

DAVID HEFFER RETIRES – A TRIBUTE

AMERC NEWS

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Issue Nineteen —Read Inside

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AMERC NEWS is the Journal of the Association of Marine Electronics and Radio Colleges.
It is distributed to all Members, Associates and Affiliates of the Association.
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EDITORIAL

This Issue advises of some changes to the structure of the Association and to the consequences for AMERC NEWS. But first, a tribute.....

David Heffer stepped down as Chairman of the Association at the AGM in May, anticipating his retirement from Southampton Solent University. You may still be thinking of the University as Southampton Institute or even Southampton College of Technology and for the while I shall refer to it as 'the institution.' But however you call it, remember that David was there at the time. You will find various references to David's having thirty-five years at the institution. In fact it is longer, since he was a marine radio student there some ten years earlier than that.

When I arrived at the institution as Head of Department in 1978, I found David already making his mark on the world of marine electronics and more widely. He was a king pin in our microprocessor work, writing a book, designing modules for the marine engineering degree and in the summer was employed by Shell Tankers, being flown from ship to ship training marine engineers in control techniques.

David's talents were recognised and he moved up through 'the system' until he had become Dean of the Technology Faculty, in effect looking after one third of the institution. In his career he made a tremendous contribution to its strategic direction and the development and diversification of its technology portfolio. He also earned the respect of many national bodies, such as QAA where he helped develop the engineering benchmark standards.

But to us in AMERC he will be remembered for his leadership that lasted fifteen years. He helped guide the Association through important changes, including a remit widened beyond marine electronics and the forming of the company.

You will remember David as I do; loyal, honest, straightforward and always in command of his brief. It is not always that we can find committed people with pleasant personalities but David is one, and we have all enjoyed his company. We shall miss him. The Association marked his retirement with a gift at a pleasant ceremony at AGM. Southampton Solent University also recognised David's achievements by conferring on him the honorary degree of Doctor of Education. The Association congratulates David on this and applauds the University for giving him that honour.

Brian Cotton
Editor

EDITORIAL ANNOUNCEMENT

CHANGES TO AMERC NEWS

It was in the Spring of 1999 that I was commissioned to compile a Newsletter for the Association with a brief to 'follow the Committees,' as it were. In practice, this forced me to a timetable that would deliver AMERC NEWS to staffrooms by Christmas or Easter. After AGM I would try to rush out an Issue to summarise what had happened but this could be delayed until September depending on when the Examiners' Panel Minutes were available. This did not happen often but if it did, it meant that the September and October editions would be close on each other.

With the suspension of formal Electronics and Communications Board activity, this timetable can be amended, although it is still dependent on Committee dates. What we anticipate now is that the first publication in the academic year will be in October* and the second in January or February. The third will be before the AGM when it will include the statutory notices. Our last Issue (18) was a first attempt at this. The July Issue will no longer be produced.

One consequence of there not being a July or September Issue is that a greater reliance must be placed on staff in the centres reading the Examiners' Panel Minutes and REC Coordinators are reminded of their duties to circulate these to all relevant staff.

The other consequence is that there may be a lesser number of pages but not appreciably if those articles keep coming in – and over to you for that. I still intend to include some items relating to the wider world of technology and related matters. But then that is *my* intention. *Your* views on AMERC NEWS content are always welcome and your articles the more so!

* Regrettably, the October 2005 Issue is a little delayed.

Brian Cotton
Editor

THE ELECTRONICS & COMMUNICATIONS BOARD

NEW ARRANGEMENTS

For near twenty years, AMERC has had a broader base than what would be required for strictly maritime radio and electronics. By 1993, the commitment to general electronics and communications had grown to the point where the Association needed to establish two separate Boards to manage its business. For ten or more years thereafter, there was a significant growth in the Association's commitment to telecommunications, led by the Electronics and Communications Board. During that time, the Board built a reputation with skills councils, regulatory bodies, industry, examining and validating authorities. Anyone who served on the Electronics and Communications Board or who has attended AGM since 1993 will testify to the high regard in which its operation and achievements were held. The Board provided a vehicle for the construction of many of the syllabus items for BTEC and City & Guilds national and international programmes. More broadly, service was provided to our own membership through innovations such as the popular Technical Updates. Outside of the Association, schools teaching aids were devised and, most recently, the progressing of the Digital Aerials Qualification. Significantly, for these activities government agencies and companies had sought out the Association.

What has been the core of the Electronics and Communications Board's commitment, namely curriculum design in telecommunications, has now dropped away severely and a decision has had to be taken to disband the formal meetings of the Board. Nevertheless, it is expected that the Executive Committee will be taking opportunity to look for business in the non-maritime fields where there is known to be expertise in the membership.

AMERC has a great debt to Stuart Tomlinson, Keith Waudby, Steve Brett and David Turner. For all their hard work with the Board in helping to satisfy national needs and for keeping the reputation of the Association so high, they have the deserved thanks of the Association.

With falling income it would be expected that the Association would need to be discriminatory about the amount of resource that could be placed on any project but there is a willingness to give proposals due analysis and support. If any member can think of any way of capitalising on our high reputation the Hon Secretary will be pleased to be approached.

2005 AGM EDINBURGH

THE NEW EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

The elections at AGM brought some changes of faces on the Executive Committee.

Officers of the Association

Mike Webster*	Chairman
Chris Harrison*	Vice Chairman
Keith Mitchell	Hon. Secretary
Julie Oates	Hon Treasurer

Executive Committee Members

Phil Davies*
Willie Williamson*
Kevin Walsh*

*These colleagues were also elected as Directors of AMERC Ltd.

FINANCE

The Association's Hon. Treasurer, Julie Oates, presented a comprehensive report to the meeting. The income in the year had fallen due to a lesser number of examinations and some reductions in membership.

Nevertheless, the net worth of the Association is still high, near £270,000. The Executive Committee is committed to looking for new sources of income and of course the budget will be controlled. At the very least a balanced budget is anticipated.

EARLY ADVICE 2006 AGM

The 2006 AGM will be held in Poole, Dorset, on 27th May, 2006. The venue will be the RNLI College, which has outstanding accommodation and facilities. Take an early peep at the website:

www.lifeboats.org.uk

THE BUSINESS

The business of AGM followed the usual pattern and Members will have had the papers and reports, some of which are summarised in this Issue. The Examiners' Panel Minutes have been separately circulated and must be copied on to relevant staff.

The future of the Electronics and Communications Board was given consideration. The decision of the Executive Committee to disband the Board's formal meetings was noted. A tribute to the work of the Board appears in this Issue.

Both in the business of AGM and at the dinner, Members had an opportunity to say farewell to David Heffer who stood down as Chairman of the Association after fifteen years of outstanding service. David has now retired from his full time post at Southampton and a tribute to him appears as the Editorial of this Issue.

MARITIME BOARD

EXAMINERS' REGISTER

Approved GMDSS Examiners not attached to an REC may remain on the AMERC Examiners' List. An Examiner who has not conducted GMDSS Examinations in a five-year period should be removed from the active List. Once removed an Examiner wishing to recommence examining duties should apply to the Executive Committee.

ENEM

There will be eight candidates for the December 2005 ENEM Examinations. For April and June 2006 there will be twenty-four candidates for the ENEM and Radio Maintenance Examinations.

OVERSEAS CENTRES

The Association has received several enquiries from overseas centres. The Board is currently reviewing its procedures for formal applications.

BMEA

The first BMEA students being processed, giving opportunity to review procedures.

REVALIDATION CONFERENCE

The proposed Conference intended to discuss issues relating to revalidation of GMDSS Certificates has been postponed. It is felt that it is better to await the outcomes of international discussions planned for 2006.

CORRECTION

In the last Issue (18), we *incorrectly* said that REC are asked 'not to send payments to the NAC using BACs. for each individual student.' The NAC corrects with: 'The NAC can accept payment for examinations by certain credit cards for which there will be a charge of 1.69%. RECs are asked to use this facility only in circumstances where other methods of payment prove difficult. Our apologies.

REVALIDATION

The holder of a GMDSS Certificate without one full year of sea service and requiring revalidation must sit the whole of the examination again. A letter from the NAC will be issued to the candidate who will present it to MCA. There is no requirement for a course to precede the revalidating examination.

GMDSS STATISTICS

Here are the GMDSS Examination Statistics for the period April 2005 to June 2005.

EXAMINATIONS	ENTERED	PASSED
UK GOC	177	152
ALL GOC	302	266
UK ROC	67	62
ALL ROC	75	68
LRC	179	168

M-NOTICES

MGN 294 (M+F) USE OF GMDSS EQUIPMENT

This Guidance Note, which supersedes MGN 114, refers to COMSAR Circular 17. It advises that the use of GMDSS equipment for general communications is an effective test of the apparatus. It also states that such use gives operators chances to exercise their skills.

MGN 286 (M+F) RADIO SURVEYS

This Note advises that since April 2005, Selenia Communications has held the delegated radio survey and inspection contract for the UK based service. Abroad, surveys will generally be provided by classification societies.

The Note provides a useful summary of the radio survey process. It has a list of contact numbers and addresses.

MIN 290 (M+F) RADAR INTERFERENCE

Initial research findings indicate the potential for interference to marine radar systems from 2G and 3G mobile phones.

A follow-up project will determine the true impact of such potential interference. Feedback from mariners will also be collated.

MGN292 (M+F) SHORE MAINTENANCE

This Note recalls that IMO Regulations require MCA Registration for UK providers of shore based maintenance for GMDSS equipment. An Annex to the note lists the technical qualifications required by shore-based maintainers. There is also a self-certification form for admission to the MCA Register

MGN288 (M+F) RADIO LOG BOOK

This Note reminds readers that the use of the GMDSS Log Book is compulsory. The Annex provides an example of a typical day's log.

MIN 199 (M+F) SMALL CRAFT AIS

The Class B Version of AIS is not yet available. Small craft owners are not recommended to fit Class A but to wait until the Class B version is marketed. The MCA states that in the interim a receive only AIS can be fitted.

MIN 205 (M+F) ETRS DATUM

MCA has now completed transfer of charting to the new European Terrestrial Reference System (ETRS) Datum. Guidance is given on the method of transfer of positions from one chart to another and ALRS Volume 2 refers.

MISCELLANY (1)

IEE-IIE MERGER

Members of the Institution of Electrical Engineers (IEE) and the Institution of Incorporated Engineers (IIE) have voted in favour of merger. Talks are taking place between the two institutions and a final decision is expected shortly.

The newly formed Institution will be known as the Institution of Engineering and Technology (IET).

Further information can be found on the IEE and IIE Websites.

Of note is that the Institution of Mechanical Engineers (IMechE) and the Institution of Civil Engineers (ICE) are pressing ahead with merger talks. This followed a positive vote of members in July of this year.

IIE EVENTS

In the summer, your Editor took part in a technical visit to a cable ship in Portland. Which was very interesting and well organised by the IIE. You are recommended to look at the Institution's 'Interactive Online Events Calendar' where such events are listed.

www.events.iie.org.uk.

SKILLS COUNCIL

SEMTA, the science and engineering skills council has merged with Metskill, the former national training body.

NFEC

The National Forum of Engineering in Colleges has changed its name to the National Forum of Engineering Centres. NFEC was founded when further education establishments were incorporated. The name change is to reflect the fact that there is a wider range of training providers at this level.

BRITISH STANDARDS

The British Standards Institution (BSI) is seeking comment on its draft Code of Practice BS 8450 for electrical and electronic installations on board ship. For more information visit:

www.bsi-global.com/d8450.

GMDSS INSPECTIONS

Twenty-two countries have agreed to target ships' communication systems. It is expected that port control officers will carry out some 4,000 inspections of equipment, operations and records.

LORAN-C TRIALS

Trinity House and Irish Lights have been conducting trials with LORAN-C transmissions from Rugby. The experiments will continue until March 2007. It is hoped that LORAN-C will be able to provide terrestrial back-up and be complementary to GNSS.

MISCELLANY (2)

FALKLANDS MEMORIAL

We reported in Issue 17 that the construction was in hand for a memorial to merchant seamen who perished due to enemy action in the Falklands Conflict in 1982. The final sum raised was of the order of £50,000 and it is a very fine memorial indeed. It was opened at Tower Hill by the First Sea Lord in September.

JRC EQUIPMENT

Roger Taylor of NSTC Gravesend offered a JRC Main Station 'to a good home' in Issue 17 of AMERC NEWS. There were a number of enquiries but first off the mark was the Liverpool Marine Radio and Electronics Society. It was duly collected and has gone into storage while a site for display is being sorted. One museum site being used by the Society is Fort Perch Rock on the edge of the Wirral.

RICHARD MATTHEWS

Richard Matthew, Secretary of the Merchant Navy Training Board has retired. In its interactions with the Board over many years, the Association has dealt principally with Richard and we wish him well in his retirement.

AI S CONTRACT

Norcontrol has secured the contract to install an AIS network in UK RCC.

AFRI CAN RCC

Moves are afoot to have operational RCC in place by the end of this year in Mombasa, The Seychelles, and Zanzibar.

SANDFORD MILL MUSEUM

We referred in Issue 17 of AMERC NEWS to the establishing of the Donald Imber Collection of Marconi equipment at Sandford Mill Museum, Chelmsford. A well-written report on the opening ceremony and giving details of the collection appeared in the October/November edition of Radio Bygones which is available from Broadstone Publishing.

A NEW UNIVERSITY

Southampton Institute has been awarded full taught degree awarding powers and university title. It will be known henceforth as Southampton Solent University.

GMDSS DEVELOPMENT

The Examiners' Panel Minutes have a reference to GMDSS development. Mike Webster is happy to have comments and you should email these to him.

BACK PAGE

AMERC PAYMENTS

Members at AGM were reminded that GMDSS Examiners are self employed for that purpose. They must therefore arrange for their own insurance and meet their own Inland Revenue obligations.

From 1st January 2006, the mileage allowance for those making claims under AMERC business will be 40 ppm.

AN APOLOGY

In Issue 17, we reported on a revalidation course which we are sure would be interesting to our readers and possibly have some relevance to current discussions on this topic. Unfortunately due to a misunderstanding on the part of your Editor, the article purported to deal with a revalidation course that had been devised in Norway. It was in fact a Russian course.

Our apologies to Sergei Aysinov for this mistake and indeed to Ted Hackett who had been the intermediary.

NEW ARRANGEMENTS

Don't forget the new schedules for publishing which are outlined on page 3 of this Issue. We anticipate that Issue 20 of AMERC NEWS will appear in January 2006.

This Newsletter duals as Circular 222. Check you have a full file. All Issues of AMERC NEWS appear on the AMERC Website and back copies of the Circulars may be obtained from the Hon. Secretary. ***Don't forget to distribute your copies to your colleagues.***

Articles and suggestions for the next Issue of AMERC NEWS can be sent at any time.

Brian Cotton, Editor.

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