the seeds were sown long before his career even started, with maritime being the core link between family members.

No less than three close members of his family have had fruitful careers in the industry. This meant that strong role models were naturally encouraging Robert to follow in their footsteps.

“Being from a port area, my family has a lot of maritime traditions,” he explains. “My father worked at sea as Chief Engineer and my grandad was at sea in the navy. My uncle also worked at sea as Second Engineer. So that hard-working maritime culture has been within me since I was a young child.”

Being at sea has its challenges, but one of the main positives according to Robert is the obvious career pathway. The hierarchy at sea doesn’t lead to any ambiguity about your next step, while the progression on shore is not always so obvious.

“It’s a very clear career path and it’s been set in stone for ages,” says Robert. “You know exactly what the next job role will be when you get a promotion, and the steps you need to take or qualifications you need to gain to make that jump.”

“I remember my first watch as a Third Officer – it was very stressful. I was traversing the Singapore



Robert accepting his Open University award

Strait, the busiest place in the world, navigation-wise, with so many ships passing. Third to Second Officer is quite a smooth transition, but Second to Chief Officer is a bigger jump. You suddenly become a manager and a leader, heading up a team of deck officers and deck crew.”

Moving ashore

Now happily on the dry side of maritime life, Robert opened up about the challenges of being at sea, admitting that working on the water had many benefits but the relentless nature of the work can become overwhelming at times.

“I am quite a positive person and I can’t claim that I ever suffered from depression on board,” he says. “However, I had situations where I was close to crying lying on my bed. You have people being put in danger, you have to deal with treacherous weather, difficult cargoes, very little rest. It all adds up and it can get too much.”

“But at BP, we had a helpline that was always available to us and we could even talk to a psychologist if we felt it was necessary. This gave staff the confidence to talk about their issues.”

Despite the relatively small role that Marine Society has played in Robert’s maritime journey, it highlights the subtle yet lasting impact that the charity can have on a seafarer’s life. Marine Society’s vision is for every current and future seafarer and maritime professional to be skilled for life, and that shows in the wide range of services available to our beneficiaries, from financial help to advice and support.

If you are a seafarer or maritime professional and need career guidance, are looking for a maritime course to further your development, or funding to support a qualification, please send an enquiry to learning@ms-sc.org



Checking position onboard LNG vessel British Innovator, departing Trinidad and Tobago

TRAINING TOMORROW'S MARITIME PROFESSIONALS



With the maritime sector experiencing record low numbers of seafarers and officers entering the industry, **Heather Williams**, Director of Sea Cadets Learning at MSSC, explains how Sea Cadets is helping to inspire and train the next generation

We want our young people to have the opportunity to access all the experiences that being a sea cadet or royal marines cadet offers. They can choose their own path through the many specialisations and proficiencies Sea Cadets offers, while building their CVs for the future. The Sea Cadets Experience gives young people the chance to explore different career pathways within the maritime sector, in addition to equipping them with the transferrable life skills they need to succeed in the workplace.

Cadets can gain accredited qualifications, including a BTEC Level 1 (SCQF Level 4) Certificate in Teamwork, Personal Skills and Citizenship, which provides recognition of the skills they gain through the Cadet Training Programme (CTP). Then they can work towards a BTEC Level 2 in Teamwork and Personal Development in the Community, which develops a wider variety of skills including communication, career planning, the value of volunteering and personal development.

Prepared for the future

The CTP for sea cadets and the Cadet Training Syllabus (CTS) for royal marines cadets start with

building the skills, knowledge and experience a young person needs to launch them for life. Like any positive youth development programme, our training has all been designed to support a cadet's personal growth. It will also develop many life skills, from fostering positive relationships and working effectively with others, to developing their own learning and ability to make informed positive decisions.

Many cadets also develop a love of the outdoors during their time with us, both on and off the water for sea cadets and in the field for our royal marines cadets.

The right support

We are lucky to have so many new and experienced volunteers who bring a wealth of knowledge, experience and passion to delivering the Sea Cadets Experience. Many cadets become instructors and bring this experience with them if they choose to stay on as a volunteer once they turn 18.

Our training is developed around building active and interactive sessions with hands-on elements throughout. Our training for working with young people encourages volunteers to bring their own creativity to support cadets in gaining skills and knowledge in an active and positive way.

Many cadets go on to have careers within the maritime sector and take up roles in every area you can imagine, including the merchant navy, Royal Navy and Royal Marines, the super yacht industry, port and harbour control, naval architecture, and ship and boat building. Others go into hospitality, engineering, digital, education, medical areas, army, air force and the emergency services.

Often, our young people are inspired by finding something they love during their time with Sea Cadets, and this sets them on a pathway to their future career.



PERSONAL GROWTH

From taking part in the King's Coronation to climbing the career ladder, a cadet and a seafarer share the experiences that have shaped them

THE SEAFARER VIEW: "WORKING AT SEA, I GET THE BEST OF ALL WORLDS"



**Chief Officer
Spencer Wyles**

I quite often get asked, if I hadn't pursued a career in the merchant navy, what would I be doing? I genuinely don't know. After all, what other career gives so much? I love my job, especially since being promoted to Chief Officer.

I have had a career of many challenges, which have all made me the person I am.

The ever-changing environment of being at sea is so rewarding, from joining a new ship to sailing a new route. Also, the sea itself changes so quickly, constantly bringing new challenges for seafarers to face and learn from.

The work is so varied that it offers mini-glimpses of other paths not taken. Where else are you a firefighter one day, a paramedic the next, then a helicopter landing officer,

before driving a ship alongside or conducting extensive maintenance or repairs, like a builder or welder might?

If I worked ashore, I'd hopefully still have a job that required various skills, maybe as a police officer, firefighter or paramedic. But working at sea, I get the best of all worlds. One never wishes for a fire or medical emergency, but I have enjoyed the extensive training, without the associated tragedy. I might have said airline pilot, but I don't like flying, and I think there are probably far fewer wildlife encounters in the air!

At sea, each rank helps the one below to achieve all that is required to reach the next step up, and, in turn, we all bring one another up as we grow and develop our working lives. Luckily for cadets, when you join at the lowest rung on the promotion ladder, you get the most opportunities to achieve your personal goals.

So, what would I be doing if I didn't work at sea? I think I'll save that for my retirement.

THE CADET VIEW: "SEA CADETS SHAPED ME INTO THE YOUNG PERSON I AM TODAY"



**AC Sara (17),
Southampton
Unit**

Since joining Sea Cadets, I have grown stronger in my identity. I have developed leadership skills, discipline and confidence from attending courses and parade nights at my unit. I have met people from a variety of backgrounds and units across the

UK, developing life-long friendships with my peers. Sea Cadets has offered me a variety of

experiences both on and off the water, I have gained qualifications in boating and have had the opportunity to attend many parades.

These experiences have helped me to gain a greater understanding of military life, as well as opening my mind to the many career opportunities that Sea Cadets offer. The opportunity to participate as a flag bearer in the King's Coronation was an incredible experience that I would never have dreamed I'd be able to take part in.

It is opportunities like this that have helped shape me into the young person I am today.



WE NEED YOU TO HELP TRANSFORM YOUNG LIVES!



Thousands of young people are on the waiting list to join Sea Cadets. Many thousands more would benefit enormously from the skills, teamwork and sense of adventure you could help them develop.

- **Become a volunteer:** Ensure young people can receive our support in navigating life's challenges and seizing its opportunities. Use your existing seafarer skills in a flexible volunteering role that can fit around your other commitments.
- **Become an instructor:** You could be providing life-changing learning experiences or hours of fun on the water.
- **Become a local unit trustee:** Even if you have limited time, you can help to raise vital funds and build community partnerships.

We believe that our volunteers are on the same journey of growth and development as our cadets. And you don't need to be an 'expert' or have a military background. With the backing of your local unit and the National Support Centre, you'll be able to access everything you need to thrive in your chosen role – from advice and training to recognised qualifications.

If you want to boost your CV while improving the lives of young people near you, we'd love to hear from you. Please contact your local unit or fill in our online form at sea-cadets.org/volunteer

The best thing about being a Sea Cadets volunteer is...

"Instructing powerboating and participating in events, camps and offshore voyages."
ROSYTH VOLUNTEER

"Supporting young people with different needs and backgrounds."
CROYDON VOLUNTEER

"Meeting new people, being part of a community and having fun. And the sense of pride when you help cadets achieve a challenging goal."
PORTSMOUTH VOLUNTEER