



When I was aloft the other day, I unearthed my '1st Trip Journal' buried amongst a collection of archived MN related textbooks.

In 1974, all deck cadets were expected to compile a record of their work experiences during their 1st trip. I don't remember if this was an MNTB requirement but my CTO – P.J.Lannin – took it seriously and he expected all deck cadets in the CTU to write about a hundred words in their Journal every day.

My recollection was that our daily schedule had 30 minutes set aside for this task and once a week we had to hand over the Journal to the CTO for his inspection and comment.

Over the next few months I will transcribe my Journal word-for-word, spelling mistakes and all, and publish it here. It was written with an expectation that it would never be seen again – we all thought that writing it was a chore and a bit of a waste of time - but nearly 40 years on, today's deck cadets may be curious to compare the work experiences of a 17 year old 1<sup>st</sup> trip cadet in 1974 with their own experiences in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Belated thanks to CTO Lannin for ensuring we religiously maintained a Journal throughout our 1<sup>st</sup> Trip – this record only exists because of his regular checks that we were writing something and for his 'encouragement' whenever we fell behind.

In 1974 the RFA had more than 30 ships. At that time I think the oldest vessel in the fleet was RFA Brown Ranger, laid down in 1939. Luckily my first ship was the relatively new RFA Olwen A122 - a fast steam turbine fleet tanker that was only 10 years old. During my 1<sup>st</sup> trip she was under the command of Capt. G Harcombe and later Capt. JGM Coull.



My Journal starts on 24<sup>th</sup> October 1974, after a 2 week pre-sea phase in the first half of October at Riversdale College in Liverpool where we did basic sea safety training and were given our 'correspondence course' and essential text books for Phase-1.

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**24<sup>th</sup> – 27<sup>th</sup> October 1974 – RFA Olwen at Devonport.**

Arrived at Devonport at 14:00 and RFA Olwen was at Yonderberry Jetty. Five cadets boarded via liberty boat at 14:20 and we were shown to our cabins and left to settle in. Later, during the evening we were given a brief talk on the RAS procedures by the Cadet Training Officer.

Oct-25<sup>th</sup>: At 08:10 the cadets were given an introduction to RFA Olwen by the CTO and this was followed by a talk by Chief Officer Mr. Lench. The scheduled introduction to Captain Harcombe was postponed.

Oct-26<sup>th</sup>: 08:05: ship terminology was explained by the CTO and later a lecture on safety aboard ship was given. This was followed by a check of each cadet's emergency and lifeboat stations. BOAT 4, EMERG 1. Shore leave granted (Cawsand).

Oct-27<sup>th</sup>: (Time change) 09:15 an introduction to Rule of Road and we were informed of other reading assignments for Sunday Nov. 3<sup>rd</sup>.

24<sup>th</sup> to 27<sup>th</sup> ADDITIONAL NOTES: told about ullages and given demonstration by senior cadet.

**28<sup>th</sup> October 1974 – RFA Olwen at Devonport.**

08:05: Commenced on linen duty tasks and was instructed by Purser on how to make a DTI bed. Completed at 08:45. Proceeded to RAS Control Room where the Chief Officer explained in more detail about the various fuels carried aboard such as FFO – DIESO – AVCAT. Mr. Lench also explained the various pieces of equipment in the RAS area. He also talked about the importance of knowing the specific gravity and temperature of the fuels being carried. After the morning coffee break at 10:35, cadets in the Port Group went below to Number One deck and clearly marked each tank top with the correct number: ie: 4 centre, 3 port etc.

13:10 Port group given study period. I worked on Project number two:- longitudinal section of ship showing all "spaces"

18:38 Introduction to signals.

**29<sup>th</sup> October 1974 – RFA Olwen at Devonport.**

08:10 Reported to Chief Officer and continued the explanation of the cargo, He was extremely helpful in explaining to me the equipment in the RAS. After this, I proceeded to the flight deck with the First Officer to assist in putting a new refuelling nozzle on the helicopter hose.

10:35 Chief Officer requested that certain tanks were closed as FFO was to be pumped aboard.

11:00 I made an unsuccessful bid to repair the portable telephone cord from the flight area. It is possible that the cord was fractured in more than one area.

13:15 Proceeded to Quality Control Room to wash down bulkheads and deck in order to prepare it for priming.

15:10 Primed with red admar the bare metal areas. Completed at 16:10  
Assisted in moving ships stores from midships to fo'castle. Completed at 17:05

Studies during evening.

### **30<sup>th</sup> October 1974 – RFA Olwen at Devonport.**

08:10 Reported to CTO and 4 cadets proceeded to hangar to clean bulkheads. Scrubbed and then clean wiped bulkheads and completed 75% of the designated area by 11:50

13:10 Two cadets reported to the Third Officer and we went to HM Dockyard by liberty boat. Selected 12 films from library and then proceeded to stores for 1 stretcher. Headed back to the ship on the 15:35 liberty boat via RFA TIDEFLOW which was preparing to cast off the buoy. The Third Officer gave a brief explanation of the cast off method and the duty of the tug. Arrived on the Olwen at 16:05 and went to CTO who sent me to fetch bulbs from electrical workshop. After several attempts I met with success !

19:00 Made a plan of focsle and poop mooring equipment and on completion studied signal flags.

### **October 31<sup>st</sup> 74 – RFA Olwen at Devonport.**

08:10 Reported to the Chief Officer and later I was asked to take ullages and temperature of number one wing tanks which contained FFO. When the job was successfully completed we watched the 36' workboat being lowered.

11:00 Went with the First Officer to check the topping off of number 5 wings and then to see number 6 tank start filling.

13:15 Cadets of Port Watch were given an interesting walk around the fuel depot and we were shown the pump rooms, laboratory where some tests like flash points were carried out and the general tank layout.

15:10 returned to the ship and read sections of BR875 about cargo and quality control.

18:30 Explanation of mooring and berthing by the CTO in preparation for 07:00 Monday departure. (This evenings talk was sprinkled with humour which was good and it helped in remembering certain points).

### November 1<sup>st</sup> 74 – RFA Olwen at Devonport.

08:10 Commenced with cabin and classroom clean which was successfully completed at 09:55

Cadets changed to dress uniform for a group photograph on the flight deck at 10:30.



10:55 Brief lecture on the Plimsoll Mark and the freeboard. All proceeded to focsle to read the draft of the ship ( 31' 9") We were given an explanation of mooring equipment.

13:05 Two cadets on loading duties. We had to take regular samples of lub.oil to check for sediment.

Assisted in changing hose from oil barge and began to load centre oil tank at approx. 14:30

16:30 Worked with Third Officer on fire hoses and put new 100ft. total lengths in flight deck area. Also 5 @ 60ft on 01 deck.

Evening studied Rule of Road and lesson 2 navigation.

**November 2<sup>nd</sup> 74 – RFA Olwen at Devonport.**

The early watch of 04:00 to 07:00 was cancelled due to pump failure on oil refuelling barge.

08:10 Proceeded with personal study after cleaning classroom. At 09:20 an individual test was given to each cadet and it involved knowing Rule One of R.o.R, safety procedures, tank layout and the ship's draft!

09:45 Began study of Rule Two and continued with learning of signal flags. Also practiced my morse code for own personal use.

Navig. lesson two.

The afternoon was given off so cadets were allowed to go ashore, some to get haircuts.

**November 3<sup>rd</sup> 74 – RFA Olwen at Devonport.**

Went through record books and correspondence course with CTO. marked off various tasks which had been completed ( Total 14 )

Proceeded with personal study for rest of the morning and during afternoon went to TORPOINT and got delayed in the rain, making myself and another cadet 15min. late for evening meal.

Evening: had an early night in preparation for an early call.

**November 4<sup>th</sup> 74 – Devonport to Portland.**

06:30 At harbour stations with two other cadets on the focsle and watched casting off procedure ( letting go of springs, headlines etc ).

09:00 After casting off the Port tug, proceeded to fasten down stores in the centrecastle.

10:35 Went to Emergency Station for a check off the breathing apparatus and accessories.

13:20 Weighed off anchor in order to prepare for slipping on to buoy A3 in Portland.

15:00 Line boat and crew shackle up starboard chain to buoy followed by port side slips being used also.

18:30 Evening lecture on lowering lifeboats, and lifeboat equipment, in preparation for a morning exercise.

**November 5<sup>th</sup> 74 – Portland.**

08:10 until 11:00

cadets checked and lowered lifeboats 1 – 3 and 5 so as to be familiar with the procedures involved (gripes, tricing pendants etc).

11:00 Took out hand propelled boat for half an hour and then raised and secured it.

13:00 A practical demonstration and lecture on inflatable liferafts and the equipment contained within them.

14:15 A film on sabotage and correct actions to take when there is suspicion of such.

15:30 Cadets took out one of the motorised lifeboats and later “pulled” it using oars. Returned alongside at 16:15 and after hauling up - winch failures - the boat was hand cranked the final 12 feet. Gripes fastened and secured at 17:18

Evening film shown on Security which was quite relevant and to the point.

**November 6<sup>th</sup> 74 – Portland.**

06:30 Two cadets stationed on the bridge and I was given task of writing up the bridge log ie: putting down all orders relevant to ships movements. Relieved at 08:00 and proceeded to study and correspondence course work (navigation -2)

12:21 Returned to bridge and continued duty of keeping the bridge log (engine movements etc)

13:15 A short introduction to refuelling rigs and the colour codes used.

14:30 Lecture on firefighting equipment and techniques involved.

15:18 Emergency station and “fire” on RAS deck. Obvious hitches resulted as the hoses were all incorrectly rolled up and thus valuable time lost. The “fire” was eventually extinguished and I’m sure everyone will be on their toes next time. Hoses correctly stowed and exercise complete at 16:00.

Evening lecture on RAS, jackstay etc.

**November 7<sup>th</sup> 74 – Portland.**

06:45 Two cadets on the bridge and we were shown some of the equipment that was tested prior to sailing. At approx. 07:30 and the ship set sail. During the morning I plotted courses of ships in the immediate area on the radar. It was interesting to see how each manoeuvred in respect with the other.

13:15 Preparation for RAS and we watched HMS Rothesay approach on radar. After 'messenger' line across etc there was a personal transfer. This ship then let go and re-approached for fuel transfer. It was not successful due to ATW failure.

15:20 Cabin clean.

21:50 On the bridge as the ship was preparing to anchor and operated the telegraph.

22:30 After meeting the "staff boat" we secured for the day.

**November 8<sup>th</sup> 74 – Portland.**

07:30 On gangway duties and had to prepare for staff boat to come alongside (pilot ladder etc).

09:00 Preparation for RAS with Gold Rover and the first job was assisting with the distance line.

11:15 Set up light jackstay for personel transfer and we all took the weight on the line. The transfer was successful. End 11:48

12:30 RAS stations once again and each cadet in Port Group spent a little time in the winch cab so as to have some idea of the operation.

16:00 Harbour stations but there was a delay due to capstan brake problems. Finally the cable was attached to the buoy and there was an unfortunate incident with the First Officer.

The liberty boat came alongside and picked up personel at 17:10

Evening used for personal study – Rule Three.

**November 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> 74 – Portland.**

07:55 Two cadets on CABA which involves checking of breathing apparatus. We checked the pressure of the sets and the 11 spare 'bottles'.

The daily task also involves a check of the flashlights and similar.

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09:45 Checked on Rule Two and Signal flags. I passed but I knew myself that I must understand it more.

14:00 Went ashore to get uniform problems cleared but Gieves was shut.

Nov.10<sup>th</sup> 74

08:55 Routine CABA check of all equipment.

10:00 Talked with several Radio Officers about amateur radio etc and it proved to be an interesting talk.

10:15 Record book and correspondence course check with CTO.

### **November 11<sup>th</sup> 74 – Portland.**

08:00 daily CABA check followed by some rope work and splicing. At 10:42 the introduction to wire splicing by the Bosun's Mate was interrupted by harbour stations (foul weather delayed scheduled 0800 departure). Worked on focsle and assisted with various ropes and wires.

14:00 The Minerva approached for RAS on Port side but the first attempt was unsuccessful. Later HMS Minerva and RCN Huron approached and were successfully replenished (finish 15:24). My job was on the distance line. In the final replenishment two cadets were in the winch cabs carefully watching the procedure and techniques involved. After this we all helped in tidying up the deck in preparation for further RAS.

17:00 Ship "blacked out" for the duration of the convoy exercise.

### **November 12<sup>th</sup> 74 – Portland.**

Slumberland was interrupted by a 01:10 call as the anchor party was required Fwd. The port anchor was dropped at 02:00 with six shackles in the water. Completed duties at 02:40 and it was good to get out of the whistling wind!

07:30 Gangway duties. 08:19 CABA check. Studied 'morse' until 11:20

12:40 Commenced "closing" up the ship for 'Operation Awkward' and then tended pilot ladder. 15:20 Started measuring and sewing up a canvas nozzle cover for flight deck. By 16:30 it was about 1/3<sup>rd</sup> completed.

At 20:30 RAS stations were called and the cadets on deck controlled the distance line. It was not until 23:35 that 25 (German) and Nubian cast off us. We then coiled up the line and secured for the day.

**November 13<sup>th</sup> 74 – Portland.**

(25 miles off Scilly Isles at 12 noon.)

08:00 Daily CABA check. Also opening of air vent on monkey island. Continued task of sewing up canvas hose cover, one of which was completed by 12:00. Both were fitted on the respective nozzles on the flight deck.

15:18 Cabin clean and finished at 16:45

The scheduled evening RAS was called off due to poor weather conditions and high seas. However all hands were on standby in case required.

The thought of sleep was overcome by the motion of the ship and in all it was a waste of time!

**November 14<sup>th</sup> 74 – Portland.**

The scheduled 08:00 RAS was postponed but replenishment with F-75 did take place at approx. 09:00. The cadets handled the distance line and also went to see the operations in the winch cabs. After the replenishment I continued the regular CABA check and finished the morning with one hour of study.

13:01 Wire splicing with Bosun's Mate and we finished two splices which turned out reasonably well.

17:30 Anchor party called and my duties included attending the pilot ladder and getting all the equipment ready. The liberty boat came along the starboard side and personnel were safely transferred.

**November 15<sup>th</sup> 74 – Portland.**

08:04 Daily CABA check, after which all hands stood by for emergency Stations. There were two 'fires' to extinguish and boundary cooling was necessary. The exercise finished at 09:55 and all equipment was stowed away. At 10:45 three cadets assisted with the library after which harbour stations were called and we took up duties on the focsle. The afternoon replenishment with HMS Nubian went off well with better weather condition and final replenishment with Gold Rover went off without difficulty. we secured from RAS stations and put all gear away by 18:20.

A man overboard exercise was held at 13:00 and it clearly showed the need for rapid action as the ship took about 18 mins. to complete the Williamson Turn. During rough weather it would be almost impossible to see the person in the water. Gemini recovered.

**November 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> (Sat and Sun) 1974 – Portland.**

08:01 CABA check and today we had to put equipment back properly as it had been incorrectly stowed after yesterday's fire exercise. Also it appears that "bottle" 8 is faulty.

09:00 Rule of the Road check and also signals and record book etc. After this I continued with my project work and number three is now ½ completed. At 15:00 Anchor Stations was piped and we prepared to secure to the buoy inside the breakwater. The anchor chain was broken and the anchor was hung off.

By 16:30, both port and starboard chains were secured to the buoy and the anchor party stood down.

Nov. 17<sup>th</sup>

CABA check after which I proceeded to study and worked on correspondence course.

**November 18<sup>th</sup> 74 – Portland.**

08:10 Worked on the focsle as RFA Olwen slipped from the buoy. The operation went off smoothly and when the ship was outside the breakwater she commenced on trials. (SIGS.PP2). After the routine CABA check, the cadets in Port Watch worked on the 25' cutter and the 'workboat', scrubbing and cleaning them up generally. We secured for lunch at 11:45.

At 13:01 all cadets continued clean up the boats until RAS stations were called. Replenishment with Van-Galen, Rothesay and Hamburg was successful and we secured at 16:15. At 17:15, three cadets worked on the focsle and we finally lowered the starboard anchor at 17:40 (5 shackles on deck),

During the evening the cadets arranged their own meeting and we formed a "discussion group".

**November 19<sup>th</sup> 74 – Portland.**

At 07:40 I proceeded ashore on the staff boat and I purchased some 'sweaters' for the Captain, Chief Officer and also the Chief Engineer. At the same time I was able to straighten out my own uniform problems.

13:30 All cadets continued cleaning up of boats and also the man-overboard procedures. At 15:00 there was a light jackstay rigged and also three cadets 'broke' the anchor cable in preparation for 'Towex' with HMS Rothesay. The actual towing exercise finished at 17:00. We had an evening lecture on the compass, after which we stood by for the harbour station call at 23:00.

We secured for the day at 00:01 when the port anchor was lowered and when we were stood down.

### **November 20<sup>th</sup> 74 – Portland.**

At 07:25 I took up my harbour station on the bridge, operating the telegraph and REV.TEL. as well as keeping the movements log. After we were away on passage my duty was to 'lookout' for nearby vessels and we were able to put our newly gained knowledge of the compass into operation. We were stood down at 11:25 as HMS Hardy prepared for replenishment. In RASCO I was shown how to keep the RAS log and what information to put in it. The stern RAS finished at 12:06. after 45 tons of DIESO had been transferred. Then all cadets worked in the boats and they are at last looking much better – and during clean up, a fire exercise took place but the fires were quickly extinguished. At 17:00 RAS stations were called and two cadets were in RASCO keeping records of operations. The RAS was severely delayed due to hose line parting off Van-Galen and HMS Rothesay had difficulty connecting the probe. Concluded at 19:15 and FLYEX was cancelled.

### **November 21<sup>st</sup> 74 – Portland.**

07:25 Two cadets on the bridge and today I 'kept' the movements log. Also O started taking a more careful note of equipment for my project. AT 09:30 we started the CABA check and we found it necessary to change all sets except for two, after yesterday's exercise. 10:35:- Began setting out a RAS record book for fuel transfers. At 12:45 worked on bridge, operating telegraph and keeping Ops.book. RAS stations were called at 13:55 and we were relieved from the bridge. Our RAS duties were in RASCO and we kept the record book, noting times of Romeo C.U, hose connections etc. After a light jackstay transfer we were stood down.

(Harbour Stations was not necessary as the ship stayed out, thru-out the night).

### **November 22<sup>nd</sup> 74 – Portland.**

08:05 Routine CABA check which was followed by a stern RAS. with the Gold Rover. (no fuel was pumped because the hose line parted). The serial was cancelled by 09:30 and the next exercise began at 10:15

Two cadets were on the bridge and we kept the movements book as well as keeping a careful lookout on the "Dan Buoy". We were stood down at 11:55 and after lunch, all cadets started to unload all the lifeboats. The amount of supplies in them was quite astounding, ranging from a compass to boxes of barley sugar. Two boats were completely finished and only one was not started.

(Portsmouth and Rosythe)

**November 23<sup>rd</sup> and 24<sup>th</sup> 74 – Portland.**

08:05 This morning's daily task was that of checking the lifeboat engines and also the fire pump. All worked quite well but the fire pump in the fore peak would not pump well against a strong back pressure. We also fired up the Emergency Generator as well as the sonar winch. After completing the task, we finished de-storing the lifeboat equipment and lashed down all the oars and strongbacks.

Nov 24<sup>th</sup> 74

09:05 Checked and sampled Avcat, testing it for water and sediment. We found that tank 3 CENTRE contained about  $\frac{3}{4}$ " water in the bottom as it turned the hydropaste distinctly from green to violet.

**November 25<sup>th</sup> 74 – Portland.**

08:05 Daily Avcat fuel checks and three centre contains about an inch of water. After this, I went on to study but this was postponed and after going thru Rule 4, two cadets had to work with the First Officer and we checked all the spare lifejackets out of which 12 were good and 41 bad. We finished this after lunch and during the afternoon harbour stations were called several times. We finally sailed for Portsmouth at approx. 15:00.

I continued working with the first officer, this time stocktaking all the different types of chairs aboard. At 17:00 we still hadn't finished the after part of the ship.

RFA Olwen arrived outside Portsmouth at 19:30 and here she anchored.

**November 26<sup>th</sup> 74 – Portsmouth.**

08:04 Quality Control of Avcat and today 3C shows no trace of water at all. On finishing the Quality Control, we rigged the gangway and then at 10:30 we released the tug which was secured to the Port Beam.

11:03 Continued taking stock of chairs and finished the After Accomodation Areas.

At 13:00 all cadets worked with lifeboats and four old vessels were towed away while four new fibreglass boats were brought alongside and hoisted up after severe problems with the winch. The gripes etc were not fixed on due to lack of light; thus tomorrow's schedule is already partly revealed !

**November 27<sup>th</sup> 74 – Portsmouth.**

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08:05 Quality Control of Avcat; again the dip revealed that about one inch of water was in the bottom of the tank ( 3C )

08:35 Continued taking stock of accommodation equipment and also breathing apparatus and the job was finally completed at 16:25

At 16:30 I assisted in clearing up the equipment used in the cutter which had been out all day and we secured at 17:00 hours.

The evening lecture on safety equipment was postponed until Friday.

### November 28<sup>th</sup> 74 – Portsmouth.

08:05 Quality Control of Avcat yielded the same results as yesterday. After this, two cadets applied a top coat of paint in the Quality Control Room.

13:05 The 36' workboat was lowered as we had to go to the Brown Ranger to get some stores. The boat broke down, and it wasn't until 14:30 that we finally got underway.

The Brown Ranger, now 33 yrs.old, was de-storing and we removed 240 fathoms of rope, some books and also small equipment. The Chief Officer of the ship showed us around and I was amazed to learn that 4 weeks ago, she was in New Zealand.

At 16:30 we restored the ropes and equipment aboard Olwen and then secured for the day.

Transcription for the remainder of 1974 will be added in early Nov. 2013

H.M.S. RFA OLWEN at PORTSMOUTH.	ORDER BOOK Date NOVEMBER 28th - 74.	H.M.S. RFA OLWEN at PORTSMOUTH.	ORDER BOOK Date NOVEMBER 30th - 74.
	<p>0805: This morning, three samples were taken of each tank of Avcat. Tank three still shows a great deal of water. On completing the daily task we had to take a sample of the lub. oil coming aboard as well as regular soundings. The soundings taken from the top on the generator flat, showed that the oil was coming up one foot six inches per hour and was about down at 1232, with an output of 31.115.</p> <p>at 1815 we went out in the 38ft cutter in which we practised approaching and picking up a floating buoy.</p> <p>1830: short lecture on agrotechnics and line drawing operation which in lead in abstracts plans such as monkey island.</p>		<p>0805: Daily routine, Quality Control of Avcat, yielding the same results as yesterday. At 1000 we learned the 38ft cutter as it was required to make a trip to the ocean. She left for the ocean after a few mechanical problems at 1040. This was followed by rule of the road, code and signals, after which we were allowed to go ashore.</p> <p>DECEMBER 1st - 74</p> <p>0805: Quality Control of Avcat, followed by check through record book and collection of correspondence cards. After this we were free and I started work on the second lesson of our correspondence course.</p>