3 September 2015

Red Ensign raised at Portsmouth International Port in support of Merchant Navy Day

The Red Ensign fluttered over Portsmouth International Port on September 3rd, to mark Merchant Navy Day.

At 10 AM in Portsmouth, and at other venues across the country, there were special ceremonies to say thank you to seafarers for their tireless service, with the well-known flag being raised to mark the special day.

The events were prompted by a call from the charity Seafarers UK and the Merchant Navy Association. The groups wanted the flag to be raised on public buildings and landmark flagstaffs all around the UK.

Portsmouth City Council, which owns Portsmouth International Port, was more than happy to help. Ferry Port Manager, Kalvin Baugh hosted the ceremony at the passenger terminal, with other members of staff who have worked in the Merchant Navy also in attendance.

HRH The Earl of Wessex is President of Seafarers UK. He has endorsed Merchant Navy Day, which has been running since 2000. The Earl sent a message to those participating in the ceremony, saying “On this Merchant Navy Day, I very much hope you will support this campaign to remember the sacrifices, salute the courage and support the future of the often unsung personnel of our Merchant Navy.”

As an ‘island nation’ the UK relies on Merchant Navy seafarers for 95% of our imports, including half the food we eat. The UK has the largest ports industry in Europe. 75% of our exports (by volume) are shipped from UK ports. Portsmouth International Port is a key entry point for fresh produce from all over the world, with 60% of all bananas eaten in the UK having arrived at Portsmouth before heading to supermarkets.
Merchant Navy Day is held each 3 September on the anniversary of the sinking of the SS Athenia, the first British merchant vessel lost during World War II. Seafarers UK is a leading grant-making charity that helps people in the maritime community by providing vital funding to support seafarers in need and their families. Donations to the charity’s Merchant Navy Fund can be made at www.merchantnavyfund.org

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