



# FLY THE RED ENSIGN

FOR MERCHANT NAVY DAY  
3rd SEPTEMBER 2018



CHIPPENHAM  
TOWN  
COUNCIL



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## **MESSAGE**

from HRH The Earl of Wessex KG, GCVO, CD, ADC(P)



### **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.

**HRH The Earl of Wessex KG, GCVO**



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## FOREWORD

by 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*



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## INTRODUCTION

by 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. 95% of our imports are carried by ship, including half of the food we eat. Without regular fuel imports our power stations would soon shut down. And with more sea ports and harbours and a longer coastline 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



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

by John Sail, 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 Merchant Navy Association (MNA) has been seeking more recognition for seafaring veterans since 1989. MNA branches around the UK support the 'Fly the Red Ensign for Merchant Navy Day' campaign by organising their own flag-hoisting events or attending ceremonies organised by local councils. The Dumfries Branch is one of the most active, arranging for a Red Ensign to be flown on 14 public buildings and even a local hotel!





## 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 2017 Seafarers UK gave 70 grants totalling over £3 million to maritime charities and organisations.

As an 'island nation' we 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 will be facing problems of very different kinds; long periods of separation from friends and family, shifts on 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 100,000 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 donations, 'in memory' gifts 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) and donations large or small are always appreciated. For further information please visit the website at [www.merchantnavyfund.org](http://www.merchantnavyfund.org)



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## HOW TO TAKE PART

1. Please arrange for a Red Ensign to be flown on a civic/public/historic/landmark building or prominent flagpole on Monday 3rd September 2018. Note that the Red Ensign may be freely flown ashore anywhere in the UK at any time of year. For example it is permissible for it to be flown on Merchant Navy Day and for the whole of the following week.
2. 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 wish to organise your event on the preceding Friday. You may wish to read out the message from HRH The Earl of Wessex, President of Seafarers UK, on page two of this guide. Promote your event using local media and social media channels. Arrange for photographs to be taken on the day. Please note that if the Red Ensign is being held for a photograph (i.e. not hoisted on a flagpole) it should be shown with the solid red to the right hand side.
3. Confirm your involvement by providing information to Seafarers UK, either online at [www.merchantnavyday.uk](http://www.merchantnavyday.uk) or by completing the registration form that is available on request from Seafarers UK. Your participation (excluding personal details) will be promoted on the 'Roll of Honour' on the Merchant Navy Day website.
4. Order a Red Ensign. Red Ensigns are available from many flag suppliers, including online sources. You may wish to consult the Flag Institute ([www.flaginstitute.org](http://www.flaginstitute.org)) which also provides advice on flag-flying protocol.

For this year's Fly the Red Ensign for Merchant Navy Day campaign our preferred supplier is Hampshire Flag Company, Unit 11, Pipers Wood Industrial Park, Waterberry Drive, Waterlooville, PO7 7XU. Phone 02392 237130, email [info@hampshireflag.co.uk](mailto:info@hampshireflag.co.uk), website [www.hampshireflag.co.uk](http://www.hampshireflag.co.uk)

Red Ensigns may be ordered in a wide range of standard sizes. Quality woven polyester example prices (including UK mainland delivery but excluding VAT) are:

- 108"x54" (274cm x 137cm or 3 yard) - £45.71
- 90"x45" (229cm x 114cm or 2½ yard) - £35.30
- 72"x36" (183cm x 91cm or 2 yard) - £28.00

(These are special offer prices; please quote 'HFlag REnsign' when ordering).

Hand waving flags (pack of 10) are available from Hampshire Flag Company at a cost of £14.94 including UK mainland delivery (plus VAT).

5. On the day of your flag-hoisting and/or ceremony use social media including Twitter (#MerchantNavyDay) to publicise your activity. Send a copyright-free photograph (high-resolution JPEG please) to Seafarers UK (see back cover for contact details).
6. Merchant Navy Day provides an opportunity if you wish to raise funds for Seafarers UK's Merchant Navy Fund, that exists to support British Merchant Navy seafarers in need and their families. If you are able to assist the charity in this way and require collecting tins, etc, please email [mnfund@seafarers.uk](mailto:mnfund@seafarers.uk) or phone Carole Hunt on 020 7932 5986.



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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS



National Association of Local Councils



Local Government Association



London Councils



Scottish Community Councils



**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.



The Merchant Navy Association

### 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.



Paraspe in Meris - Avilis

### Federation of Merchant Mariners

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 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!

### Contact

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