



Editorial

Welcome to issue 34 of AMERC News – my first as Editor.

In this issue we have the report on the latest **Maritime Consultancy Group** (MCG- Page 2) - which reflects relevant items covered in the AMERC Executive Committee (EC) earlier the same day. And our **Annual General Meeting** (AGM – Page 3) and subsequent **Examiner's Panel** (Page 5) are also included.

Previous editors have gone to much trouble to trawl items from various maritime sources, and have also solicited contributions from AMERC members. I'll be working the same street. It's the **AMERC News** so we need to hear from members as well as having reports on the various committees and/or gatherings.

To that end, there's a specific section for **Member's Profiles** (Page 9) – as has been tried before but 'died a death' because of lack of member contributions. *Please change that.* Use the example(s) in this issue as a 'rough guide' to what you might want to say about your own centre or operation.

An issue that was discussed at AGM was the possibility of giving our GMDSS candidates an exercise that might help improve their understanding of international geography and/or the use of Admiralty Lists of Radio Signals (ALRS). To that end I've included the '**GMDSS Criss-Crossword**' (Page 10). We'd all be delighted to hear *your* suggestions (with examples please?) of how to get our students thinking 'out of the box' and improving their geography and/or publications knowledge.

Many 'News' readers are examiners in our own right – yet still we question the logic of a required answer to a particular question/task. And the limited group time at AGM doesn't mean that we can all go away convinced.

That doesn't mean that we're 'thick' – only that we don't necessarily accept something unless we've heard a convincing explanation. To that end, **Explanation Please** (Page 11) is included for any question(s) you may have. Don't forget – if *you* have a question then it's likely that *someone else* has doubts. Don't wait for '*someone else*' to ask! (Names will be omitted to protect the innocent ...)

We'd also like to hear about your personal experiences - at sea or in the classroom – or any interesting stories you may have picked-up from others. That's what you'll find in **Tales from the Key-Side** (Page 12).

Finally - in future editions – we'll have **Maritime Miscellaneous** for anything that's not included elsewhere (thought you'd have enough to read this time around as it was!)

This edition doubles as **Circular 244** and, as such, must be circulated to all GMDSS instructors/examiners by their AMERC centre contact. Our Secretary (Keith Mitchell) has distributed paper copies as usual, and we're looking into distributing future issues electronically. To that end, I'm happy to send this one to you as PDF email attachment, so that you can forward it to anyone who may be interested (your clients?).

Looking forward to hearing from you.

Ian W

Mail: ian.waugh@btinternet.com

The **Maritime Consultancy Group (MCG)** meets regularly - currently four times each year – for the AMERC Executive Committee ‘Open Meeting’. MCG membership consists of AMERC Executive Committee (EC) representatives; the AMERC Chief Examiner; the MCA Chief Examiner and the MCA Deck & GMDSS Team Leader; and AMERC/industry specialists. The open meeting can also be attended by other invited persons. (*You can ask to be invited by contacting the AMERC Secretary*). The following items from the meeting of 10 June 2010 are drawn to your attention:

AMERC 50th Anniversary: The EC is looking at ways to acknowledge (celebrate?) the AMERC 50th anniversary, due in 2012 - within the constraints of how we, as a charity, spend money. Brian Cotton will be pursuing this item on behalf of AMERC - bearing in mind that our AGM date that year will clash with the London Olympics (which appears to be taking accommodation throughout the UK). (*Brian thought he was retiring after the AGM - but you don't get away that easily, Brian!*)

NEW GOC OPT Examination Format: It was noted that a number of centres, particularly some Overseas Centres, were experiencing poorer results using the new Operational Performance Test examination format for General Operator Certificate. Noted that it was the responsibility of individual course providers to amend their course structure, lesson plans, and/or course length - to take account of any change to examination format. (More on the conduct of the OPT part of the GOC exam' is included in the *Examiner's Panel* page(s)).

Examination Failures: Noted that individual candidates cannot demand to see examination scripts; nor get into conversation with the Examiner regarding specific detail for failing any part of the GMDSS examination. Reasons for failure should be given, by the examiner, to the instructor – who should deal directly with the candidate to correct problems before any resit.

RNLI SARROC: Steve Howard reported that the RNLI Search And Rescue Radio Operator Certificate, Module 1, incorporates the CEPT International Short Range Certificate standard in addition to the SAR element. SARROC Module 2 includes the SSB Radio element of the Long Range Certificate – allowing RNLI personnel to operate MF radio on a Lifeboat in UK waters.

GMDSS Examiners with MRGC: There is a provision in the Examiner's Handbook for holders of the pre-GMDSS MRGC/PMG certificates to become examiners. The Chief Examiner (Eric Lamb) is to examine any such candidates prior to appointment.

Tributes: were paid to departing members who have supported AMERC over the years, including:

Brian Cotton – who served as AMERC News Editor and former Hon' Sec; Deputy Chairman; and Chairman. Brian also thanked the committee for their help over the years and promised full support to his successor at AMERC News;

Mark Morgan is leaving the RNLI this year, and was thanked by the Chairman for his input to the MCG;

Denzyl Pereira is retiring from the MCA and was thanked by the Chairman for his support for AMERC (the thanks reciprocated by Denzil); and

Mike Webster – performing his last meeting as Chair - was thanked by the Secretary for all his work in various roles over many years. (*Noted that Mike, as past Chairman, will serve as a member of the Executive Committee for another year*).

GMDSS Examination Statistics: Jackie King of the NAC presented the following examination statistics for the period 1 Jan 2010 – 31 March 2010.

EXAMINATION	ENTERED	PASSED
UK GOC	341	268
ALL GOC	815	626
UK ROC	36	34
ALL ROC	84	80
LRC	30	30

Annual General Meeting 2010

The Association's AGM and Examiner's Panel were held in the Marriott Fiveways Hotel, Birmingham, on Thursday 10th June 2010. There were forty-three delegates and nine had apologised for absence. The following notes for AMERC News are a summary of proceedings – not the official minutes of the AGM (which will be produced and distributed by the Secretary using his normal process).

Keith Mitchell (Company Secretary) presented his report (*included in full in the AGM papers, available from your Member contact (see 'Members' section at www.amerc.ac.uk)*) - some notable points being summarised as:

- AMERC had donated £10,000 to Mercy Ships (see www.mercyships.org.uk), and asked that the donation be used for STCW training;
- The AMERC website QUIZ www.amerc.ac.uk is proving to be particularly popular, having had many 'hits';
- There had been numerous requests from overseas training centres and colleges wishing to deliver UK GMDSS training. Most fall by the wayside when directed to the Examiner's Handbook, which shows what's required (equipment; books; etc) to be in place before a centre can be considered;
- AMERC will be 50 years young in 2012, and suggestions were being sought as to how to celebrate this milestone (within the constraints of the Charity Commission and OSCAR); and

As reported in the MCG notes - some 'old stagers' were retiring this year, including:

- Brian Cotton - stepping-down as Editor of AMERC News, having produced 33 editions over a period of 12 years;
- Mike Webster – stepping down as Chairman after 5 years; to be succeeded by Chris Harrison;
- Mark Morgan is retiring from the RNLI (Steve Howard taking over Mark's role); and
- Denzyl Pereira is retiring from the MCA in July – Rosemary Nelson remaining as the AMERC first point of contact.

Mike Webster reminded us that the charitable aims and objectives of the Association were primarily to:

- Provide a training and examination service for Marine Radio and Electronics disciplines; and
- Retain enough cash to support that training and examination service.

Should there be excess funds, the Association could give donations to other charitable organisations (*hence the Mercy Ships donation, mentioned earlier*).

Phil Davies presented his MNTB Technical Committee Report (*available in full in the AGM papers*). Some points highlighted by Phil were:

- The revised GOC and ROC booklets were now available for download from www.mntb.org.uk/course_criteria-21.aspx
- MNTB requirement for GOC course length remained at 60 hours minimum (as against the IMO Model Course length being 132 hours minimum);
- The MNTB requirement for the new ECDIS course would be the same as required by the IMO Model Course for ECDIS;
- The NARAS(O) (Navigation, Radar and ARPA simulation at Operator level) course would emphasise GMDSS procedures, including the keeping of a full radio log; and that
- The next drafting of the Deck Training Record Book (TRB) would include GMDSS tasks.

Julie Cartwright presented the Financial Report, the main points being:

- We had a small 'negative contribution' this year (i.e. we spent more than we earned!);
- Income from GOC exams was up, whilst ROC and LRC income was down – the overall result being more examination income; but that
- In common with everyone else, interest received on deposits was significantly down.

AGM 2010 (continued from previous page)

Motions:

1. Moore and Smalley were approved as the accountants for the year 2010;
2. The annual membership fee remains at £220.00 for Full Members and £110.00 for Associate members for the year 2011
3. The financial accounts for the year 2009 were approved;
4. Mr Chris Harrison was elected as a Director and Ordinary Member of the Executive Committee;
5. Mr Paul Martin was elected as a Director and Ordinary Member of the Executive Committee; and
6. An application from Blue Water Yachting (Antibes) for Full Membership was approved.

Election of Officers to the Executive Committee

The Chairman reminded members that, as officers step down at the end of their (normally 3-year) term, they have the option of seeking re-election. At the same time, a notice is circulated inviting others to apply for the post being vacated – and that volunteers for the post (*from representatives of Full Members of the Association*) are most welcome to apply.

It is considered desirable for the Association to have more applicants than places to fill – fresh ideas/fresh input being healthy for any organisation. Historically: lack of ‘volunteers’ has resulted in members being cajoled into the various posts. You can change that?

A word or two of caution: much of the Executive Committee work is ‘behind the scenes’; and there is no payment (other than expenses). But there is much hard work - so dedication is required.

Executive Committee Appointments:

- Keith Mitchell was appointed Company Secretary;
- Julie Cartwright was appointed Company Treasurer;
- Keith Watkins was appointed Deputy Chief Examiner;
- Francis Rodrigues was appointed Assistant Chief Examiner (Overseas); and
- Ian Waugh was appointed Editor of AMERC News.
- Subsequent to the meeting, Chris Harrison accepted the post of Chairman.

Annual General Meeting 2011

The venue for AGM 2011 will be the City of Norwich, England.

Norwich International Airport currently has daily scheduled flights to Aberdeen, Amsterdam and Edinburgh

There are also direct rail services with Liverpool, London (Liverpool Street) and Lowestoft (amongst others).

Examiner's Panel

The Examiner's Panel was chaired by Eric Lamb – GMDSS Chief Examiner – who presented his Annual Report. This was followed by the NAC report (Jackie King); and information gained from centre visits by Eric, Keith Watkins (Deputy Ch. Examiner) and Francis Rodrigues (Assistant Ch. Examiner (Overseas)). The main items arising were:

New Operational Performance Test (OPT); and General Knowledge (GK) Paper: Centres had been asked to inform Eric about any anomalies that may have been observed with the revised examination structure. Those responses, together with observations made during centre visits by Eric, Keith and Francis, had - after consultation with the EC - resulted in some adjustments to the OPT process.

The new format had taken some time to settle-in, with the main difficulty (apparently) being with course delivery. This had resulted, in some centres, in less than 50% of candidates being ready to take the examination at the end of their course. Of those who did take the examination in those centres experiencing most difficulty, a large number were unable to complete the OPT section within the allowed 90 minutes – typically spending too much time on documentation to the detriment of progress on equipment operation.

It had also been noted that, in some centres:

- the results obtained by candidates during centre visits were much poorer than those achieved at the same centre 'normally';
- many candidates seemed to have difficulty with international geography; and
- candidates had not become suitably familiar with the ALRS publications;

To help with those problems, it was suggested that:

- Lesson plans should include an introduction to the TRANSAS simulator (for those centres using that simulator) – including using the 'world chart' section of the simulator;
- The General Knowledge paper may, in future, include questions in geography;
- Candidates should be given a better introduction to the ALRS publications – not only which book to use, but better guidance on how the information is presented in those books;
- A record of progress should be kept during the course to help judge whether a candidate was able to complete the OPT within the required time (such records to be available for audit purposes during Chief/Deputy/Assistant Ch. Examiners visits); and
- Centres should consider giving candidates an exercise to do during the course; which might help improve their geography/bookwork (Ed's Note: see '***GMDSS Criss-Crossword***', following).

Statistics: A review of examination papers for the previous year showed that pass rates for GOC was down, whilst ROC and LRC were higher than the previous year.

Items arising from centre visits also included:

- Whilst the revised OPT examination format was originally envisaged to be 'candidate led', this was giving problems in some centres. Consequently; it has been decided that it was still the role of the examiner to ensure that the exam ran more timely;
- For the Radio Telephone exercise, it was (again) stressed that there should be more spontaneous working, rather than a fixed 'round the room' exercise; and
- With the combining of the 'SOLAS' and 'multi-choice' (regulations) questions in the General Knowledge (GK) paper it was felt that the 'SOLAS' element had been somewhat diluted and that the Panel should look at way(s) to correct this.

Examiner's Panel (*cont'd from previous page*)

Administration: was generally satisfactory, but some examination scripts were being sent to the NAC with incomplete information on the front sheet. Centres were asked to check scripts before sending to the NAC.

Course Approvals/Centre Inspections: It was stressed that the minimum course length of 60 hours meant 57.5 hours teaching time, plus 2.5 hours (per candidate) examination time - and that the 60 hours did not include one or more days examination as part of the total.

A table of scheduled centre visits by the Chief Examiner; Deputy Chief Examiner and/or Assistant Chief Examiner (Overseas) was included with the AGM papers. Attendees were reminded that unscheduled visits could occur at any time.

NAC Report: Jackie King reported that she'd been pleased with the good response to all queries sent out; and reminded the Panel that all photographs for GMDSS certificates must comply with UK Passport Agency requirements. *A direct link to those requirements is included in the AMERC website.*

MCA Report/Update: Denzyl Pereira reported that Sir Alan Massey – former 2nd Sea Lord of the Admiralty – had been appointed as the new Chairman of the MCA with effect from the end of July 2010. Other MCA news included:

- Due to the spending cutbacks for all government departments and agencies, when people leave, their posts will not be filled;
- All current job advertisements are being retracted;
- The MCA is pleased that AMERC has maintained quality with respect to new centre approvals, rather than aimed purely for quantity;
- EU Directive 2008/106/EC requires that all Certificates of Proficiency (which includes GMDSS Radio Operator certificates) from all EU countries must be accepted by all other EU countries. The MCA had challenged this originally but now had to accept the ruling.
- For 2009, the MCA had issued 1374 new GMDSS Endorsements; and 1644 Revalidations – both up from 2008. For year ended March 2010, new Endorsements were 1185 and Revalidations were 1816.
- Denzyl concluded by thanking AMERC and the NAC for all the help given to the MCA, and also his personal thanks to the Executive Committee and all in AMERC.

New MCA Contract: Mike Webster (retiring Chairman) clarified the AMERC contract with the MCA and explained that we were responsible for:

- Course approvals; Centre approvals; and continuous audit of both; and
- Providing the GMDSS examination service; and inspection of same.

The EC had looked at our audit procedures, and would now clearly differentiate between course and centre audits; and examination service inspections. The main points being:

- Courses must meet MCA requirements – but course structure and delivery was still the responsibility of individual centres;
- Continuous improvement was expected if course/centre approvals were to continue;
- Examination service/examination centre inspections should show consistency between centres; with continuous improvement again being expected.

Note: *Audit procedure guidelines are in draft form and will be placed on the AMERC website when ready - and will, ultimately, be included within the Examiner's Handbook.*

Examiner Panel - Working Groups:

As normal, the Panel split into working groups to cover: (a) OPT; (b) GK Paper; and (c) LRC

(a) OPT Issues: Terry Slack reported on a number of problems experienced with the current format for the OPT, including:

- Candidates were spending too much time reading scripts;
- Poor geographical knowledge was evident in many candidates;
- Candidates were experiencing problems using the ALRS publications;
- The number of MF RT Coast Radio Stations was declining, making Task 17 more difficult to fulfil;
- The 90 minute time allowance was often being exceeded (especially where English was not the first language for a candidate); and
- Pass rates in some centres were notably lower than previously achieved.

OPT Group Challenges: The working group considered whether to:

- Maintain or withdraw the separate ‘candidate’ script;
- Introduce a limited set of cards related to specific questions (naming the port/pilot or radio station etc);
- Enhance the scenario map to include additional distress/distress relay information (so the candidate didn’t have to refer back to another part of the script);
- Re-order and/or link some tasks;
- Re-organise the script so that Page 4 didn’t include the bulk of ‘grey box’ tasks;
- Remove Task 4 – log book entries (as also covered in the RT Exercise); and/or
- Update the examiner’s script to highlight where ‘verbal prompts’ and/or ‘information cards’ should be used.

OPT Group Conclusions: The working group concluded that:

- Candidate scripts would be discontinued – the OPT reverting to being examiner-led;
- Candidate map would show start and end of voyage, and may include additional information (names of country; ocean; stations? To be considered when revised scenario detail is known);
- Examiner’s will have a ring-bound set of cards for each scenario – to be presented to the candidate at each required point in the exam;
- The ring-bound card-set would identify which Pilot Station/Coast Radio Station(s) were required to be used; but would not identify which NAVTEX station/Ocean Region (satellite) was required (candidate expected to find this information using the scenario map and ALRS Volume 5, NAVTEX/SafetyNET sections - as now);
- Task 17 ‘programme MF RT frequencies for a given station’ would become a ‘ship-to-ship’ task, linking with Task 16 (VHF or MF DSC routine intership call)
- Re-ordering of tasks would include moving the Monthly Tests to the same section as the Daily & Weekly Tests;
- A ‘simplified bridge checklist’ would be provided covering Daily, Weekly and Monthly tests;
- Re-ordering of tasks would include moving Distress Relay from Page 4 to an earlier page;
- Task 4 (log book entries) would be retained, maintaining a link with the RT Exercise; and
- Distress, Urgency and Safety tasks would continue to be ‘grey box’ tasks (to avoid any contradiction with the GK paper, where more emphasis was to be placed on the candidate choosing the correct priority).

Examiner Panel Working Groups (*cont'd from previous page*)

(b) **GK Paper Issues:** Keith Watkins had reported the following issues with the GK Paper:

- Combining the SOLAS questions with the multiple-choice Regulations questions had resulted, in some cases, in people passing the paper despite having obtained only 66% in the SOLAS element (previously requiring 75%); and
- Candidates were still obtaining a pass mark - despite choosing the wrong priority – but by gaining significant marks from copying information given in the question (e.g. position/nature of emergency);

GK Group Challenges: The working group considered whether to:

- Maintain the current format of 3 SOLAS questions at 15 marks each, with 15 multiple-choice Regulations questions; or whether to separate the SOLAS and Regulations papers, as before;
- Adjust the marking scheme to award more marks for choosing the correct priority; and awarding less marks for reproducing information provided in the question;
- Keep the joint-paper format, but award separate marks for Part A (SOLAS) and Part B (Regulations);
- Replace the longer SOLAS questions and/or the multiple-choice Regulations questions with questions requiring a single 'short answer' (see AMERC News Number 33 for examples); and/or
- Remove SOLAS altogether from the GK paper and examine it as part of the OPT;

GK Group Conclusions: The working group agreed that:

- The new, combined SOLAS and Regulations format, should continue;
- The balance of marks for SOLAS questions should be adjusted to provide higher marks for choosing the correct priority, and less marks for reproducing information in the question;
- Question wording should be modified, where necessary, to show that a vessel is 'in grave and imminent danger & requires immediate assistance' or 'no danger of loss of life'; and
- Marking separately for SOLAS and Regulations; introducing 'short questions' either in place of, or additional to, long/multi-choice questions; and removing long SOLAS questions altogether and covering that part of the examination as part of the OPT - were rejected.

(c) **LRC Group:** There was no formal feedback to the Panel from the LRC group – however, the group:

- Agreed to reword questions to enable a better grasp of the comprehension of the question for those who don't have English as a mother tongue: and
- The marking scheme was also improved.

Andy Fuller – Deputy Director General of the International Mobile Satellite

Organisation (IMSO) - gave the Panel an informative presentation on the role of IMISO – an intergovernmental organisation that, amongst other things, has responsibility for overseeing Inmarsat's public satellite safety and security communication services – including provision for the GMDSS. IMISO now also acts as the International Coordinator for Long Range Identification and Tracking (LRIT) services, worldwide. You can read more about IMISO at www.imsso.org

Member Profile(s)

This area is for you to tell us who you are and what you do.

For new members, we'd like to know more about you.

For existing members: the others - new and long established alike – would like to hear about your own operation. Or you can tell us about some event you've been involved in, or one that's going to happen in the future.

The example(s) below are suggestions only about the type of information that might be appropriate but, as it's your area, you can say what you like (omitting, of course, profane, indecent and obscene language :-))

Member Name: Training Ship Rahaman

Centre Location: Nhava, Mumbai;
District: Raigad;
State: Maharashtra,
Country: India

Main Contact: Theodore D'Sa
+91 22 2721 2834
theoadel@hotmail.com
www.tsrahaman.org

Radio/Electronics Courses Offered:
GMDSS GOC (UK and Indian cert's);
RANSCO; Radar Observer Course; ARPA

Other Courses Offered:
Pre-sea courses inc. Fire Fighting;
PSC/RB; MFA; Pre-Sea Rating course;
Deck Cadet training; and
Catering courses.

About TS Rahaman:

Recently completed 100 years as a Maritime Training Institute – the original Marine School being founded in 1910 as a Charitable Institution at Rashid Mansion, Worli Point, Bombay by the late Haji Ismail Yusuf – Proprietor of the Bombay Steam Navigation Company – as a debt of gratitude to the seafaring community who manned the Company's ships; and also to encourage the orphans and sons of the seafaring community to follow in the steps of their forefathers.

The school and orphanage moved to Nhava, the family-owned island off Bombay Harbour, in 1912 - and commenced a programme of Marine Training which now specialises in Pre-Sea training and simulator-based electronic courses (including Radar, ARPA and Navigation Simulator Course)

Member Name: GMDSS4all.net

Centre Location: Peripatetic (Mobile)

Main Contact: Ian Waugh
+44 1387 262329
ian.waugh@btinternet.com
www.gmdss4all.net

Radio/Electronics Courses Offered:
GMDSS GOC, ROC, LRC and SRC
CAA (Offshore) Radio Operator

Other Courses Offered: (none)

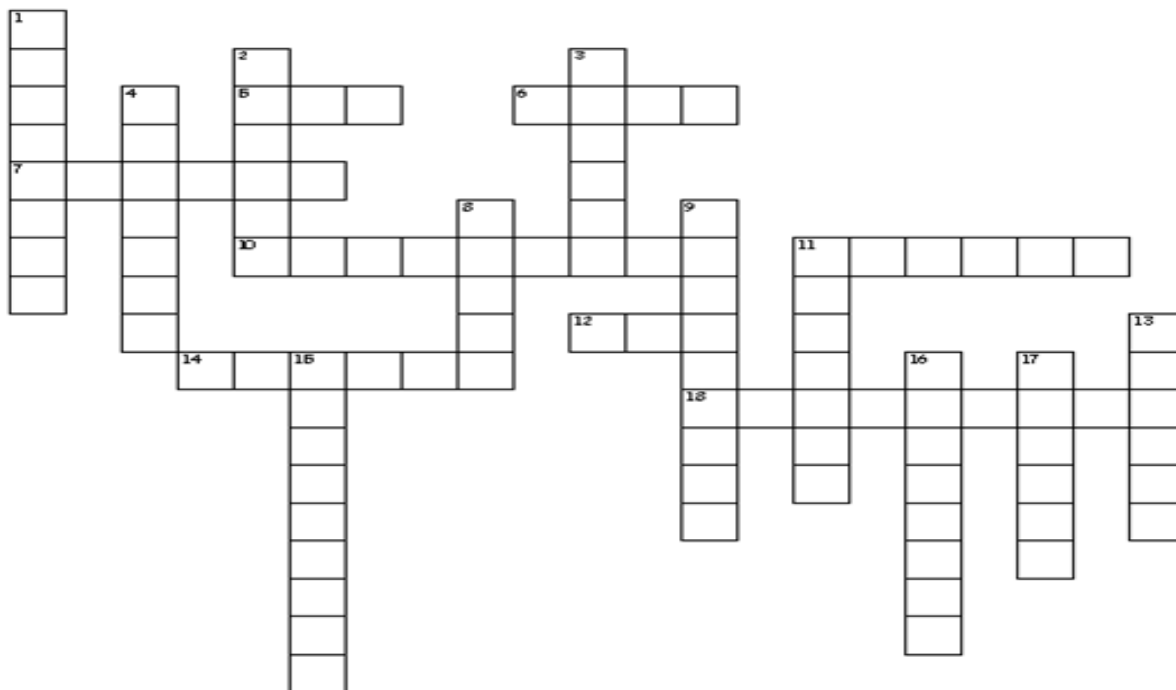
About GMDSS4all.net:

When I realised that my operation was classed as 'peripatetic' I couldn't wait to get home to my Collins; and Oxford English Dictionary. Collins was very kind – comparing us to Aristotle teaching whilst walking around (the 'mobile' bit?) the Lyceum in Athens; The OED was more down to earth: '*travelling around with tools, like a tinker...*'

We've delivered (*sans* horse-and-cart; *avec* Vauxhall hatchback/various airlines) courses in Antibes (France); Baku (Azerbaijan); Fort Lauderdale (USA); Palma de Mallorca (Spain); Viareggio (Italy); Equatorial Guinea (Offshore and onshore); and numerous locations in the UK - as well as (non-certificated) familiarisation training onboard various vessels. Client profiles include: Training Providers; the Offshore Industry; Merchant Navy; commercial fishing; Inmarsat; Hydrographer of the Navy; Port Authorities; Harbour towing companies; and leisure and professional yachtsmen.

Examiner for UK GMDSS; and CAA (Offshore) Radio Operator certificates.

GMDSS Criss-Crossword – all answers should be researched and/or confirmed by reference to *ALRS*, where appropriate



Across

- 5. The only satellite providing **SafetyNET** coverage for Navarea 7, **East of the Cape**
- 6. (.....) Canal - connects Med' Sea to Red Sea.
- 7. (.....) Radio - Denmark's main **Coast Radio Station** (**HF RT**, and **HF DSC**)
- 10. **Port** in NSW and on Tyneside, England.
- 11. (.....) Radio - **HF DSC**, and **HF RT Station** - in centre of Spain
- 12. Norwegian **Inmarsat LES** surrounded by oak trees
- 14. Medical (.....) accessed using **Inmarsat Special Access Code 32**
- 18. Safe haven in Alaska?

Down

- 1. (.....) Strait - connects South Atlantic and Pacific Oceans
- 2. Major **port**/capital of Portugal
- 3. Canadian prince and **NAVTEX station**.
- 4. A Singapore island that's home to an **Inmarsat LES**
- 8. (.....) Bay **Pilots** - directed vessels to world cup matches in Cape Town
- 9. Capital of Iceland. Location of **RCC**, and **NAVTEX Station**.
- 11. (.....) Strait - separates Malay Peninsular and Sumatra
- 13. VHF working channel for Cherbourg **Pilots** (France).
- 15. Great run-ashore in Chile (and also home to a **RCC**, **NAVTEX station**; and **CRS**).
- 16. Major **port** on south-west side of Tokyo Bay
- 17. (.....) Canal - connects Caribbean Sea to Pacific Ocean

Note for instructors, examiners and/or students. We are looking for novel ways to exercise the mind, particularly for geography and **ALRS questions**. Let me have *your* clues (with validated answer!) for future Criss-Crosswords and/or let me have your own suggestions for candidate exercises.

Explanation Please?

This is the area for questions that may puzzle you - because it's not particularly clear why a specific answer is necessary when it appears that other answers may also appear to be appropriate – or, even if you as an instructor are satisfied with the question, you may want to know why the candidates should have to produce the level of detail being asked.

Question: For Inmarsat-C answers, why should it be necessary to say:

- Transmit/Send a
- Distress Priority Message
- To the (*specified*) RCC;
- Through the (*specified*) LES

Answer: At the end of a GMDSS GOC course, candidates should be able to demonstrate their knowledge of the GMDSS infrastructure they are utilising – particularly in an emergency. It is not considered sufficient at that stage of their training that they only know that they should use the ‘Transmit’ or ‘Send’ menu to send their ‘Distress Priority Message’ and that, having used ‘Distress Priority’ the message will be automatically routed to ‘some’ RCC. They should know that, if they wish to contact a particular RCC (e.g., to respond to a Distress Relay received by SafetyNET) - they need to use a specific LES (whether actual or ‘virtual’). They should also understand that, for those countries that do not have a LES/virtual LES, they will be relying on another RCC - in a different country (*of their own choosing*) - to forward their message in accordance with international practice for handling distress alerts/messages. (This does not negate the need for candidates to know the quickest method of sending Distress Alerts, if required).

(They should also know that they can, for less urgent problems, contact the RCC in a country which does not have a LES by using the contact numbers in the SAR section of ALRS Volume 5).

Question: What’s a ‘virtual LES’

Answer: Consolidation of ownership of Land Earth Stations (LESs) over recent years has resulted in some Land Earth Station Operators (LESOs) ‘owning’ more than one LES on any particular satellite – resulting in the closure of some LESs. By installing the (closing) LES Access Code in another LES – as a ‘virtual LES’ – the LESO can continue to provide direct access to, for example, the primary RCC in the country in which the ‘closed’ LES was situated (e.g., see ‘MRCCs associated with Inmarsat LES’ section of ALRS Vol 5 - which shows ‘ex-Goonhilly’ LES operating through Burum LES, Netherlands).

AMERC Website – Examiner’s Forum

*Steve Howard of the RNLI has introduced a new topic on the Examiner’s Forum area of the AMERC Website. Steve’s new topic is the **TRANSAS Simulator** - used by many GMDSS training centres.*

*Steve’s initiative will allow you to ask questions – which may then be answered (either by Steve, or some other boffin ☺) without the expense of calling-in TRANSAS. **If you are a GMDSS Examiner and haven’t already done so, now’s the time to register ...***

- Next Issue:**
- (i) What are the implications of using DSC **Distress** Alert and voice ‘**Mayday**’ call for Piracy attack? Does this put responding vessels at risk?
 - (ii) Your question(s)?

Tales from the Key-Side - by AnonyMouse ...

This is the page for your stories – whether from personal experience at sea, at work, or in the classroom – recent past or distant past. Or it may be something you've heard. Doesn't matter – we're looking for interesting, funny or informative stories that may make us laugh, cry or look for someone to hit. Submissions may be edited, and the writer's name will only be included if specifically asked!

Dateline: Copenhagen Cruise Terminal – near the 'Little Mermaid' statue; July 2010

Frequency: Tour-guide voice-frequency (modulated by Danish accent ...)

Tour guide: *'Normally we would walk to the Little Mermaid statue but, for now and until October, she is visiting Shanghai, China, for EXPO 2010. However, if you still want to see The Little Mermaid, there is an original replica in the Tivoli Gardens'*

Passenger 1 *'Original replica? Je ne comprendre...'*

Passenger 2 *'I think maybe we go to the Jazz Festival at Nyhavn, instead ...'*

Dateline: Black Sea; off the coast of Turkey; early 1950s – during a NATO naval exercise

Frequency: Signal Lantern (Flashing Light)

Russian naval vessel to Royal Navy frigate: *'what are you doing in the Black Sea'*

Reply *'14 knots'*

Source of information: Book 'Make a Signal!' by Capt. Jack Broome
(Ed's note: contributor's copy was loaned to someone in Glasgow in 1976 – probably someone at the Royal Naval Reserve, Govan. He asks that, if you're reading this, can he have it back please?)

Dateline: Wick Radio/GKR, Scotland; November 1976

Time: 0220 GMT (didn't have UTC in those days ...)

Frequency: 2182kHz – barely-composed voice breaks through the relative silence ...

*'Mayday Mayday Mayday Wick Radio this is Fishing Vessel xxx
There's smoke coming from below Wick ... my son and nephew are asleep down there ...
My position is - Decca Green chain[position given]
I've got to go down and get them out of there ... Over'*

[confirmed position ... acknowledged distress ... did the Mayday Relay and received responses from a number of vessels ... follow-up calls to F/V xxx received no response – then ...]

*'Hello Wick this is Fishing Vessel yyy [F/V who hadn't responded to original calls/relay]
I've got the three men aboard - and the boat's sunk ...'*

Silence Fini ...