

Warsash School of Maritime, Science and Engineering Graduation Ceremony – Captain Brian Hoare (HoareB62): *(This graduation ceremony was for the whole Warsash maritime faculty which includes WMA cadets.)* Our Chairman Roger Holt and I, as Deputy Chairman, were invited by Solent University on 30th June 2019 to attend the graduation ceremony for Officer Cadets and those completing maritime related degrees, followed by the Maritime Dinner that evening. We have both attended many of the passing out ceremonies and dinners held by the Warsash Maritime Academy (WMA) at the Guildhall which were specifically for Officer Cadets (OCs) completing their three year's study but this would be the first since the WMA had been fully integrated into the new facilities at Solent University in Southampton, following the closure of the upper training site at Warsash.



David Dearsley and Roger Holt with three Officer Cadets



Warsash Maritime Academy cadets

The old style passing-out ceremonies were very much a family affair, the OCs having been a close knit group at the Warsash Campus during three years of studies only broken by six months of sea time. The tables in the Guildhall were filled with parties of proud parents and relatives and the whole show organised and presented by the WMA staff. There would be much cheering by their peers as individual OCs came to the stage often followed by even louder cheering and whooping from their proud families. The Warsash Association (WA) prize would be the highlight of the presentations, our distinguished guest would address the gathering, dinner would be served after which the OCs could celebrate and let off steam to a disco and the bar was only a few paces away. One of the two highlights of the evening would be the address given by the John Bazley on behalf of the WMA, he always recounted their studies over the period, charitable events and without fail concluded with statistics regarding how much food, beer, toilet rolls etc. had been consumed during their time and normally ended with the stunning fact that throughout the period the engineer OCs had washed their boiler suits once! The second highlight would be the response on behalf of the OCs which without fail included grateful thanks to the teaching staff at the WMA and their parents for supporting them. I had feared that this unique occasion would be lost by being totally subsumed into the more formal graduation ceremony of Solent University but am pleased to report that while the graduation ceremony itself is quite formal, the dinner and prize giving in the evening is not.

We were entertained to lunch by Solent University prior to the graduation ceremony where we met the outgoing Vice Chancellor Graham Baldwin and members of the faculty staff. During lunch the Chancellor, Theo Paphitis, the multi-millionaire entrepreneur of 'Dragons Den' fame, thanked particular members of staff for their help in organising all the graduation ceremonies during the week and for guiding him through his first as Chancellor since succeeding Lord West of Spithead. He went on to note that Vice Chancellor Graham Baldwin was leaving to become Vice Chancellor of the University of Central Lancashire (a return home to his native Preston), thanked him for his work in overseeing the many changes over the past few years and made a presentation to him.

The more formal proceedings commenced with the Chancellor, Vice Chancellor, faculty staff and invited guest such as our own member David Dearsley who holds an Honorary Doctorate from the University, to don their gowns and proceed the short distance to the Guildhall for the graduation ceremony. At this point the formality of the ceremony is markedly different from the previous WMA ones; a slick video is shown to the audience prior to the start showing how it is to be conducted and guidance for our participation, the audience stands as the robed faculty party proceeds to the podium and the Vice Chancellor makes an address. He highlighted the one hundred million pound investment into Solent University of which forty million pounds was invested in the new WMA and Nautical studies campus; he referred to the return on this investment stating that the University was meeting its budget targets and congratulated the graduates on their achievement. The Chancellor, Theo Paphitis, was invited to receive the graduates, at each stage of these proceedings there is much doffing of caps and mortar boards as tradition dictates. A senior member of the faculty introduces each group by stating 'Chancellor I present to you.....', the WMA OCs were the first, very smartly turned out in their mess jackets, possibly the smartest group I have seen at any ceremony. This year they were a relatively small number as their intake coincided with the

announced move from the Warsash site and many shipping companies and training agencies held back waiting to see how the WMA would develop at its new location. This group is unique in being the last to study at the Warsash old site prior to their six months sea time. On their return they were in a completely different environment at the new facilities in Solent University. All current OCs commence their three years training at the new St Mary's Campus.

Our group were followed by graduates with degrees in Maritime Operations, Maritime Engineering, Electro Technical, Yacht Design, Port Operations and the like, a much more diverse spread of maritime education than we used to see at the old WMA ceremony. At the conclusion of the graduation presentations, the Chancellor addressed the graduates. As befits an entrepreneur and self-made multi-millionaire he gave them very sound advice in that although they have been educated to pursue their chosen careers, they must be prepared for set-backs along the way, life is like that, but hard work and determination to follow their chosen path is the key to success: wise words for some of our OCs who did not have a sponsor able to offer them their first OOW appointment. A nice touch at this ceremony was that the Chancellor, Vice Chancellor and faculty members exit the hall first and then formed a corridor to applaud all the graduates as they passed though after exiting the Guildhall

At the conclusion, we attended a small reception in a marquee erected outside the Guildhall, which gave us an opportunity to meet several Cadets and our WA ties attracted the attention of two membership candidates one of whom seemed very keen to join even though he is now a BA pilot. It was a well organised and successful occasion, the only thing missing from the old style passing-out ceremony was announcing the shipping company or sponsor of each OC as they were called, I believe it gives the assembled audience a feel of just how international the shipping industry is and hope the announcement will be reinstated next year.

The annual Maritime Passing Out Dinner that evening was held in the 'Spark Building' at Solent University and as there was no format during the graduation ceremony for a prize giving, it was decided to incorporate it into this event. Following a convivial dinner, during which we met the Deputy Vice Chancellor, Julie Hall, the Vice-Chancellor gave an address during which he gave more details on how the one hundred million pound investment had been spent with particular emphasis on the WMA. He highlighted the recently opened state-of-the-art Simulation Unit allowing several ship units, engine room simulator and liquid cargo operations simulator, to interact with each other or operate independently. He also advised that there was a simulator for container crane operation, updated us on the delivery of new ship models to the Timsbury Lake ship handling centre and the development of new firefighting and sea survival training facilities on the lower site at Warsash.

The prize giving ceremony then took place but unfortunately many of the recipients were at sea. This included Officer Cadet Robert Archibald who won the Warsash Association Cup for Individual Achievement and in his absence our Chairman presented it to a representative from Carnival Cruise HR department on his behalf. I was unexpectedly called upon to present the Sword of Honour which was again received by the Carnival Cruise representative in the absence of the winner. This is not strictly our prize as it is awarded by The School but it is given to the same winner of the Individual Achievement prize. The sword was given on loan many years ago and is kept in the safe custody of Solent University as indeed is our Cup. Either way it was a nice gesture to ask the WA to make the presentation as we represent that link to the previous history of Warsash. The evening concluded with the Chancellor giving a light hearted address, many thanks to Solent University for continuing with the prize giving ceremony and making it a memorable occasion for the OC's and the parents attending.