



Editorial

Welcome to issue 55 of AMERC News - *which doubles as Circular 271 and, as such, must be circulated to all GMDSS instructors/examiners by their AMERC centre contact.*

In this issue we have a brief on the most recent **Maritime Consultation Group** (MCG - Page 2) - reflecting relevant items covered in the most recent AMERC Executive Committee (EC) meeting - including: details of an **Assessment of keyboard skill** in centres where a touch-screen Inmarsat-C simulator has been installed; a reminder that any centre who transfers their **training equipment to a new location**, or to a different room at the same centre, requires to update their centre approvals; an item on the introduction of the updated **CEPT syllabi for GOC and ROC training and examinations**; and a reminder from the Chief Examiner regarding **using the Examiner's Forum** to open discussion about existing or new examination practices and content.

The **quarterly statistics for GMDSS examinations** from the NAC are also included here.

Explanation Please? (Page 3) Has a contribution from Executive Committee member Mike Shakespeare on Ship Reporting Systems – with an example of what he's included in his own course notes (to assist others who may be considering something similar as a result of the updated CEPT GOC/ROC syllabi).

Page 4 hosts another '**GMDSS Criss-Crossword**' to help stretch delegates' knowledge of **international geography** and the use of **Admiralty List of Radio Signals** (ALRS) publications. The answers to puzzle 54 are also included – **again with hyperlinks** for those interested in learning more about the featured locations/stations.

We have two contributions (Page 5) to **Tales from the Key-Side** – one from a current GMDSS training centre; and one from Graham Lees about his visit to a former Coast Radio Station in the USA – with some additional interesting hyperlinks.

Member Profile(s) features an update of City of Glasgow College Riverside Campus (formerly Glasgow College of Nautical Studies); whilst **Maritime Miscellaneous** has an item on a 'remotely-controlled drone' aircraft for maritime SAR operations; one on Ofcom's position on certain key issues for the upcoming World Radiocommunication Conference; and one on the updated ITU Recommendation on Digital Selective Calling (DSC).

Your submissions are always welcome for **Explanation Please? Member Profile, Maritime Misc'** and **Tales from the Key-Side** - and/or anything else you think would be of interest to readers. Further suggestions to help delegates with their knowledge of international geography would also be welcome.

As usual – my sincere thanks to those of you who've provided feedback, questions, tales and other information for your newsletter.

Sláinte!

Ian W

Mail: gmdss4all@gmail.com

The **Maritime Consultation 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/or the MCA Deck & GMDSS Team Leader; the NAC and other AMERC/industry specialists.

The latest meeting was held in London in September 2015. The following items reflect discussions at MCG (full minutes will be circulated appropriately) - and/or associated items that are of interest to Members and training centres. The items are placed according to size - not in any ‘priority’ order.

Assessment of keyboard skills: One of the tasks on our Operational Performance Test (OPT) for General Operator Certificate (GOC) and for LRC Satcom Module, is the ‘assessment of keyboard skills’ – where examiner has to be satisfied that a typing speed of not-less than 50 characters-per-minute has been achieved. This was originally assessed by typing a ‘telex distress message’ on the SSB Telex keyboard; and more recently by using the Inmarsat-C keyboard. With the advent of ‘touch-screen’ equipment being included in some GMDSS simulators (e.g. the 6000-series Sailor Inmarsat-C is a touch-screen unit) - centres are advised that installing a normal keyboard is not only permitted, but might be advisable. Actual ships’ Inmarsat-C equipment that has touch-screen will normally also have a ‘proper’ physical keyboard attached: having one as part of the training centre installation is not seen as being an unrealistic operating environment.

Transfer of Location: Centres are reminded that, should they wish to move their already-approved GMDSS training facility to a different location (including moving to a different classroom within the same building), they must seek approval through the Company Secretary. Any such move will require a validation visit from the Chief Examiner, at the expense of the centre, in order to continue with their approvals.

CEPT-GMDSS Examination Syllabus update – GOC and ROC: The harmonised examination syllabi for the CEPT General Operator’s Certificate (GOC) and the Restricted Operator’s Certificate (ROC) were published as document ERC Decision (99)01 in July 2015 – with implementation effective 3 January 2016. One new item included in the updated syllabus for GOC and which is not in the current syllabus is the **Inmarsat-C Performance Verification (PV) Test (Link Test)**; and a second new item – for both GOC and ROC – is **Ship Reporting Systems**. Our own current examination package will continue until end-December 2016; with the next update due to be implemented in January 2017. It is not anticipated that the current papers will be changed to include the above items - but a new topic area ‘Ship Reporting Systems’ has been added to our online ‘GMDSS Quiz’ – your suggestions for improvement/additional questions are invited.

There is already a Quiz question on PV Testing and, again, any suggestions for improvement/ additional question(s) will be welcome. Examiner’s Panel 2016 will consider how the subjects might best be included in future (written and/or practical) exam series’.

Examiner’s Forum: The Chief Examiner reported that he continues to monitor the Examiner’s Forum in the hope of seeing useful input to our examination process and content.

GMDSS Examination Statistics – quarterly report: National Administration Centre (NAC) examination statistics for the period **1st April 2015 – 26th June 2015** are shown below:

EXAMINATION	ENTERED (1 st time)		PASSED (1 st attempt)		% PASSED 1 ST ATTEMPT
UK GOC	256	(231)	223	(201)	201/231 (>87%)
ALL GOC	540	(494)	481	(439)	439/494 (>88%)
UK ROC	54	(49)	49	(44)	44/49 (>89%)
ALL ROC	68	(63)	63	(58)	58/63 (>92%)
LRC	31	(31)	31	(31)	31/31 (100%)

Explanation Please?

This is the area for questions that may puzzle you – whether you're a trainer without a specific 'radio' background; a seagoing operator who's finding that the 'real world' doesn't seem to be fully in-tune with what you learned in the classroom (or with what you've read in publications – official or otherwise); or because it's not particularly clear why a specific answer to an examination question is necessary when it appears that other answers may also appear appropriate. *Note that those of you who have access to our 'EXAMINER'S FORUM' on the AMERC website can open-up and discuss any subject/question that they have an issue with J*

Following the recent MCG where the new CEPT GMDSS Syllabi were introduced (see Page 2) - EC Member Mike Shakespeare of Blackpool & The Fylde College shared the following addition to his own college notes, in case anyone would like to include them in any course updates they may be considering. [Links added by Ed' – don't blame Mike if any go wrong! Info' on the reporting systems mentioned here is included in ALRS Volume 6]

“AMVER

As a backup to Distress, Urgency, and Medical Urgency the AMVER organisation in New York maintains a database of subscribing ships positions and routes.

Subscribing ships notify AMVER

- initially of their vessel's particulars, including specialist facilities (e.g. Helicopter Landing Facilities) and specialist manning (e.g. Doctor)*
- on sailing from a Port*
- every 48 hours on passage*
- on arrival at a Port*

Once AMVER are made aware of a need for assistance, they can generate a computer map (SurPic) of all vessels meeting certain parameters in the vicinity of the problem, and can contact those vessels and task them to assist. AMVER assistance is available to everyone, not just subscribers

Although very useful, it should be remembered that only subscribing vessels will show on the SurPic; there may be a non subscribing vessel closer. For this reason consider AMVER an aid, rather than the primary means of responding to a critical situation.

VESSEL REPORTING SYSTEMS

Many areas of the world have vessel reporting systems to ensure safe traffic management; some examples are:-

- [CalDovRep](#) – Dover Straits Reporting*
- [Wetrep](#) - West European Tanker Reporting System*
- [GibRep](#) – Straits of Gibraltar Reporting*

In addition many ports and harbour areas have Vessel Traffic Services (VTS) to which the mariner must report, for example:-

- [Sunk VTS, Harwich and Thames](#)*
- [Kurushima Kai kyo Traffic Advisory Service, Yokohama](#)*

There are also specialist reporting services such as Piracy reporting via IMB in Kuala Lumpur and MSCHOA in Dubai.

It is incumbent on the mariner to be aware of what reports are required to be made, when, where, to whom and what information should be contained. Full details can be found in ALRS Volume 1 (Anti Piracy) and Volume 6 (Ship Reporting Systems)”

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Member Profile

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. The entry below from member City of Glasgow College shows the type of information that you may want to include – but, as it's your own area, you can say what you like (omitting, of course, profane, indecent and obscene language J)

Member Name: City of Glasgow College

Centre Location: Riverside Campus
21 Thistle Street
Glasgow
G5 9XB

Main Contact: Douglas Mannix
Phone: +44 141 375 8715
email: douglas.mannix@cityofglasgowcollege.ac.uk
Website: [Faculty of Nautical Studies.](#)

Radio/Electronic Courses Offered: GMDSS GOC/ROC.

Other Courses Offered by the Faculty of Nautical Studies:

City of Glasgow College offers a full range of courses from mandatory training for Deck Officers to a range of short courses such as MCA, RYA, and STCW short courses including for the professional development of Merchant Navy Officers and crew. The brand new Riverside Campus building has a full 360 degree Bridge Simulator, four 135 degree Bridge Simulators, Tanker Simulator, ECDIS Lab, GMDSS Lab and a Marine Skills Centre which offers survival craft & rescue boat training and Freefall Lifeboat Operations. Our teaching staff are engaging and experienced, and our facilities are second to none, with students travelling from all over the world for the world class training we offer – including:

[Chief Mates / Class 2 Post HND Course](#); [Chief Mate Full HND Course](#); [Class 1 Masters Orals](#); [HNC Marine Engineering \(SCQF level 7\)](#); [HNC Nautical Science/HNC Nautical Science \(Alt Route Phase 3D\) \(SCQF level 7\)](#); [HND Marine Engineering \(SCQF level 8\)](#); [HND Marine Engineering for Cadets from Overseas Colleges \(SCQF level 8\)](#); [HND Nautical Science \(SCQF level 8\)](#); [HND Nautical Science/Chief Mate Full /Master Inc HND \(SCQF level 8\)](#); [MCA Approved High Voltage \(Management\) Level Course](#); [NC Shipping and Marine Operations January \(SCQF level 5\)](#); [NC Shipping and Maritime Operations](#); [NC/HNC Deck Officer Trainee Programme](#); [NC/HNC Marine Engineering Cadetship \(SCQF level 7\)](#); [OOW Post HND Course](#); [PDA Nautical Science HND](#); [Scottish Professional Diploma in Marine Operations \(SCQF level 8\)](#); [UK Maritime and Coastguard Agency Officer of the Watch \(Reg11/1\) \(including HNC Nautical Science\) \(SCQF level 7\).](#)



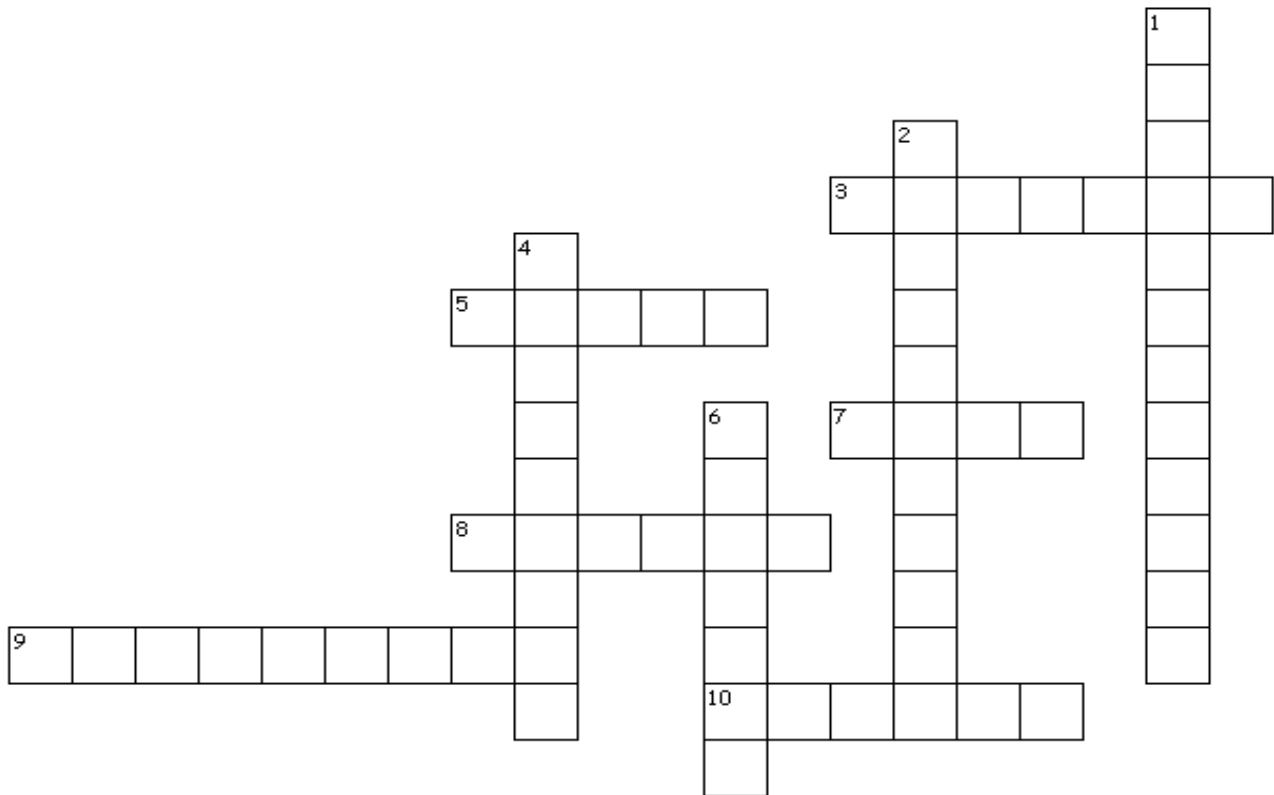
City of Glasgow College – Riverside Campus



Main GMDSS Training suite

City of Glasgow College also has Faculties of: [Building, Engineering and Energy](#); [Business](#); [Creative Industries](#); [Education and Society](#); and [Leisure and Lifestyle](#).

GMDSS Criss-Crossword Number 55 - all answers should be researched and/or confirmed by reference to ALRS, *where appropriate*



Down

1. Main port of entry on 3-across (6,6)
2. Foul-tasting bodies of water linked by 4-down? (7,5)
4. Waterway connecting Med' with the Red Sea (4,5)
6. Phoneticised ID letter for NAVTEX station at 8-across

Across

3. Seventh-largest island in the Philippines.
5. Island on which 8-across sited
7. International ID letter for NAVTEX station at 9-across
8. NAVTEX station serving 3-across
9. Port city situated on west bank of 4-down
10. One of the other lakes linked by 4-down.

Issue 54 answers – with hyperlinks:

DOWN: 1. [PuertoLimon](#) 2. [CanalDeTenglo](#); 3. [Caribbean](#); 4. [PuertoMontt](#); 5. [Pacific](#);
ACROSS: 3. [CostaRica](#); 5. [PuertoGolfito](#); 6. [Dundee](#); 7. [ReloncaviSound](#); 8 PuntArenas¹
 1. See Costa Rica entry in S.A.R. section of ALRS Vol 5.

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

This is the page for your stories – whether from personal experience at sea, at work, in the classroom or life generally – 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, of course, be withheld on request.

Dateline: GMDSS classroom – somewhere in England – August 2015
Time: OPT 'Initial Equipment Set-up' section
Frequency: 518kHz

Examiner: "I'd like you to programme the NAVTEX for Met forecasts please"

Hands delegate a scrap of paper with 'WX fcst' written on it – thinking it may help him to remember.

After some time he announces that he has finished.

The display reads **MSG:** ABCD_F _ _ _ _ _ L _ _ _ _ _ ST _ _ WX

Examiner: (after the usual 'are you happy with that' prompt) 'I only want the compulsory messages, plus the Met Forecast – are you happy with what you've programmed?'

He was ...

I guess we'll have to forget all the abbreviations we learned as ROs and perhaps try to learn that 'txt spk' that our new brand of delegates are more familiar with?'

Dateline: Cape Cod – Chatham Radio/WCC - September 2015
Time: During *another* of Graham's holidays...
Frequency: He can't get enough of them!

I recently visited the site of Chatham Radio (WCC) on Cape Cod, USA. This former coast radio station closed in 1997 and has since been turned into the Marconi Radio Museum. Originally the site was used by Marconi to receive the first cross-Atlantic radio signals. It was later bought by RCA communications and used as a commercial coast radio station until its closure as radio traffic drastically reduced with the impending full implementation of GMDSS in 1999. It became abandoned for some time, but the local town of Chatham has brought it back to life.



Further details can be seen at <http://www.chathammarconi.org>

(cont'd next page)



Coastguard station in Chatham close to WCC



A former coastguard cutter on view outside of the USCG station.

The aerial farm was extensive and close to the shore. The mainly rhombic arrays have now been removed or allowed to disintegrate, although the remains of one metal mast can still be seen in the sand. Tx and RX aerials were in different locations - further details can be seen at

<http://chathammarconi.org/PDF/Diorama%20Witeup.pdf>

The transmitters employed huge vacuum valves ('tubes' as the Americans call them) and some of these were on display. I think the large ones were water cooled. One of them could handle 40kW of power as WCC regularly transmitted 35kW - compare that with circa 100 watts of a typical ship Inmarsat Fleet, or 15 watts of Inmarsat-C transmitters of today. For some time, the WCC transmitting station was 40 miles to the West in a place called [Marion Massachusetts](#)

There were six HF operating positions with a single VLF position all in quite a small room. Operators were much closer together than the situation at Portishead radio which Willie Williamson and I witnessed when taking marine radio students there in the 1970's.

Some of the original WCC kit is there, with the list of working frequencies posted on the wall (below right). They had both conventional up and down Morse keys as well as the side-swipers which American operators were fond of. The VDU's have been added to explain to visitors how communications with ships were established and how telegrams were exchanged using the Morse code.



A former ships radio station, almost intact. Not much different to a GMDSS console of today?



[Ed' - Graham on his busman's holiday ... Not sure what he's got his right hand on ...]

WCC was used during the 2nd world war as part of a network of [DF](#) stations to determine the position of German submarines operating in the Atlantic. The Americans would then launch an aerial attack to try and destroy them. A real [Enigma machine](#) is on exhibit today and there is an emphasis at the museum on the role WCC played in helping the British break the code.

The station had the first [SITOR](#) (HF radio telex) installation in a coast station and its initial telex communication was with the [QE2](#).

WCC claim that it was the busiest HF coast radio station in the world - but maybe Portishead was?

I can remember using WCC and another East coast station Amagansett Radio (WSL) located on Long Island New York. Further details http://www.radiomarine.org/gallery/show?keyword=wsl&panel=pab1_6. Both stations were extremely easy to contact on HF WT, but did not have RT facilities. For that I used WOO Ocean Gate Radio, an AT & T station - see <http://www.long-lines.net/places-routes/OceanGateNJ/index.html>.

Both WCC and WSL sent newspaper reports each day. They were transmitted using machines reading punched paper tape at over 20 words per minutes. Each broadcast lasted up to 2 hours and that's when I quickly learned to type whilst receiving the Morse transmissions.

Today the station operates as an amateur radio site callsign WA1WCC - further details <http://chathammarconi.org/AmateurRadioClub.html>.

Having worked on the east coast of USA/Canada during my first year at sea on a [Cunard](#) passenger ship [RMS Carinthia/GVDQ](#) (Can't recall an MMSI number) it brought back many memories of how marine radio communications used to be.



Oh happy days!! Or is it me getting even older and more sentimental? [Ed' - comments welcome J]

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Maritime Miscellaneous 1: Remotely-piloted 'drone' becomes overall winner of the European Satellite Navigation Competition.

Each year, the [European Satellite Navigation Competition \(ESNC\)](#) seeks services, products, and business innovations that use satellite navigation in everyday life. In the 2015 edition, prizes were awarded by some of the most relevant institutional GNSS stakeholders, such as the [European GNSS Agency \(GSA\)](#), the [European Space Agency \(ESA\)](#), the [German Aerospace Center \(DLR\)](#), and the [German Federal Ministry of Transport and Digital Infrastructure \(BMVI\)](#) in association with the [Federal Ministry for Economic Affairs and Energy \(BMWi\)](#). In addition, 24 partner regions from all over the world hosted their own regional challenges. The prize pool in ESNC 2015 was valued at approximately EUR 1 million, which included cash awards, business incubation, business coaching, patent consulting, technical support, access to testing facilities, prototype development, publicity, marketing support, and much more.

Maritime Search-and-Rescue Drone POSEIDRON becomes [ESNC Overall Winner 2015](#)

The Winner: Loles Albiol Simó, Rudesindo Hernando Meliá, Jorge Esteve Ripollés, Manuel Pedreira Giménez, Enrique Martinez Asensi

The Idea: POSEIDRON: Remotely Piloted Aircraft System for Search and Rescue and Environmental Defence

The regional winner of the Valencian Community won over the international jury of experts with its remote-controlled multicopter built to support maritime search-and-rescue services. The main purpose of POSEIDRON is to reduce the number of fatalities far out at sea when people fall overboard or are involved in shipwrecks that occur during illegal immigration.



The project consists of one large drone that is designed to increase the survival possibilities of those stranded at sea by providing a faster response and better service than existing solutions. The multicopter weighs 80 kg, can operate for more than 180 minutes, and has a diameter of four metres. It is capable of lifting up to 70 kg and is designed to take off from a mid-size boat. Thanks to its thermal cameras and the [EGNOS](#) system, the multicopter is able to immediately localise people in the middle of the water. When it arrives at a fatality, Poseidron will launch an inflatable dinghy. Depending on the weather conditions, it will tow the dinghy to a rescue boat or maintain its position in order to facilitate rescue. Poseidron can also localise and monitor fuel spills and provide support during humanitarian catastrophes. Thanks to [Galileo](#) and EGNOS, the drone will have the ability to fly safely, maintain its position accurately, and alert the emergency authorities.

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Maritime Miscellaneous 2: Information on the position to be taken by Ofcom - the UK's representative on WRC's – on certain key issues at the upcoming WRC-15.

Ofcom has today set out details on [the positions the UK will take on certain key issues](#) at the forthcoming International Telecommunication Union (ITU) World Radiocommunication Conference 2015 (WRC-15).

WRCs are held approximately every four years, and take decisions concerning the identification and international harmonisation of spectrum bands. Under a Government direction, Ofcom represents the UK at WRCs.

The next conference will take place in Geneva from 2 - 27 November 2015. It will consider a wide range of issues across a number of sector interests including mobile broadband, maritime, aeronautical, satellite and scientific use of spectrum.

Today's statement follows a [consultation](#) in June 2014, and a subsequent [update](#) in January of this year.

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Maritime Miscellaneous 3: Updated ITU Recommendation on DSC (with thanks to Glenn Dunstan and Joe Hersey).

The newly updated Recommendation ITU-R M.493-14 (09/2015) - Digital selective-calling system for use in the maritime mobile service - has been published and is available from the ITU website: <http://www.itu.int/rec/R-REC-M.493/en>

ITU Recommendation ITU-R M.493 sets the technical and (some) operational requirements for GMDSS DSC systems.

493 is the head international standard, from which administrations and international standards bodies make their own national and international equipment standards.

The new version, 493-14, contains a number of important changes including:

- Class D and E GMDSS systems (for recreational/non-SOLAS vessels) must be fitted with an integrated GPS receiver;
- new Class H (handheld) - also must have integrated GPS;
- new Class M (MoB) device - fitted with DSC and AIS; and
- the user interface requirements in Annex 3 have been made mandatory

There was also a general tidy up of paragraphs and tables.

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