

## **INTRODUCTION**

The 43 Ft. RSL Monograph was the first in a planned series of booklets on individual classes / types of RAF Marine Craft, and in retrospect was the first booklet that started the ball rolling for the RAF Marine Craft Directory volumes that have followed it since. The RSL monograph was intended to be as extensive as possible, however there were missing records at the time of writing of the first edition, and since, through many contacts within the RAF Marine Craft circles, numerous additional, and better photographs have emerged. Indeed only late in 2006 did some information come to light which led to the fates of two craft hitherto not known – but more important were the photographs that accompanied the information. Other information has revealed the fate of RSL 1668 for example and it was quite a surprise, when it was found.

Hence in the rewrite, which now forms Appendix B to the RAF Marine Craft Directory series, the histories of the individual boats has been revised, more fully expanded and better illustrated with a host of new photographs of the craft both in service, and after they had been sold out of RAF service, or indeed transferred to another “service” for further use. Like the first edition this treatise is in two sections, the first, a general description of the 43 Ft RSL, its construction, layout and systems along with supporting illustrations, these improved and of craft actually being built. The first section has been taken for the most part from the official publication used by the RAF as a manual for the craft, namely AP 4554 VOL I. The second section is a FULL set of individual RAF service histories of the craft, and details of subsequent sale / disposal / scrapping etc., again including the best selection of the available photographs of the craft in both RAF and post service use. The histories have been taken from the official record cards at RAF Hendon, copies of which are held on microfiche by the S.C.G. Sadly cards for three craft were missing, these being RSL’s 1651, 1659 and 1664, which is more the pity, as all the aforementioned craft have survived. However since the first edition, the full set of Allotment records have been made available and using these the missing histories have been pieced together. These same allotment records gave additional information of movements, not recorded in detail on the individual craft cards.

I am of course only the compiler, as numerous others have assisted in one way or another - the list, including past and present owners of survivors of the class, is under acknowledgements. Special thanks must go to Dave Fricker and Phil Simons for supplying a lot of the missing information and a wide selection of photographs. However the vast array of photos made available through the RAF Museum by Ken Hunter and of course, the co-compiler Donald Smith who took time out to seek out photos of the “missing” RSLs in RAF service. Thus I believe only RSL 1648 eludes us as an “ in RAF Service” photo.

During the thorough investigations required to sort out the histories of the craft, several other documents have been used, these are all listed under “Acknowledgements” also. A few other facts have emerged, suffice to say that most have been “sort of” known beforehand, however when all the service histories were laid out together, certain patterns emerged, myths were quashed and I must admit here and now that several revealing points were raised. Snippets of information, for example, from several sources resolved the problem of the RSL sitting on show at Hythe Marina, her identity until very recently (i.e. whilst compiling the original edition) was taken as read, literally - the experience has taught me the old lesson, that historical source material must be properly checked out for accuracy, once again. I hope the accuracy of the information contained herein is indeed up to date, however my information is limited to what I have seen, read and more importantly, what has been passed on to me, by others. I cannot vouch for all their contacts and the accuracy of their reports, however if their individual accounts have been researched as well as mine, or better, - then this booklet will be the envy of all who wish to know anything about 43 Ft. RSL’s.