

AMERC News

Issue 65 – Incorporates Circular 285

April 2018

Editorial

Welcome to issue 65 of AMERC News - *which doubles as **Circular 285** and, as such, must be circulated to all GMDSS instructors/examiners by their AMERC centre contact.*

In this issue we also have our usual brief on the most recent **Maritime Consultation Group** (MCG – Page 2), and which includes an anticipated **change of Company Secretary**; a change to the **Chair of the Executive Committee** and to **NAC Management**. Also included are an item on **changes to Data Protection Legislation & General Data Protection Legislation (GDPR)** which impacts on personal information currently recorded by training centres; and a further report of **findings of Chief Examiner visits**, which centres are advised to review prior to their own expected visits.

The latest **quarterly statistics for GMDSS examinations** are included here.

Page 3 hosts our usual '**GMDSS Criss-Crossword**' to help stretch delegates' knowledge of **international geography** and the use of **Admiralty Digital Radio Signals (ADRS)** and **Admiralty List of Radio Signals (ALRS)** publications; and a reminder about the '[Triviaplaza world geography quiz](#)' identified by Chris Harrison and first introduced in News number 59.

'**Tales from the Key-Side** (page 4) introduces the **Portishead Radio** Facebook page, with a painting by an amateur marine artist and former R/O at Portishead Radio; whilst Page 5 hosts **Explanation Please?** which carries an item about **programming your Inmarsat-C receiver for Coastal Navigation Warning areas**; another on **early solid-state marine radio equipment**, with answers provided by the maritime Radio Historical Society; and a 'brief history of the Distress Signal'.

'**Maritime Miscellaneous**' (Page 8) has an Inmarsat press release concerning the new '**Fleet Safety**' product, which has been recommended for GMDSS recognition; a link to download the latest **AMSA GMDSS (2018) Handbook**; and an item about a planned **Leith Nautical College reunion**.

'**Member Profile(s)**' is again missing input from any centre who'd like to tell us all about themselves would be welcome for future editions.

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 develop their knowledge of international geography would also be welcome. When it comes to **Explanation Please?** always remember – if YOU have an issue then someone else probably has that issue too ... **don't be shy!**

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

[Inmarsat I-3 to I-4 Services Migration](#)

[This link will take you to information on Inmarsat's satellite upgrades, including PDF file downloads explaining the effect on Fleet, SafetyNET, and Inmarsat-C services.](#)

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 March 2018. The following items reflect discussions at MCG (full minutes will be circulated appropriately) - and/or associated items that may be of interest to Members and training centres. The items are placed according to size - not in any ‘priority’ order.

Company Secretary Change: Members should already have received **Circular 284**, stating that the current Company Secretary – Terry Slack – will be standing down at AGM, after seven years in the role. A vacancy will therefore occur, which will be filled by appointment of the Executive Committee.

Executive Committee (EC) Chairman: Chris Harrison will be standing down as Chairman at the June AGM. The EC has appointed Paul Martin, a serving EC member, to succeed Chris.

NAC Changes: Joan Hobbs will be retiring after >27 years service at the NAC. Her position as NAC Manager will be taken by Chloe Nacci, who has been working alongside Joan to ‘learn the ropes’. Contact telephone and email addresses are unchanged. It is hoped that both Joan and Chloe will attend our upcoming AGM.

General Data Protection Legislation (GDPS) changes: All training providers should have received an email (and attached letter) from the MCA, regarding changes to the recording and retention of personal data effective May 2018. In particular, our current practice of recording Passport/National ID and/or Discharge Book Numbers on Course Completion Certificates (CCCs) must cease. The MNTB will be approached to confirm the changes required to their example CCC. It should be noted that it is the responsibility of the training centre, not the subsequent examiner, to confirm the identity of those being presented for examination. Further guidance on retention/redaction of past information is expected to be provided at AGM and in the next AMERC News.

AMERC Chief Examiner visits – items of note: Herewith a selection of items that came up during Chief Examiner visits over the most recent period – some of which were mentioned in AMERC News 64 - and which other centres and examiners might want to review and/or consider ‘fixing’ before their own inspection. As before - this list is not exhaustive:

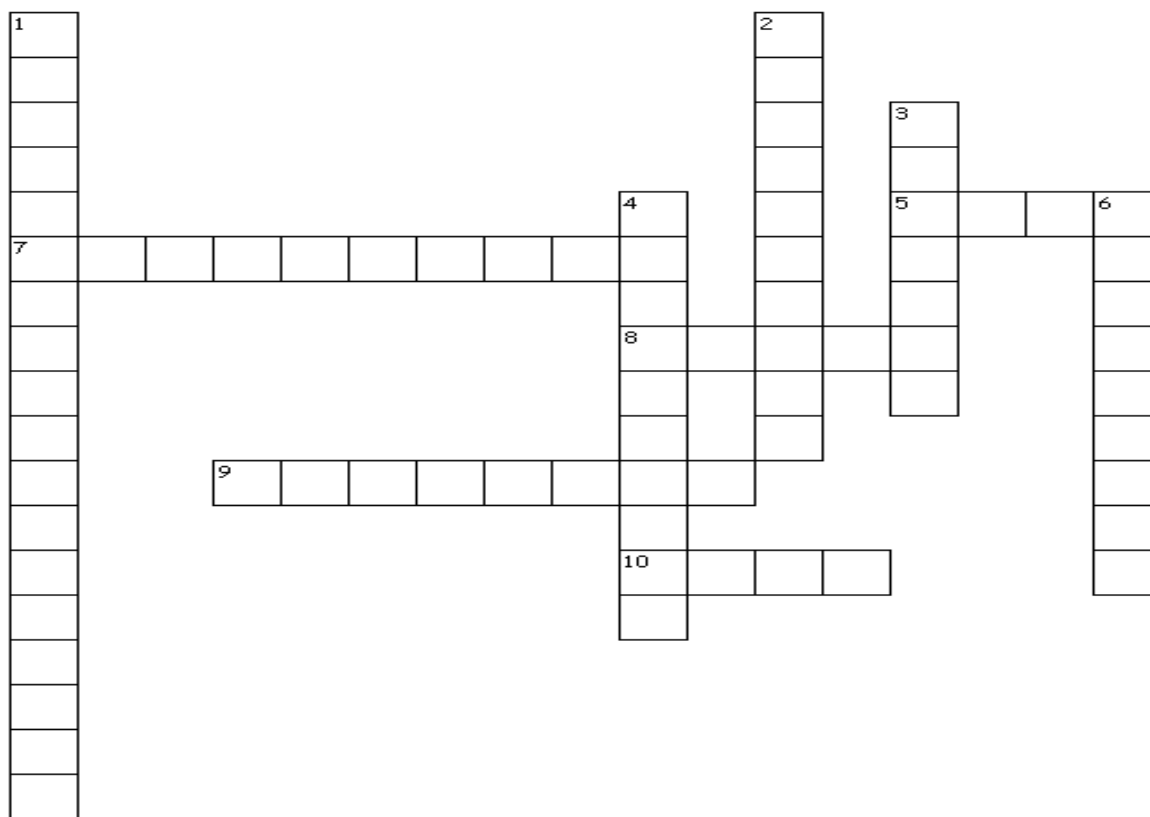
- ‘Examination in Progress’ notice not being displayed outside the exam’ room;
- examiner not explaining the GK multi-choice marking grid – how to mark/change an answer;
- examiner not strictly enforcing the 25-minute time limit for GK papers; nor stating the 5-minute/2-minute warning of time remaining;
- examiner not maintaining the RT log and marking sheet ‘live’ during the RT part of the exam;
- examiner not marking the candidate RT log appropriately w.r.t. changes in the log not being clear/initialled;
- clock not visible to all candidates during GK and/or RT examination;
- examiner using ‘over’ when a reply is neither required nor expected; and not providing appropriate guidance to vessels to ‘proceed’, ‘standby’ or ‘not required; and
- candidate results being announced ‘as a group’ – they should be given individually.

(and a wee look at your own-centre previous report, as a reminder!).

GMDSS Examination Statistics – quarterly report: National Administration Centre (NAC) examination statistics for the period **1st October 2017 – 31st December 2017** are shown below:

EXAMINATION	ENTERED (1 st time)		PASSED (1 st attempt)		% PASSED 1 ST ATTEMPT
UK GOC	299	(266)	258	(229)	229/266 (>86%)
ALL GOC	557	(506)	497	(452)	452/506 (>89%)
UK ROC	23	(23)	23	(23)	23/23 (100%)
ALL ROC	40	(39)	39	(38)	38/39 (>97%)
LRC	34	(33)	33	(32)	32/33 (>96%)

GMDSS Criss-Crossword Number 65 - answers should be researched and/or confirmed by reference to ALRS/ADRS, *where appropriate*. Readers might also like to test their knowledge of international geography by using the [‘Triviaplaza geography quizzes’](#) website (where you might also find one or more of the answers required below).



Down

1. Capital of the southern Indian state of Kerala.
2. (5,5) Sea port at (3-down).
3. Capital of Indonesia.
4. (7,3) body of water off the northern Norwegian coast and NW Russia.
6. MMSI for DSC station at (3-down)

Across

5. NAVTEX station ID letter for station at (9-across)
7. Seaport at (1-down)
8. International NAVAREA in which (1-down and 7-across) situated.
9. Russian port city in (3-down) close to the Norwegian border, north of the Arctic Circle
10. NAVTEX station ID for station at (3-down).

Issue 63 answers – with hyperlinks:

DOWN: 1. [Hull](#); 2. [Japan](#); 3. [Zeebrugge](#) 7 [002320007](#); 8. [China](#); 9. [Humber](#).

ACROSS: 4. [Sabah](#); 5. [Eleven](#); 6. [Borneo](#); 10. [Immingham](#).

Tales from the Key-Side –byAnonyMouse ...

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 something to hit. Submissions may be edited, and the writer's name will, of course, be withheld on request.

Dateline: [Facebook – Portishead Radio group](#)

Time: When the son of a former GKA R/O introduced himself to the group

Frequency: Updated regularly by Larry Bennett, former R/O; ALRS Editor, and ALRS manager.

Hi Larry, hi all. I am the son of Jim Byrne (1925-2003). Dad worked at Portishead Radio from 1958 to 1985(?), so some members of the group may remember him. I thought this picture might be of some interest: In his free time Dad was a keen marine artist and I have a memory (possibly false!) that some of his paintings used to hang in the social club. Though he had retired by the time the Radio Station closed down, he went along on the last day. He retrieved one picture (though I think it hung in an office rather than the club) and IIRC, it was this one, showing QE2 at Southampton, in grey for the Falklands campaign, and which he painted in 1983.



The post from Eugene Byrne generated a number of replies from the GKA facebook group, including photo's of some other paintings by Jim Byrne. Some readers might well remember him and/or might like to 'befriend' the page for their own interest!

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Explanation Please?

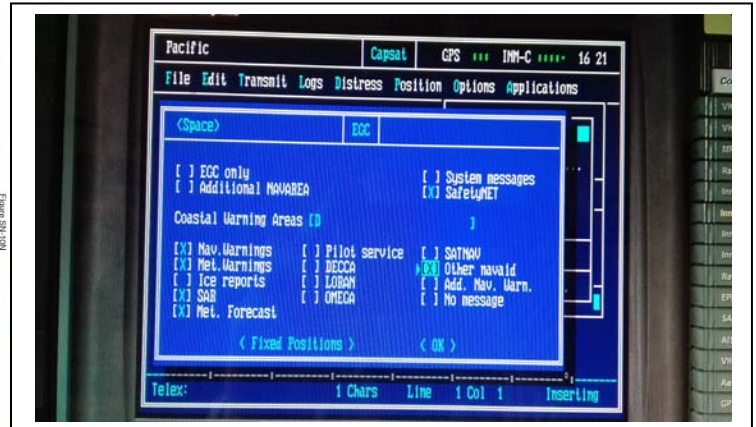
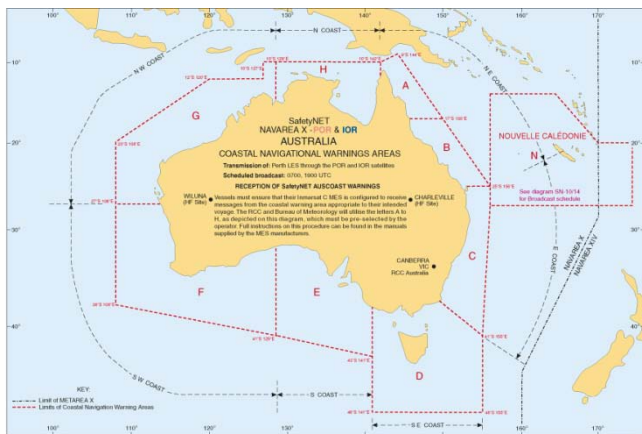
This is the area for questions that may puzzle you – whether you're a trainer without a specific 'radio' background; a seagoing operator who's finding that the 'real world' doesn't seem to be fully in-tune with what you learned in the classroom (or with what you've read in publications – official or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

Question 1: When programming my Inmarsat-C for an additional Navarea and/or for Coastal Navigation Warning Areas, I get conflicting messages when trying to select Nav' Warnings, Met Warnings etc. The equipment will, sometimes, let me select those, but at others I can't unless I also select a Coastal Navigation Warning area – even when I'm not in an area where this information is provided. Is this a software issue, or some other problem?

Answer: Best described, I think, by referring to one of the SafetyNet pages from ALRS Vol 5 and a photo of a typical Inmarsat-C screen – as included below.

Firstly – assume we are in NAV/METAREA X (which covers Australian waters) - and coastal to Tasmania. We've logged-in to POR (main Sat-C screen, top-left), and will get the principal NAV/METAREA X information automatically. The 'X' in 'SafetyNET' – top-right of the EGC screen and which cannot be removed – will ensure Nav, Wx, SAR etc information for our current, and any 'additional' NAV/METAREA (if selected – none selected here) is received automatically.

If you then look at the Coastal Nav' Warning diagram for Australian waters, you'll see that Coastal Navigation Warning Area 'D' covers the waters around Tasmania – so you have to select 'D' to receive the additional, more local (coastal) information for this location. But in this case, you also have to tell the system which information you require, using the message categories in the bottom half of the EGC screen, where I've selected Nav' Warnings, Met Warnings, SAR messages, Met forecasts and Add'l Nav Warnings. Selecting/de-selecting those message types is done by hitting the 'space' bar when the cursor is in the relevant box (shown here in 'Other Nav'). These message types are only 'active' when a Coastal Nav' Warning Area letter is selected (in this case 'D' though multiple areas can be selected at the same time).



Note that, if you use the space bar to select 'EGC Only' (top-left of the EGC screen) – you are configuring your Inmarsat-C as an EGC receiver, in which case you will no longer be able to transmit messages.

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Question 2: - [and answers, received from Arthur Hunter, [Western Maritime Training](#). "I sent a question about the introduction of transistor-based radios on ships to the [Maritime Radio Historical Society](#) and got this great reply, I have no idea if it is of any interest to you or your colleagues (you probably know it all already) but it was too good an answer not to share it"

Answer (a): [from Richard Dillman] I can only speak to the shore side equipment used in Morse service at [KPH](#). The first solid state receiver used at the station was the [National HRO-500](#), introduced in 1964 and produced through 1972. I'm not sure of the date the first one arrived at KPH but I suspect it was in the early part of that date range.

Answer (b): [from Roy Henrichs] RD is correct about the National HRO-500. To the best of my knowledge, that was the first solid state communications grade receiver available. As mentioned, these radios were used at KPH.

Regarding use of solid state radios shipboard - the first solid state HF receiver I recall seeing shipboard was a [Mackay Marine](#) synthesized solid state receiver.

It had been installed as a replacement for the venerable tube type [Mackay 3010](#), and was a marvel for its day! High selectivity, sensitivity, thumbwheel switches used to select frequency. Believe that was on a [States Lines](#) (no longer in business!) vessel, probably around 1973/1974.

Around the same time, most cargo ships usually had a Mackay Marine tube type VHF. It was used for standard communications as well as bridge-to-bridge comm's.

The exception at the time was [American President Lines](#). While they had a Mackay tube type console, their ships were outfitted with a [Collins MR-201 VHF](#) - a solid state radio. I believe the unit had a remote control head, enabling its use for standard communications as well as bridge to bridge.

The MR-201 was well built and very reliable. I only remember one failure, and believe it may have involved a solid state TR switch circuit. On the other hand, the Mackay tube type units frequently needed service, often involving vacuum tubes - no surprise - and I recall repeated cases of intermittent contact to tube pins at the tube sockets! From changing tubes frequently, as well as vibration and corrosion aboard.

The company I worked for at the time serviced APL, States Lines, Chevron, Union Oil, and other customers in the [SF Bay Area](#). And, the company was a dealer for Intech VHF's and CAI HF gear.

[Intech](#) manufactured solid state VHF radios in a relatively small package, with crystal control. I believe some may have been used in bridge to bridge applications. The company also produced a portable radio (walkie talkie) for marine VHF use - obviously solid state.

APL also carried a Collins MR-102 HF SSB transceiver, with a [51S-1 tube type receiver](#) employed for duplex receive with the AT&T high seas marine operator (KMI, [WOM](#), and others).

The MR-102 was a hybrid unit, had both tubes and transistors; its ATU was solid state, used a large number of IC's - very unique at the time. Unit initiated autotune at about 1 watt, and if successful within about seven seconds then its 2KW PA stage kicked in (four [4CX350F tubes](#), in a small package); if unsuccessful, red "fault" light lit.

It was a frequency synthesized radio, ISB capable; a direct descendant of the [Collins URG series](#) used on aircraft. Basically, a rack containing field replaceable black boxes, aircraft style. A marvel of its day.

I understand Collins URG series was used on Air Force 1; a fairly serious application.

Re: solid state use shoreside - a couple brief notes.

The [AT&T high seas marine operator, KMI](#) (neighbor to the KPH receive site), used mainly tube type receivers in 1973/74. I remember quite a few Collins 51S-1's. But, the company I worked for also was a CAI dealer. CAI manufactured a small, solid state, fixed frequency HF receiver - and KMI bought some of these.

As a side note, CAI also manufactured HF SSB transceivers, but those were hybrid technology. Not pure solid state units. Some use in cargo ships, as well as smaller vessels.

Also - [USCG Vessel Traffic Center \(SF\)](#) used doubly redundant Motorola VHF transceivers at its remote sites, with doubly redundant 406 Mc transceivers used for MUX communications to some locations. These radios basically were [Motorola MOTRAC type](#) - a solid state receiver, often paired with a hybrid (tube/solid state) transmitter. I believe the USCG units were hybrid, but am not fully certain.

Radios seldom were a problem - issues more often involved RTO line and occasionally the Navy microwave system link to the Motorola equipment.

Not sure exact manufacturing date for that gear, but worked on it in 1976/1977 when at a Motorola (land mobile) service station. By that time, newly manufactured gear was solid state. So, gear for VTC probably was transitional era - but very reliable!

I hope this information helps answer your question.

[Ed's note – the info' provided reflects the experience of operators from the USA, where much equipment was manufactured. Marine radio equipment was manufactured around the world and so, if anyone else would like to contribute their own memories regarding early solid-state marine radio, I'd be happy to feature an update in a future edition]

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[A brief history of the Distress Signal?](#)

[Here's a link to one writer's view on the history of the 'Distress' signal, from CQD, through SOS, to Mayday and Pan Pan](#)

Maritime Miscellaneous 1: IMO body recommends Fleet Safety for GMDSS recognition

06 March 2018: **Fleet Safety** from Inmarsat, a new service incorporating [FleetBroadband](#) and a **Maritime Safety Terminal (MST)** has been recommended for Global Maritime Distress and Safety System (GMDSS) recognition, after its performance was subjected to intensive review by a group of [International Maritime Organization](#)-appointed experts.

The milestone recognition was confirmed at a [Sub-Committee meeting on Navigation, Communications and Search and Rescue \(NCSR\)](#) on 23 February, where delegates acknowledged an [International Mobile Satellite Organization](#) (IMSO) experts technical review finding that Fleet Safety surpasses the requirements of resolution A.1001(25) initially for the MEAS region.

NCSR will now recommend that the May 2018 meeting of the Maritime Safety Committee approves Fleet Safety as a recognised service to support the public service on which seafarers rely.

Important step-forward

“We are delighted that Inmarsat’s proposal regarding the future development of its GMDSS solution has received a positive response from NCSR,” said Ronald Spithout, President, Inmarsat Maritime.

“This is an important step-forward for our maritime safety strategy encompassing both our current constellation of I-4 satellites and our I-6 constellation and has been designed for both existing FleetBroadband services and the next-generation. It is a testament to the hard work and dedication of Inmarsat’s Maritime safety & security and engineering teams, and to the on-going support of IMSO.”

Operating on L-band via the Inmarsat fleet of four I-4 satellites, Inmarsat FleetBroadband terminals are equipped with the same GMDSS functionality as Inmarsat C. Today, around 160,000 [Inmarsat C](#) terminals are installed on ships operating worldwide.

Safety services

“For almost 40 years, Inmarsat has been focused on the safety of mariners throughout the world and, following the recommendation to include Fleet Safety in GMDSS, we can proudly restate our commitment to both maintaining and improving the safety services we offer to the maritime industry,” Spithout added.

IMO is reviewing GMDSS under a wide-ranging modernisation Plan, looking to take advantage of changing satellite infrastructure and advances in maritime software and hardware to enhance the system.

Spithout said that Inmarsat would liaise closely with IMSO and its network of technology and channel partners over the coming months to finalise and implement the proposal recognised by NCSR and which will be put in front of the Maritime Safety Committee in May.

All vessels of 300 grt and above, and all passenger ships sailing on international voyages are required to be fitted-out with GMDSS compliant equipment. To be compliant, GMDSS must meet performance standards set out by IMO in A.1001(25).

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Maritime Miscellaneous 2: Australian Maritime Safety Authority (AMSA) 2018 GMDSS Handbook.

With thanks to Paul Martin for pointing us to this link to download [\(PDF file\) the latest AMSA GMDSS handbook](#)

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Maritime Miscellaneous 3: Leith Nautical College Reunion.

Former staff and students of [Leith Nautical College](#) are hoping to track down old colleagues, classmates and friends, for a reunion event in Edinburgh in September 2018. Everyone connected to the former maritime training centre is invited for a weekend of activities in Edinburgh on 29th and 30th September.

An evening reception will take place on the Saturday at Edinburgh College's Milton road Campus, the home of Leith Nautical College from 1978 to 1988.

[South Leith Parish Church](#) – which has historic links with the maritime community – will host an exhibition about the history of Leith Nautical College and visitors are invited to bring along their mementos. The church will also hold a service of thanksgiving on the Sunday morning.

Gordon McFadzean, former head of Electric and Electronic Engineering at Leith Nautical College said: *“Students of Leith Nautical College have travelled far and wide in the course of their work, playing vital roles in modern maritime history. This is a fantastic opportunity for people to get back together and catch up and I’m sure there will be plenty of incredible tales to swap.*

“I hope that any former students and staff will be able to come along and that they can spread the word to anyone they’re still in touch with. It would be wonderful to see everyone again.”

To register interest please contact Edinburgh College Development Trust manager Sheena Stone at development.trust@edinburghcollege.ac.uk

Anyone with a connection to Leith Nautical College is asked to spread the word about the reunion to other students and staff.

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