



## ASK THE CAPTAIN – Feb 2012

Once again very many thanks for all of your questions; thanks in particular for the short ones! In future do not be offended if overly long questions are not answered. Please note that I have again closed Ask the Captain on 17<sup>th</sup> of the month to allow us time to staff the answers. Any questions received after the 17<sup>th</sup> will be answered next month. I always receive very positive feedback on Ask the Captain when I meet people when I am out and about which is very pleasing. I do hope you enjoy reading the answers.

Q: I am in favour of all the positive, forward moving decisions that have occurred in the past 2 years and congratulate you for taking so much of the flack. Some questions placed in this forum must be to entertain the rest of us, but I've a genuine interest in your opinion on my question.

When the rank of Cdr (SCC) RNR/Lt Col (SCC) RMR was introduced, the accompanying release mentioned one reason was to bring the SCC some parity with the senior ranks available in the CCF, ACF and ATC.

So, I wonder if at the time, or at any point in our history, there has been discussion as to the status of SCC (including RMC) officers with regards to becoming commissioned. I realise to gain some sort of RNR (RMR) sub-list commission is unrealistic. I even think a Queen's commission is not necessary within Sea Cadets. However, the SCC is supposed to mirror the Senior Service, and RN and RM officers gain commissions. Our counter parts in the other Cadet Forces hold commissions too (although not the CCF (RN) I understand). I don't know the historic reason that Sea Cadet officers do not. I cannot even offer a personal view on what I think the difference in our current appointment as an officer versus having a commission would make! None, of course, in a daily sense.

But, back to my point, has a Tri-Service Cadet Force only commission ever been considered in the UK, like those available to Sea Cadet Corps officers in other parts of the Commonwealth? I realise the appetite from the ACF and ATC may be lacking as they already have "theirs", but that's not why we can't instigate it for our officers and bring some parity with our international friends, if not our national colleagues.

With current favour being placed on the Cadet Forces as youth organisations and the celebrations expected in 2012, is it possible the Sea Cadets could lead a move towards a Cadet Forces commission?

A: The answer is yes this is under consideration currently as part of the on-going defence youth engagement review, we would have to be clear on the detailed implications before signing the Corps up to any such proposals. We have many things to do as part of the recent vision and strategy work and I must say that this is not near the top of my priority list. I agree some of the questions are very entertaining but at least the Corps have a means of speaking directly to the top of the organisation which is why I think this channel of communication is so popular, albeit hard work to keep going.

Q: whilst at the London Boat Show at the Excel Centre this month, other than seeing a boat which had been badged & labelled 'Sold to Belfast Sea Cadets', I didn't notice a Sea Cadet presence.

The Excel Centre is only 7.5 miles from SCC HQ, there are many units within London Area, Southern Area & Eastern Area that could easily reach the Excel Centre. There were many opportunities for recruiting & advertising the Corps. Is there a good reason why there was no Sea Cadet presence at this prestigious event?

On a more positive note I nearly spat out my metaphorical cornflakes (I was driving at the time) whilst listening to the Radio 4 Today Programme 16/01/12. Robert Hardman was being

interviewed by Evan Davis about a new Royal Yacht or 'National Flagship' & he gave the Sea Cadets a great plug. Have we got a friend & ally at the Daily Mail & should someone in HQ follow this up?

A: This was the first time in 10 years that we couldn't attend the London Boat Show. We normally support the RN on their stand and our London Area staff and cadets help to promote the Corps there. Working with the RN on their stand is a great for us as a charity as it is too expensive for us to set up one of our own. Due to tightening budgets unfortunately the RN for the first time did not have any presence at the Boat Show. Maybe next year they may re-consider! As the cost of exhibiting independently is expensive we tend to work with partners, at last years Southampton Boat Show for example we were invited to join Suzuki on their stand, so generally speaking we do have a presence at these shows.

As to the Daily Mail, they have launched a ship appeal for a new Britannia independently of us, just in time to capture the coverage around the Jubilee.....The idea is not a firm one instead more aspirational, and a nice fit with all the Jubilee discussion at the moment. However the reports are various with some saying that Sea Cadets would be one of the main beneficiaries and others that Sea Cadets would pay to use the ship. These reports can be confusing, we have written to the Editor and the reporter composing the article explaining our position and in principle supporting their efforts, obviously we would be interested to see where it leads, however we are committed to our own Ship Appeal so we hope that in future the reports will be a little more accurate.

Q: We have a 16 year old ex cadet who has marine engineering and electrical engineering BTEC and would like to volunteer to join the unit to help with boat maintenance. He does not want to be a cadet and we would like to make use of his help as a unit helper but he seems to be precluded by age. As he is old enough to work, is there anyway that we might be able to take him on?

A: I am afraid that the only way a person under 18 can be involved in Sea Cadet activities is as a cadet. This provides him or her with safeguarding, MOD indemnities and other protection that come from that status. There is no reason of course why a cadet cannot instruct if properly qualified. For obvious reasons, however, Adult Instructors must be over 18. So my advice is he or she waits until 18 or considers re-joining as a cadet and that the unit makes some special provisions to use his or her skills.

Q: After taking sometime to think about what I have read in the December 'Ask the Captain' I have decided that I must urge you to re-consider the implementation of this change to the regulations. I am in a similar situation to the PO who planned to use 2 ½ years service as a PPO and a further 2 ½ years as a substantive PO to go on the CPO course. This apparently is no longer allowed. I feel that this change to the regulation should not have been allowed to take place whilst there were instructors working towards this goal. This has totally de-motivated me and having successfully gained the previously required, two advanced qualifications, I believe that I have sufficient experience to do the CPO course now.

A: This is not a recent change. I believe that the regulation allowing half PPO service to count was removed from SCRs nearly 3 years ago.

Q. 1996 Eastern Area only had 3 COs/OICs that were Senior Rates, today more than half the units are commanded by SRs. Am I correct to assume that the aim is for all Units to be commanded by an officer? How do we go about addressing this when only 4 CFAVs were advanced to officer cadre in 2011 within the Area? Working on those figures it will take approximately 7 years for the current SR COs/OICs to be promoted, assuming all remain in post.

Also, the CO/OIC is an important role and really can determine the 'Cadet Experience', yet the selection process and eligibility requirements are very small. For CFAVs to be promoted they have much to complete and are required to have knowledge prior to promotion. OICs are appointed then expected to gain the knowledge (with the exclusion of appointments from the Officer Cadre). Surely this is not an efficient way of working.

I am yet to meet an ACF or ATC CO/OIC of SNCO rank. How do these 2 organisations manage to get the right people for Officer Promotion/CO Selection? How are MSSC addressing this? Could we learn something from them?

A: It would be great if all units were commanded by officers, but that is not to belittle the achievements of the many senior rates who hold those positions and who do a fantastic job. Unlike the SCC, the ATC and ACF, have always promoted people into roles and perhaps that is something that we should consider in the future though it is not one of our immediate priorities.

Q: I am writing to ask about the current SCC haircut policy. Do cadets have to get their hair cut? Because some cadets just want to keep their hair! I would understand if this was a job in the Navy, but its not, it's just a hobby. I know many people who have left because they were forced to get their haircut. I look forward to your response.

A: Our cadets and uniformed instructors are privileged to be able to wear the uniform of the Royal Navy and when wearing that uniform are expected to present themselves to an equivalent standard. I would have thought that anyone joining a uniformed cadet force would realize that such rules exist.

Q: I was wondering whether you could help me, I am a cadet and my unit is refusing to give me my ordinary to able cadet exam when i have been an ordinary cadet since August 2010. There is a bit of favouritism at my unit and they seem to be giving the cadets they like the promotions within 2-3 months and it really isn't fair.

A: I suggest that you speak to one of the adults at your unit that you know best and ask why you haven't been given your exam. I am sure that they would listen to your concerns.

Q: Why has the junior uniform changed? It now looks more like a scout uniform! And with 4s having been removed from ASC2 as uniform for juniors we now have no choice. We were promised the branding would not affect our uniforms, but it seems now even junior uniform has been affected. I feel the removal of the crest and the introduction of the 'S' onto uniforms is simply disgusting.

Also, I feel the price we ask parents top pay per junior uniform is extortionate as it stands, now we have to ask them to buy a second uniform because we have now changed to the new branding - or do you propose we simply have a mix of uniforms throughout the junior sections?

Finally, why do the tops have 'Sea Cadets Juniors' written on them when they are 'Junior Sea Cadets'?

A: First of all, let's remember that juniors are there to have fun. We want them to be recognisable and smart but they do not move into formal uniform until they are 12 and become cadets and that is how it should be. I approved the new uniform and happen to

like it very much. Strange as it may seem I am not against some mix of uniforms in junior sections – we need to be tolerant and recognising that some parents will have already spent money on the old uniform.

Q: As you may be aware there are a number of unofficial websites which operate under the title of the Sea Cadet Corps or Sea Cadets, most notably the KUSCH Online Forums at [www.sccportal.org.uk](http://www.sccportal.org.uk) and Sea Cadet Training found at [www.scctraining.org.uk](http://www.scctraining.org.uk). These are closed sites, requiring log in with username and password, in which cadets and adults alike can discuss issues and share training resources. I have in the past been an active member on the Forum site, but more recently, having read up carefully on the Unit Web Guidelines and the Understanding Facebook Use Guide in order to ensure our unit was acting in compliance with the policies, I have become concerned.

The websites and Facebook pages which are acceptable comply because they are open and public. The danger associated with closed sites is the potential for grooming and inappropriate contact between adults and cadets which is not in public view to be checked.

A: We are aware of both sites you mention. The KUSCH Forum is officially recognised and is properly moderated by senior SCC volunteers. The 'scctraining' was not officially sanctioned and has been taken down at our request. However, it did have some useful materials on it and we have been in touch with its originator and are looking to replicate some of its features on the T&A Website in the not too distant future. The concerns you express, however, are very pertinent and it is an area that we constantly monitoring.