



### **ROYAL AIR FORCE - LONG RANGE RESCUE CRAFT**

Early in January 1945 long range operations by the American 20<sup>th</sup> Bomber Command across the Bay of Bengal increased the air/sea rescue commitments. In addition, a large proportion of Warwick aircraft were rendered unserviceable temporarily by the climatic conditions.

The establishment of Air/Sea Rescue aircraft in A.C.S.E.A. was 20 Warwick's and 9 Sea Otters of which the former were intended for medium range operations in the Bay of Bengal carrying the airborne lifeboat, and the latter for short ranges especially in Sunder-Dans and Northern Burma.

In June 1945 it was decided that the Sunderland V's were to replace the Catalina I.V.B. for air/sea rescue in the Far East.

No. 212 A/SR Squadrons' aircraft were to remain at 12 strength. No. 279 Squadron (K) was being prepared for Tiger Force.

During May 1944 with the forthcoming increased bombing assault of Burma and Malaysia by the American bombers, there was concern to improve the air sea rescue craft operating in the Bay of Bengal by the Americans, Royal Navy and Royal Air Force based upon all their experience gained. The present craft were operating at their limit of endurance. Craft design and serviceability for the Far East was a concern and very much under discussion.

During 1943 high ranking American Air Force officers attended the Royal Air Force Sea Rescue School at Blackpool, United Kingdom, resulting in these officers returning to their Headquarters, Army Air Forces, Washington for the purpose of organising emergency rescue activities in the Southwest Pacific Theatre.

The Americans were in a short period operating with their Thirteenth Air Force in the Pacific 104-foot and 85 foot air/sea rescue craft powered by Packard engines which required changing after every 500 hours running. The 85-foot craft were reported from their trials in Florida, USA, to be giving considerable trouble owing to the use of high-octane fuel in the auxiliary engines. The range of the craft was 1850 miles.

They were also using a new type of airborne lifeboat, namely the Ratsey-Higgins. Two of these lifeboats could be carried on a PBY-5, each capable of carrying a whole Lancaster crew.

By 7<sup>th</sup> January 1945 the Air Ministry proposed to send out 40 of "D" Class Fairmile's to the Mediterranean and SEAC Commands, the latter Command where 12 LRRC should be despatched in March 1945 arriving in India by April 1945 before the beginning of the SW Monsoons for Deep Sea Air Sea Rescue Service work.

The Admiralty pointed out difficulties of maintaining this type of craft and alternative proposals were put under consideration.

A deputy director in the 3<sup>rd</sup> Sea Lord's department at the Admiralty gave the Air Ministry some rather disquieting information about the Fairmile "D" class long range air/sea rescue craft.

- a) Being wooden-bottomed craft, they are seriously affected by the depredations of the Toredoworm. This necessitates them being taken out of the water for inspection at least once every five weeks.
- b) They are not good sea boats and are unable to withstand seas, especially in view of the fact that their four Packard Merlin engines are unable to run at less than 800 rpm, which gives them a speed of approximately 6 knots. Such a speed in heavy seas imposes too great a strain on the boats. In heavy weather sufficient speed must be maintained to give the craft steerage way, otherwise it is liable to become unmanageable. If driven too fast into a head sea the craft is liable to be damaged and this applies equally to any ship including Atlantic liners. There is no doubt that the "D" type Fairmile's are better sea boats than the present HSL's and operations in the northern part of the North Sea gives ample evidence to show that they are satisfactory.
- c) The Admiralty consider that the crew quarters of a Fairmile "D" Class boat are such they cannot expect crews to remain at sea for any length of time.
- d) The Packard Merlin engines being high-performance petrol engines, have to be taken out and overhauled every 4-500 hours as opposed to the normal 3-4,000 hours of a proper marine engine.

With the advice of the seaworthiness of these craft given, the air/sea rescue experts accepted these boats realising their limitations and were satisfied that they would meet their requirements, knowing that there were very serious maintenance problems involved. It was agreed that some difficulties were insurmountable, but it was best to take these fences on receipt of assurance.

The experts pointed out that the Americans were using the same engine in their 104 feet and 85 feet air/sea rescue craft operating with the Thirteenth Air Force in the Pacific.

To meet Stage II requirements in ACSEA, there were no alternative means of effecting rescue at long range in sea conditions preventing flying boats from alighting and taking off, at present exists. The possibility of using sloops, or corvettes or other craft, had been explored and they were left with the "D" Class Fairmile's or nothing.

One problem was the concrete docks for slipping of the LRRC and these were likely to be in short supply, mainly owing to difficulties in manufacture in India or if they were built in the United Kingdom, the difficulty of towing them out to the Far East.

Admiralty requirements were considered.

The Admiralty would provide docking facilities for the RAF on a common user basis.

As far as the first 12 Fairmile's were concerned it was hoped to provide facilities for four in Ceylon and for eight elsewhere in the Bay of Bengal area, of which possibly four would be at Akyab.

Docking facilities for a further 28 craft were to be arranged at Karachi and/or Bombay and at two forward bases. This would be taken by CinC, Eastern Fleet by the Admiralty.

RAF were to provide 300 personnel for hull maintenance.

Admiralty would provide accommodation at both rear advance bases.

Admiralty expressed opinion that LCTE would be unsuitable for engine changes but could be used for minor maintenance. These vessels would however be available if required though the necessary conversion would take some time. It was arranged that an RAF representative would inspect one of these ships at Chatham and if found suitable for the purpose the Admiralty would be asked to provide five LCTE's.

It was originally planned that that the first twelve craft should sail from the UK on 1<sup>st</sup> April 1945 but subsequent information from the Admiralty indicated that this date would be too late for the passage to India to be completed before the SW Monsoon. Owing to delays by Admiralty building contractors no craft were delivered to the Service by 12<sup>th</sup> March 1945, and it was therefore necessary to postpone the sailing dates given below.

| <u>Unit No.</u> | <u>Depart UK</u>        | <u>Arrive Ceylon</u>       |                                |
|-----------------|-------------------------|----------------------------|--------------------------------|
| 101             | 10 <sup>th</sup> July   | 10 <sup>th</sup> September | ) Or as soon afterwards as the |
| 102             | 20 <sup>th</sup> July   | 20 <sup>th</sup> September | ) change of Monsoon allows     |
| 103             | 10 <sup>th</sup> August | 10 <sup>th</sup> October   | ) completion of voyage beyond. |

On 18<sup>th</sup> March 1945 Air Ministry decided that "D" Class Fairmile's were not to be sent to SEAC before the SW Monsoon.

On 26<sup>th</sup> March 1945 the intention to move the first units of Fairmile's as soon as possible to the Mediterranean. Teething troubles would be discovered before sending Fairmile's on to SEAC from the Mediterranean.

By 3<sup>rd</sup> April 1945 only one "D" type Fairmile had been handed over from the Admiralty to the Air Ministry and that no craft would sail for ACSEA before the Monsoon. There was also the possibility that they would not sail for ACSEA after the Monsoon subject to the provision of a manning of more suitable craft. This matter was being investigated by the Admiralty.

Air Ministry reported on 5<sup>th</sup> April 1945 that the original delivery programme of LRRC provided for 12 craft to be delivered by the end of February. Only 3 LRRC were available at Calshot.

Accordingly, the Air Ministry took Admiralty advice and cancelled the sailing before the monsoon. Intention now was for the LRRC to arrive ACSEA after the SW Monsoon if no other suitable craft was found for deep sea rescue in ACSEA, Air Marshall Durstan was returning to the UK from ACSEA to discuss further.

Air Marshall Park on 13<sup>th</sup> May 1945 from his Headquarters, Air Command, South East Asia wrote to Air Marshall Sir Douglas C.S. Evill, KCB, DSC, AFC at the Air Ministry, Whitehall, London as follows:

*"The departure date for long range rescue craft has been set back several times and we are now obliged to wait until the end of the SW monsoon before the craft can cross the Indian Ocean. This will be at the beginning of September.*

*The importance of these long-range rescue craft cannot be overstated in view of the long sea crossings that our operational aircraft are obliged to make. Furthermore, the shortage of long-range rescue craft has made it necessary to ask the Navy to direct operational submarines to rendezvous positions for the duration of the more important bomber operations. During the intensive operation by the XXth Bomber Command our submarines were spending sixty percent of their time on patrol proceeding to and from air/sea rescue assignments. The Commander-in-Chief, East Indies Station is no longer able to meet all our requirements for Air/Sea rescue submarines. You will see therefore that the provision of long-range rescue craft is of paramount importance.*

*One of my Staff Officers who recently visited the Air Ministry with Durston, discussed the provision of LRRC, with DDASR, D of Ops M (I) and HQ, CC. It would appear that the delay in training the crews and despatching these craft was due to the failure to realise the urgent need for some form of craft quickly, and endeavouring to obtain a better type of craft, while ignoring the factor. Apparently even steam driven corvettes were considered.*

*I realise that it is no good crying over spilt milk now, but if you could do anything to ensure that the first sixteen Fairmile launches are ready sail from Aden to India at the beginning September, I should be most grateful. I do of course realise that the class "D" Fairmile is only a stop gap and that a better long-range air/sea rescue craft may be available later. The provision of the latter type should not however be allowed to interfere with our early receipt of the Fairmile's, which alone can solve our immediate problem."*

There was a change of policy on 12<sup>th</sup> June 1945 by DD/SR Air Ministry, London. Air Command, South East Asia long range rescue craft was reduced to 24. Of the 40 Fairmile's being prepared, and with MAAF only needing 10 craft, there was now a surplus of 6.

MAAF intention was to hand over HSL's in that theatre of war to the Royal Greek Air Force and LRRC were to be replacements to RAF.

4 LRRC surplus Fairmile's were assigned to Norway. The Admiralty were arranging for Norwegian Naval ML's to undertake air/sea rescue. There was no intention however to rob ACSEA, to meet the requirements of Norway.

ACSEA, on the 20<sup>th</sup> June 1945 suggested that Corvettes would answer the problem of the LRRC difficulty, but C in C East Indies Fleet would have difficulty in providing maintenance and docking for more than 6 corvettes or Kil Class and 12 "D" type Fairmile's.

On 15<sup>th</sup> June 1945 a signal was received at Air Ministry, London from Air Command SEA.

*"We have offer by USS of 5 85-feet American rescue launches complete with full range engine and hull spares, 10 spare Packard engines, 5 cradles, etc etc. Craft are fully serviceable and ready for use. Range 1850 miles. We can find personnel from disbandment's of further ASR units. Craft could be great assistance with LRRC problem"*

A letter was received at Ministry, Bush House, London on 13<sup>th</sup> July 1945 from the Vice Chief of Naval Staff which read as follows:

*"It is the opinion of the Naval Staff that the "D" type Fairmile's would be unsuitable for air/sea rescue work in SEAC, because of their poor endurance and sea-keeping qualities and because of difficulty of maintaining them. We are confident that escort vessels will be more suitable in every way, and instructions have now been sent to the Commander-in-Chief, East Indies, to make available twelve escort vessels for air/sea rescue duties forthwith.*

*It is also under consideration to send later to the East Indies five ex-Castle corvettes, which have been specially fitted as rescue ships and which may replace 5 of the escort vessels.*

*I believe that these arrangements will fulfil your requirements for SEAC, if this not the case perhaps you would let me know. It is assumed that you will no longer wish to send the Fairmile's to SEAC and that the requirement for depot ships for them will also lapse.*

*With regard to the need for depot ships for Mediterranean I understand that there are already several Fairmile's operating as air/sea rescue ships."*

On 23<sup>rd</sup> July 1945 Air Ministry, Whitehall sent a signal to ACSEA stating that the 85-foot American craft offered will not be looked upon as LRRC, and that that the American Rescue Launches were no longer required for operations.

Air Ministry intention on 30<sup>th</sup> July 1945 ordered ten of the sixteen Fairmile's in Nos 101 and 102 LRRC Units to remain in the Mediterranean based in Malta. Six remaining Fairmile's of No. 102 LRRC Unit to return to the United Kingdom.

A signal to Air Ministry, Whitehall from Naval C-in-C East Indies on 31<sup>st</sup> July 1945 read as follows:

*"Establishment of Air/Sea Rescue Posts in the Indian Ocean for which 12 Flower Class Corvettes have, as an immediate measure been allocated."*

*"Corvettes are to be stationed in pairs owing to high unserviceability rate. Disposition as follows: Cocos two, Rangoon two, Karachi two, Trincomalee two, in that order of Priority."*

On 7<sup>th</sup> September 1945, Admiralty sent a signal to C-in-C, Far East:

One LRRC for position six degrees north, one hundred and six degrees east.

One LRRC for position 18 degrees north and one hundred and thirteen degrees east.

This cover required for Singapore – Hong Kong Route.

One LRRC for position 29 degrees north and one hundred and twenty degrees east.

This cover required for Hong Kong – Japan Route.

This is an addition to our Indian Ocean requirements.

### **Formation of Long Range Rescue Craft Units, Royal Air Force Station Calshot**

A conference was called on 17<sup>th</sup> December 1944 at Calshot in preparation for the formation of 5 long range rescue marine craft units. The units to be numbered 101, 102, 103, 104, 105 and were for deployment in the Mediterranean and Far East Theatre areas for the purpose of effecting air sea rescue.

Each unit was to be know as a Flotilla and would be equipped with 8 110ft "D" Class Fairmile Craft. Each Flotilla would be established with an Officer Commanding of Squadron Leader rank.

There would also be an Adjutant who would be responsible for administration duties. An engineering officer would be on strength establishment of each flotilla.

On completion of the formation of each flotilla the Flotilla would sail from the United Kingdom under its own power under the auspices of Coastal Command but would be taken over by the appropriate Command when in Eastern waters.

The personnel establishment of each unit to be as follows:

19 Officers

150 Other Ranks

Each craft would be manned by the following crew:

|                            |                                   |
|----------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Captain                    | F/Lt Marine Navigation            |
| 2 <sup>nd</sup> in Command | F/O Marine Navigation             |
| 1 <sup>st</sup> Coxswain   | F/Sgt Motor Boat Crew             |
| 2 <sup>nd</sup> Coxswain   | Cpl Motor Boat Crew               |
| Deckhands                  | Five A/Cs Motor Boat Crew         |
| Engineers                  | One Sgt, and 3 A/Cs Fitter Marine |
| Electrician                | One A/C                           |

|                            |          |
|----------------------------|----------|
| Wireless Operator/Mechanic | One A/C  |
| Wireless Operator          | Two A/Cs |
| Nursing Orderly            | One A/C  |

One MBC to be trained as cook

Two of crew to be trained as Divers

Ten percent reserve pf personnel will be held overseas

### ORGANISATION

(a) Routing: For the outward voyage Units will be routed by the Naval Authorities. The Unit Leader will be in command of the flotilla but will not have a craft of his own.

(b) Watches: (i) Watches will be in the normal four hour periods with two dog watches as follows:

|             |                 |
|-------------|-----------------|
| 0000 – 0400 | Middle Watch    |
| 0400 – 0800 | Morning Watch   |
| 0800 – 1200 | Forenoon Watch  |
| 1200 – 1600 | Afternoon Watch |
| 1600 – 1800 | First Dog Watch |
| 1800 – 2000 | Last Dog Watch  |
| 2000 – 0000 | First Watch     |

One bell is struck 15 minutes before eight bells for the purpose of calling the next watch.

Seven bells in the Morning and Forenoon watches will be struck 0720 hours and 11.20 hours respectively in order to give the watch below time for dressing and meals. Punctuality in watch relief is essential.

(ii) Bridge at sea: Watch will be kept by one Officer and two MBC's, watch and watch about. MBC's will split watch into two hours at Wheel and two hours on Lookout. During hours of daylight, the second man of the watch will attend to care and upkeep on deck when not at the wheel.

(iii) Engine Room: Engine Room watch will be kept by two Fitters Marine per watch.

(iv) Radio: Radio watches will be kept as follows:

Forenoon and First Watch – Wireless Operator/Mechanic. This will enable him to carry out Daily Inspection and Maintenance. Morning and Dog Watches: Senior Wireless Operator. Afternoon and Middle Watches: Junior Wireless Operator.

(v) Harbour Watches: For this purpose, the crew will be divided into two watches as follows:

#### Port Watch

Second Coxswain  
Two MBC's  
One Electrician  
NCO Fitter/Marine  
One Fitter Marine  
Two Wireless Operators

#### Starboard Watch

First Coxswain  
Three MBC's  
One Nursing Orderly  
Two Fitters/Marine  
One Wireless Operator/Mechanic

- (c) Routine:
- (i) Division of watches, routine for Cook, Nursing Orderly, Electrician, etc. should be formulated by the Captain and displayed in the Forecastle. The attention of all Captains is drawn to their responsibilities as laid down in the Marine Craft Manual and Standing Orders should be prepared using this Manual as a guide.
  - (ii) A Daily Routine for "In Harbour" and for "At Sea" should be promulgated in each unit.
  - (iii) Washing down decks, daily inspections and Test (i.e. Engine-Wireless-Electrical) also gun cleaning will be carried out in the Forenoon Watch.
  - (iv) The electrician will be responsible for all electrical equipment, particularly with mechanical deck devices and gun circuits for which a very meagre allowance of deck hands is allowed. He will attend. As far as practical, to all servicing in daylight hours.
  - (v) One MBC (acting as Cook), the electrician and nursing orderly will be on day work at the discretion of the Captain.
  - (vi) Harbour: It is recommended that the nursing orderly will attend to the cleanliness and tidiness of the Officers' Quarters as well as the Sick Bay. As far as practicable the crew will on day work, but not less than the following nucleus must be on board during stand down or leave routine:

- One Watchkeeper
- One Engineer
- One W.O.P. or W.O.M.
- One M.B.C.

It is further recommended that in harbour the working day will be from 1600 hrs to 1800 hrs, but all such detailed arrangements must be formulated by the Captain under instructions from the Unit Leader at a morning parade.

- (d) Stations:
- (i) Berthing and Harbour Stations: Berthing and Harbour Stations will be as follows (Signal one long blast on alarm device.)
 

|             |   |
|-------------|---|
| Bridge      | Captain<br>Second Coxswain at wheel<br>W.O.M. for visual signalling |
| Foredeck    | Second in Command<br>Two MBC's<br>Nursing Orderly<br>Electrician    |
| Afterdeck   | First Coxswain<br>Two MBC's<br>Electrician                          |
| Engine Room | NCO Fitter/Marine<br>Three Fitters/Marine                           |
| W/T Room    | Two Wireless Operators  |

Crews at Berthing and Harbour Stations will line up fore and aft on the mid-ship line facing outboard
  - (ii) Action Stations: Action stations will be as follows (signal succession of long blasts on alarm device)
 

|             |   |
|-------------|---|
| Bridge      | Captain<br>Second in Command for Fire Control<br>First Coxswain at wheel<br>W.O.M. visual signals |
| Engine Room | NCO and three Fitters/Marine  |
| W/T Room    | Two Wireless Operators  |
  - (iii) At all times Stations of Crew and strict adherence to routine in entering and leaving port will be observed as laid down in Section VIII of the Marine Craft Manual.
  - (iv) Both Watches will be mustered for Berthing, Harbour, Action and Fire Stations or on such other emergencies as render the presence of all hands necessary.

|            |   |
|------------|---|
| W/T Cabin  | Two Wireless Operators  |
| Guns       | Two MBC's to each Forward gun;<br>Corporal and two MEC's to Twin guns aft |
| Messengers | Nursing Orderly and Electrician   |

On 1<sup>st</sup> January 1945 sixteen marine officers arrived at RAF Station Calshot for posting in, and they were immediately detached to No. 1 Marine Training School, RAF Station, Corsewall, Scotland, for an 'Advanced Navigation Course'. Duration of the course was approximately 8 weeks.

No Other Ranks had arrived at this time and they did not do so until February 1945.

On 4<sup>th</sup> March 1945 seven Fitter/Marine trade personnel proceeded on detachment to HMS "Attack", for a "Course of Familiarisation". This course was extended as and when further fitter/marine airmen were posted into RAF Station Calshot, but later, the course included Electrician trade personnel. Fitter/Marines previous to being posted into Calshot had during early December 1944, been detached to RAF Station, Halton, Bucks, for a course on Packard-Merlin engines.

Further marine officers arrived during early March 1945 and were detached to No. 1 Marine Training School for an 'Advanced Navigation Course' until 24<sup>th</sup> April 1945.

Boat crews of 'Other Ranks' and trades began arriving in strength during February and March 1945 and they were posted into the LRRMC units which by now were officially formed as follows:

No. 101 LRR MCU - 1<sup>st</sup> January 1945

No. 102 LRR MCU - 1<sup>st</sup> January 1945

No. 103 LRR MCU - 1<sup>st</sup> January 1945

Each Long Range Rescue Craft was assigned one cook, a volunteer from the Motor Boat Crew airmen. The volunteers were detached to RAF Station's Hereford and Halton for a 'Cookery Course'.

Two volunteers from all the LRR craft crew trades were called to take a course Divers, this course took place at HMS "Vernon" at Whale Island, Portsmouth. At this establishment the volunteers lived aboard HMS "Victoria and Albert", the former Royal Yacht when they were undergoing training. Volunteers also attended HMS "Excellent", Portsmouth, where there was another Divers School.

On completion of this course, airmen were granted permission to wear at the bottom of the right arm sleeve of their uniform an insignia 'Royal Naval Diving Badge', which carried an award of an additional 3 pence per day payment. To each two divers assigned to a LRR Craft one was appointed senior diver.

The course consisted of 2<sup>nd</sup> Class Naval Diving Course using Schic German standard diving suit. Before the start of the course each airman underwent a thorough medical examination by a Naval Medical Officer. This was followed by entry into a decompression tank to test the effect on the sinuses, eardrums, etc. The divers' course was extensive and tough. There was one serious accident to an airman, LAC D. Travers who got into difficulties with his breathing apparatus when underwater at depth. As a result of this accident this airman was discharged unfit from the RAF for further service. He was paralysed from his waist downward and remained in a wheel chair until his death in 1982.

The reason for this course was basically for the divers to carry out emergency underwater repairs to the LRR Craft when the craft were out of range of docking facilities, which would be the case in Far Eastern waters. The course covered other important aspects vital to each flotilla when operational.

On the return of the Marine Craft Officers to RAF Station Calshot from RAF Station Corsewall, and other ranks from their respective courses, which by now had included Gunnery Course, and aircraft recognition for motor boat crew personnel, they were assigned to their Units, and craft number.

These LRR craft were at various Boat Yard locations throughout the United Kingdom, where they were undergoing conversion from Royal Navy operational craft, and being prepared for 'Tropicalisation'. Boat crews were detached to the boat yard of their appointed craft.

There were many delays in the completion of the ex-Navy boats due to various reasons. Each craft carried out boat builders and RAF sea trials. In some cases, these trials did not come up to the expected satisfactory sea trials causing delays. However, whilst these trials were being made, satisfactory gunnery exercises were carried out. There was the announcement of "VE Day" on 8<sup>th</sup> May 1945, thus causing another delay due to the public holiday and celebration period.

By mid-May 1945, craft began arriving at RAF Station Calshot. Some returned to the makers boat yards for various reasons, in respect to serviceability.

On 23<sup>rd</sup> May 1945 the Air Officer Commanding No. 16 Group visited this Station and inspected long range rescue craft at the base.

During June 1945 small parties of officers and airmen boat crews left RAF Station, Calshot and were detached to No. 1 PDC, West Kirby to be kitted out for tropical kit.

On 6<sup>th</sup> June 1945, LRRC's 013 and 036 stood by at RAF Station, Calshot, while His Majesty King George VI, accompanied by Her Majesty the Queen flew in the King's Flight on a visit to Channel Islands.

No. 101 and 102 LRR MC Units boat crews had now returned to RAF Station, Calshot from their Embarkation leave.

On 9<sup>th</sup> July 1945, stores equipment and spares were loaded on No. 101 LRR MC Unit's craft Nos. 006, 007, 008, 011, 017, 020, 021, these craft being a 7 craft flotilla, and not 8 craft as originally estimated strength of Unit. LRRC 005 on the strength of No. 101 LRRMCU was not serviceable at the time of sailing.

At 10.20 hrs on 11<sup>th</sup> July 1945, No 101 Flotilla comprising LRRC's 006, 007, 008, 011, 017, 020, and 021 left RAF Station, Calshot, sailing for Plymouth en route to Bombay. At 21.30 hrs the flotilla arrived at Plymouth and moored on buoys for the night period.

On 12<sup>th</sup> July 1945, the Units craft refuelled at moorings, then anchored off Trinity Dock, collected further stores and spares equipment.

On 13<sup>th</sup> July 1945 the Flotilla prepared for sailing to Gibraltar. Sailing was cancelled for 24 hours on account of bad weather.

The weather on 14<sup>th</sup> July 1945 had not changed so sailing was postponed for a further 24 hours. There was bad weather from 15<sup>th</sup> to 20<sup>th</sup> July, the sailing was postponed.

On 21<sup>st</sup> July 1945 the weather cleared and at 15.00 hrs No. 1 LRRMC Unit, flotilla (Commanding, S/Ldr C.J. Lawrence) sailed from Plymouth on route to Gibraltar.

Back at RAF Station, Calshot, No. 102 LRRMC Unit on 20<sup>th</sup> July 1945 was ordered to prepare all craft ready to sail for South East Asia, but the sailing was delayed by adverse weather conditions.

At 21.00 hrs on 21<sup>st</sup> July 1945, No. 102 LRRMCU Flotilla (Officer Commanding S/Ldr G.F.L. Coates, DSC) sailed from RAF Station, Calshot to Plymouth en route to Gibraltar. Flotilla comprising of LRRC's 013, 015, 018, 029, 030, 031, 036 and 040, an 8 craft Flotilla plus 005 which had been detached to No. 102 LRRMCU on 12<sup>th</sup> July 1945, because she was not serviceable in time to sail with No. 101 LRRMCU.

This Unit arrived at Plymouth at 09.00 hrs on 22<sup>nd</sup> July 1945 and sailed from Plymouth at 17.00 hrs on 23<sup>rd</sup> July 1945 en route to Gibraltar.

At sea with No 101 LRRMCU, on 23<sup>rd</sup> July 1945 now heading towards Gibraltar LRRC 020 reported a shortage of fuel and LRRC 006 was instructed to leave convoy and proceed in company with LRRC 020 at reduced speed on one engine, and proceed on course as per sailing orders.

On 25<sup>th</sup> July 1945, No. 101 LRRMCU spent the complete day refuelling, restoring rations, equipment etc.

On 27<sup>th</sup> July 1945, No. 101 LRRMCU was inspected by AOC of Gibraltar.

At 08.00 hrs on 29<sup>th</sup> July 1945, No. 101 LRRMCU, Flotilla left Gibraltar (06.00 hrs BST) en route to Malta arriving there at 14.30 hrs GMT on 1<sup>st</sup> August 1945.

No. 102 LRRMCU, Flotilla sailed from Plymouth at 17.00 hrs GMT on 23<sup>rd</sup> July 1945. The wind S.W. Force 3-4. Control of the line head formation was maintained by VHF, the signal to open watch being the flashing of a Green Aldis. Leader 036 maintained engine revolutions at 1200 rpm, the other ships maintaining position of ½ cable astern in daylight and 1 cable at night.

At sea on 24<sup>th</sup> July 1945 this unit was off Ushant at 0500 hrs and proceeded across the Bay of Biscay. Wind NE Force 5 with following sea and swell. During the night of 24/25<sup>th</sup> the Fitter/Marine on 036 craft reported fumes in the engine room, and the collapse of the junior fitter. The cause was found to be drain cocks on the exhaust pipes of the port outer engine which had literally "dropped off" due to corrosion. Engines were changed to the inners and the holes plugged with wood covering, covered by an asbestos glove which proved effective for the remainder of the journey.

On 25<sup>th</sup> July 1945, No. 102 LRRMCU Flotilla at sea was off Cape Uillano and the course set down the Portuguese coast. Wind Force 4-5 from NE, Sea moderate and swell. Weather cloudy with bright periods. About 23.00 hrs LRRC 036 had trouble with her petrol feed and fell out of formation, instructing the remainder to maintain course.

This Unit at 05.15 hrs on 26<sup>th</sup> July 1945 was at sea off Burlings lighthouse. LRRC 036 resumed position as leader, experiencing no further trouble but later she reported petrol feed trouble was due to heavy rolling and low fuel tanks. Wind was northerly at Force 3 with a slight sea and swell. During the night LRRC 013 reported that the salt water pump had sheared but that she could carry on, on three engines. The weather having moderated, instructions were passed to LRRC 018 and LRRC 013 to break formation and pass spare water pump. This was completed in approximately three quarters of an hour from breaking to reforming. The actual transfer being made by floating the pump down in a rubber dinghy. No reduction of speed was made by the advance Units. At 17.35 hrs this Unit was off Cape St Vincent. Wind remained north but freshened to Force 5.

At 07.30 hrs on 27<sup>th</sup> July 1945, No. 102 LRRMCU, Flotilla was off Cape Spartel and arrived at Gibraltar at 11.00 hrs. No two craft had the same consumption rate of petrol, variations of remaining petrol being between 400 gallons and 2,000 gallons. On arrival no major defects were reported.

On 31<sup>st</sup> July 1945, No. 102 LRRMCU received instructions to remain at Gibraltar to await further instructions.

No. 101 LRRMCU at Malta on 2<sup>nd</sup> August 1945 replenished fuel, rations, and fresh water on all boats.

On 3<sup>rd</sup> August 1945, a sailing date was as fixed for 4<sup>th</sup> August 1945. Naval Authorities on the 4<sup>th</sup>, postponed the sailing for 24 hours. And on 5<sup>th</sup> August 1945, there was a further postponement of the sailing date until Air Ministry had clarified intentions.

A signal was received from Air Ministry on 6<sup>th</sup> August 1945 stating LRRC's are not required to proceed to SEAC. The Flotilla was to remain at Malta until further Air Ministry orders.

No. 102 LRRMCU at Gibraltar on 9<sup>th</sup> August, received instructions for two craft to be transferred to No. 101 LRRMCU, two craft to remain at Gibraltar, and Commanding Officer to return to United Kingdom with the four remaining craft and base party. LRRC 036 and 031 were detailed to proceed with LRRC 005 to Malta and join No. 101 LRRMCU, LRRC 013 and 015 were detailed to remain at Gibraltar.

11<sup>th</sup> August 1945, LRRC 018, 029, 030, and 040 sailed for the United Kingdom. LRRC 018 (Leader) C.O.S/Ldr G.F.L. Coates, DSC, Captain F/Lt K. Griffiths, First Officer F/O A.R. Young.

On 13<sup>th</sup> August 1945 during the passage across the Bay of Biscay at approximately 16.00 hrs in fine weather conditions LRRC 029 and 030 reported fuel situation touch and go. These craft were given instructions to report position off Ushant.

At 18.30 hrs on 14<sup>th</sup> August 1945 Ushant lighthouse was sighted by LRRC 018. The lighthouse was obscured by rain which turned to fine drizzle and later to mist. At 22.15 hrs LRRC 018 reduced speed, visibility was  $\frac{3}{4}$  mile. LRRC 029 reported that her feed position was doubtful, and she was to make for Falmouth if necessary.

LRRC 018 at 03.30 hrs on 15<sup>th</sup> August 1945 sighted LRRC 029, 030 and 040 and 05.45 hrs the Eddystone lighthouse was sighted. The unit reformed at 06.00 hrs off Eddystone lighthouse. Plymouth breakwater was passed at 07.20 hrs. 08.00 hrs all craft had made fast at Mount Batten breakwater.

The Unit at Mount Batten on 18<sup>th</sup> August 1945 received a signal to the effect that No. 102 LRRMCU may be required for service with SEAC, and the unit should proceed to RAF Station, Calshot, and complete to six boats by transfer of two boats from No. 104 LRRMCU, LRRC 013 and 015 were to be ready to rejoin unit at Gibraltar.

On 20<sup>th</sup> August 1945, LRRC 018, 029, 030 and 040 returned to RAF Station, Calshot.

The deployment of No. 102 LRRMCU in South East Asia Command was not required. LRRC 013 and 015 arrived back at RAF Calshot from Gibraltar on 13<sup>th</sup> November 1945.

No. 102 LRRMCU was based at Grimsby, November 1945 as an 11 Fairmile LRRC establishment. Later based at Fraserburgh, with detachments at Stornoway, Lerwick and Blyth.

This unit was disbanded on 30<sup>th</sup> June 1946.

Rescue score – Nil.

No 101 LRRMCU at Malta by 7<sup>th</sup> August 1945 had now by permission of HS Med., Middle East been placed under AHQ Malta for administration purposes, and boat crews settled down to routine duties, maintenance repair work, painting where required.

LRRC's Nos. 005, 031, 036 of No. 102 LRRMCU arrived at Malta on 15<sup>th</sup> August 1945, to join No 101 LRRMCU, Authority Air Ministry Signal AM00X 5200 dated 9<sup>th</sup> August 1945.

On 19<sup>th</sup> August 1945 this unit took over a room in Mint Street, Valetta as Headquarters and Orderly Room.

With the sudden announcement of the Far East war ending by the surrender of Japan to the Allies, AHQ Malta and HQ Med ME gave notice to this unit that certain officers and OR's were now due for release. As a result of this notification, S/Ldr C.J. Lawrence Officer Commanding No. 101 LRRMCU handed over command of this unit to S/Ldr J.G.E. Horne OBE, who had commanded No. 254 ASRU.

On 23<sup>rd</sup> August 1945, LRRC's Nos. 031 and 036 sailed for Ischia on detachment. Authority AM Signal A968 dated 23<sup>rd</sup> August 1945.

On 26<sup>th</sup> August 1945, LRRC's Nos. 011 and 021 sailed for St. Tropez on detachment. Authority AM Signal A968 dated 23<sup>rd</sup> August 1945.

On 10<sup>th</sup> September 1945, LRRC 006 was ordered to sail on detachment to Ischia, with base party comprising of 4 Fitter/Marine, 4 fitter armourers, 2 carpenter boat builders. This craft arrived at 07.00 hrs at Ischia on 12<sup>th</sup> September 1945. LRRC 006 at 09.00 hrs on the 16<sup>th</sup> September 1945 was ordered to sail to Cagliari.

On 20<sup>th</sup> September 1945 the unit detachment as Ischia was transferred to Marseilles.

LRRC 007 on 22<sup>nd</sup> September 1945 was ordered to sail from Malta en-route to Benghazi for operational purposes.

On 1<sup>st</sup> October 1945 the St. Tropez detachment was transferred to Marseilles.

In November 1945, Unit detachments were as follows:

Malta, Marseilles, Benghazi, Ischia.

At Malta at 10.00 hrs on 1<sup>st</sup> December 1945, a fire occurred in the engine room of LRRC 007 but this fire was extinguished by 10.05 hrs.

The rest of the month of December 1945 there was nothing of importance to report.

In January 1946, Unit detachments were as follows:

Malta, Marseilles, Cagliari, Benghazi.

There were no further F.540's reports after the 31<sup>st</sup> January 1946. The unit was disbanded

Rescue score – Nil.

No. 103 LRRMCU formed on 1<sup>st</sup> February 1945 for intended deployment in South East Asia Command. Formation procedure was carried out as No. 101 and 102 LRRMC Units. The Officer Commanding S/Ldr J.B. Clarkson from HQ 18 Group did not arrive at RAF Station, Calshot until 24<sup>th</sup> April 1945.

Boat crews on allocation to their craft were detached to the civilian boat yards where their craft were undergoing conversion to Royal Air Force requirements. Once satisfactory sea-going trials had been carried out the crews ferried their craft to RAF Station, Calshot, between 1<sup>st</sup> May and 24<sup>th</sup> July 1945.

Numbers of these craft were as follows: LRRC 001, 002, 009, 012, 014, 018, 028, 034.

By 6<sup>th</sup> August 1945 operational policy for the deployment of long range rescue craft in SEAC was cancelled.

On orders from the Air Ministry on 11<sup>th</sup> August 1945 two LRRC Nos. 002 and 028 were ordered to proceed on attachment to St. Peter Port, Guernsey, Channel islands in preparation to cover the route of the King's Flight aircraft for the visit of Their Majesties The King and Queen.

LRRC 001 on 26<sup>th</sup> August 1945 sailed for Guernsey to relieve LRRC 028.

On 2<sup>nd</sup> September 1945 an aircraft crashed at Calshot. The crew of five were picked up by a marine tender operating from RAF Station, Calshot. The marine tender was taken in tow by LRRC 012, Captain F/Lt N.F. Fortune-Fowler.

This Unit on 18<sup>th</sup> October 1945 received a signal from Air Ministry that LRRC Nos. 001, 002, and 009 were to be transferred complete with crews to LRRMCU No. 102. The remaining craft to be allotted to various bases and this unit to be disbanded.

Instructions were received for LRRC Nos. 012, 019, 028 to proceed to Bowmore. Sailing date 25<sup>th</sup> October 1945.

On 31<sup>st</sup> October 1945, LRRC 014 was prepared with full crew to sail to No. 24 ASRU, Gorleston.

Rescue score – Nil

No. 104 LRRMCU did not form until 1<sup>st</sup> August 1945, due to the craft conversions not being completed and by the announcement of the Far East War at an end on 15<sup>th</sup> August 1945, policy changed to the Unit's formation urgency.

S/Ldr S.D. Merrick on 11<sup>th</sup> September was released from the Royal Air Force. F/Lt F.J. Garwood assumed Command of the Unit, but by the 15<sup>th</sup> September 1945 F/Lt F.J. Garwood was posted to No. 102 LRRMCU and this command was handed over to F/Lt W.H.R. Palmer.

During September 1945 there were many postings of officers and airmen in and out of the unit.

On 26<sup>th</sup> September 1945, F/Lt H.T. Blaney, P/O R.W. Chissell and crew left RAF Calshot and proceeded to the Civilian boat yard at Argyllshire to collect LRRC 003.

The strength of the unit at the end of September 1945 was below strength.

On 20<sup>th</sup> October 1945, S/Ldr J.D. Loughman arrived at the Unit to take up duties of Commanding Officer.

On 22<sup>nd</sup> October 1945, F/Lt H.T. Blaney, F/O R.W. Chissell and crew arrived with LRRC 003.

A signal was received from headquarters, Coastal Command, disbanding the Unit.

From 24<sup>th</sup> to 31<sup>st</sup> October 1945 all LRR Craft on the strength of No. 104 LRRMCU, were allotted to various Air Sea Rescue Units in Home Command.

Rescue Score – Nil.

No. 105 LRRMCU was formed on 1<sup>st</sup> September 1945 and was never operational. S/Ldr J.D. Loughnan was appointed Officer Commanding, but had not arrived at the unit.

On 5<sup>th</sup> October 1945, LRRC 037 was at Oulton Broad awaiting sea trials.

On 17<sup>th</sup> October 1945 a signal was received from Air Ministry disbanding No. 105 LRRMCU, but stating action was not to be taken until further notice.

Officers and crew were detached to Shoreham Boat Yard on 18<sup>th</sup> October 1945 to collect LRRC's 024 and 027. Both of these awaiting sea trials.

At the end of October 1945 on disbandment of No. 104 LRRMCU, S/Ldr J.D. Loughnan, Officer Commanding was posted from this unit to No. 105 LRRMCU to take up duties as officer commanding on 1<sup>st</sup> November 1945.

LRRC 025 was awaiting collection at Brixham on 12<sup>th</sup> November 1945.

On 15<sup>th</sup> November 1945, LRRC 022 arrived at RAF Station, Calshot. On this day orders were received to disband the Unit.

LRRC 037 arrived at RAF Station, Calshot from Oulton Broad on 21<sup>st</sup> November 1945.

Rescue Score – Nil.

#### **LONG RANGE RESCUE CRAFT - FORMATION UNITS**

|                            |   |
|----------------------------|---|
| 001 - No. 103 L.R.R.M.C.U. | 021 - No. 101 L.R.R.M.C.U.                  |
| 002 - No. 103 L.R.R.M.C.U. | 022 - No. 105 L.R.R.M.C.U.                  |
| 003 - No. 104 L.R.R.M.C.U. | 023 - Not allocated – returned to Admiralty |
| 004 - No. 104 L.R.R.M.C.U. | 024 - No. 105 L.R.R.M.C.U.                  |
| 005 - No. 101 L.R.R.M.C.U. | 025 - No. 105 L.R.R.M.C.U.                  |
| 006 - No. 101 L.R.R.M.C.U. | 026 - No. 104 L.R.R.M.C.U.                  |
| 007 - No. 101 L.R.R.M.C.U. | 027 - No. 105 L.R.R.M.C.U.                  |
| 008 - No. 101 L.R.R.M.C.U. | 028 - No. 103 L.R.R.M.C.U.                  |
| 009 - No. 103 L.R.R.M.C.U. | 029 - No. 102 L.R.R.M.C.U.                  |
| 010 - No. 104 L.R.R.M.C.U. | 030 - No. 102 L.R.R.M.C.U.                  |
| 011 - No. 101 L.R.R.M.C.U. | 031 - No. 102 L.R.R.M.C.U.                  |
| 012 - No. 103 L.R.R.M.C.U. | 032 - No. 104 L.R.R.M.C.U.                  |
| 013 - No. 102 L.R.R.M.C.U. | 033 - No. 104 L.R.R.M.C.U.                  |
| 014 - No. 103 L.R.R.M.C.U. | 034 - No. 103 L.R.R.M.C.U.                  |
| 015 - No. 102 L.R.R.M.C.U. | 035 - No. 104 L.R.R.M.C.U.                  |
| 016 - No. 104 L.R.R.M.C.U. | 036 - No. 102 L.R.R.M.C.U.                  |
| 017 - No. 101 L.R.R.M.C.U. | 037 - No. 105 L.R.R.M.C.U.                  |
| 018 - No. 102 L.R.R.M.C.U. | 038 - No. 104 L.R.R.M.C.U.                  |
| 019 - No. 104 L.R.R.M.C.U. | 039 - No. 104 L.R.R.M.C.U.                  |
| 020 - No. 101 L.R.R.M.C.U. | 040 - No. 102 L.R.R.M.C.U.                  |

**FORMATION UNITS - LONG RANGE RESCUE CRAFT**

| <u>LRRMCU 101</u> | <u>LRRMCU 102</u> | <u>LRRMCU 103</u> | <u>LRRMCU 104</u> | <u>LRRMCU 105</u> |
|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|
| 005               | 013               | 001               | 003               | 022               |
| 006               | 015               | 002               | 004               | 024               |
| 007               | 018               | 009               | 010               | 025               |
| 008               | 029               | 012               | 016               | 027               |
| 011               | 030               | 014               | 019               | 037               |
| 017               | 031               | 028               | 026               |                   |
| 020               | 036               | 034               | 032               |                   |
| 021               | 040               |                   | 033               |                   |
|                   |                   |                   | 035               |                   |
|                   |                   |                   | 038               |                   |
|                   |                   |                   | 039               |                   |

The information above is an extract from a document produced by ex-Marine Branch member xxxxxx Forbes-Morgan