



# FLY THE RED ENSIGN

FOR MERCHANT NAVY DAY  
3rd SEPTEMBER 2017



# FLY THE RED ENSIGN

FOR MERCHANT NAVY DAY  
3rd SEPTEMBER 2017

## MESSAGE

from HRH The Earl of Wessex KG, GCVO



BAGSHOT PARK

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.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Edw'.

HRH The Earl of Wessex KG, GCVO



© 2013 The Royal Household Bagshot Park/Imago by Millie Pilkington  
only to be reproduced with permission





# FLY THE RED ENSIGN

FOR MERCHANT NAVY DAY  
3rd SEPTEMBER 2017

## FOREWORD

from Admiral The Right Honourable The Lord West of Spithead GCB, DSC, PC

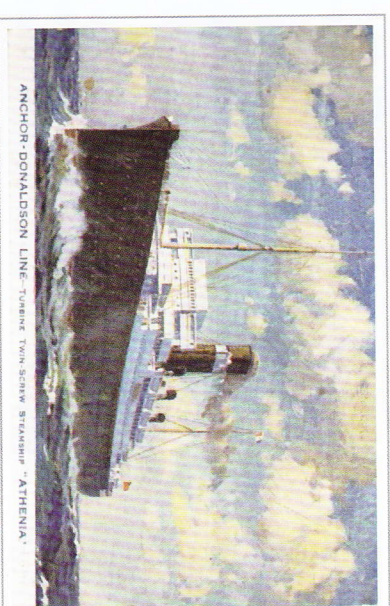
While many people know that the 3rd of September 1939 marked the outbreak of the Second World War, few are aware that it also marks the first major British maritime casualty, the merchant vessel SS Athenia, torpedoed just a few hours after hostilities were declared, with the loss of 128 passengers and 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!



*West of Spithead*





# FLY THE RED ENSIGN

FOR MERCHANT NAVY DAY  
3rd SEPTEMBER 2017

## 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 much of the food we eat. Without regular fuel imports our power stations would soon shut down. And with more sea ports and harbours 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 Navy 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 flagpoles 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 back cover).

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

The Lord Mountevans, Alderman  
Jeffrey Evans, Lord Mayor,  
City of London, 2016



# FLY THE RED ENSIGN

FOR MERCHANT NAVY DAY  
3rd SEPTEMBER 2017

## THE MERCHANT NAVY & FISHING FLEET LOSSES IN THE FIRST WORLD WAR

by John Sall, National Chairman, Merchant Navy Association

The mercantile marine, as it was termed in those times, played a significant and often critical role throughout the First World War, much the same as it would two decades later. In both World Wars, Merchant Navy seafarers and fishermen fought the enemy, the weather and the seas to keep the nation and the Armed Services supplied and able to defend themselves.

Their way of life and conditions of service were austere, with seafarers often not returning home for over two years, some having been sunk, survived and transferred to other ships to maintain those lines of support.

During the First World War, attacks on merchant and fishing vessels began quite slowly but increased significantly as the enemy sought to blockade Great Britain. In 1914 and 1915 a total of 342 merchant vessels were lost to enemy action with 2,471 men, women and boys losing their lives. During 1916 there were 396 ships lost and 1,217 seamen killed. In the following year the losses were so severe that the ships being built could not match the number of ships being lost in action, with six ships a day being sunk in some weeks.

The loss of life was increasing significantly. It was so severe that if the rate of losses of ships and men had continued, the war would have been lost. No food, no fuel, no wood, no arms and ammunition - especially some of the 91 million shells that were eventually produced and transferred by sea. The losses had to be decreased and this was achieved by the introduction of the Convoy System in 1917.

The total recorded losses for the First World War were 2,479 ships and 14,287 seamen, plus 675 vessels of the Fishing Fleet and 434 seamen. There were many more seafarers who died ashore and were not commemorated. They actually had to die at sea to be commemorated. Merchant Navy seafarers were also off pay when their ships were sunk!

The men, women and boys who were lost at sea during the First World War included lads such as Redan Sydney Jeffries (aged 13) of Lowestoft, presumed drowned on 24th October 1917. Redan was a cook aboard the fishing vessel Vanguard. More than 29 boy seamen aged only 14 lost their lives for their King and Country.

At the other end of the scale were men long overdue for retirement who insisted on 'doing their bit' and who paid the ultimate sacrifice. Men such as Patrick Casey, aged 73, killed when the SS Dotterel was sunk by a mine off the French coast on 29th November 1915.

They were the forgotten heroes - their lines of support were never broken.





## FLY THE RED ENSIGN

FOR MERCHANT NAVY DAY  
3rd SEPTEMBER 2017



## SEAFARERS UK

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. In 2016 Seafarers UK gave 94 grants totalling over £2.5 million to more than 70 maritime charities and organisations.

As an 'island nation' we depend on our seafarers to defend our shore, 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.

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 over 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, connection or empathy want to see their donation and legacies used specifically in support of British Merchant Navy seafarers and their families.

In 2016 Merchant Navy Fund grants exceeded £170,000, improving quality of life for those who have served or are currently serving at sea. The Merchant Navy Fund is administered by Seafarers UK (King George's Fund for Sailors). For further information visit the website: [www.merchantnavyfund.org](http://www.merchantnavyfund.org)

