



LATEST NEWS FROM THE MCA

A capacity crowd filled the back bar at "The Hop Store" in Antibes on 21st September to hear Capt. Roger Towner, Registrar General of Shipping and Seamen for the UK, give an interesting and informative update of what is going on at the MCA with respect to the superyacht industry.

The meeting was arranged by the PYA and our two sponsors:- Bluewater Yachting, represented by John Wyborn, and John Percival Marine Associates, represented by John Percival.



After a short speech of welcome and introduction from the PYA's President, Capt. Andrew Schofield, Roger got the evening off to a flying start with a striptease. This, unfortunately, only went as far as removing his tie but it set the tone for a friendly and relaxed meeting.

Roger first told us of recent personnel changes at the MCA which include the appointment of a new Chief Executive, Admiral Sir Alan Massey. We also learned that Denzel Pereira, formerly Chief Examiner, has retired but not yet been replaced with the result that Roger is also, once again, filling that role.

He noted that the new Minister is keen to improve maritime safety but there is a general desire in the government to limit new legislation. As an aside, Roger explained that the current round of cuts in British government spending means that there is no budget to buy for him the traditional Registrar General's uniform of tricorne hat, tail coat and breeches.

We were told that the long awaited revision of LY2 is delayed yet again and that a decision has been made to put the draft out for consultation. Roger said that the proposed revisions will probably include new requirements with regard to helicopter and submarine operations, safety for exterior window cleaning apparatus and appropriate radio equipment.

In response to a question from the floor, Roger explained that the proposed new Passenger Yacht Code - colloquially known as the 13-36 Code - is a joint MCA project that is being led by the Cayman Islands Shipping Registry. He said that the Cayman's hope is to present it at METS in November. Roger was emphatic that MCA is not going to accept our current < 3,000 GT deck officer certificates for service on 13-36 Code vessels. This means, in effect, that the deck officers will have to either take the "Unlimited" route starting from (U) OOW or be drawn from the Commercial sector / Merchant Navy.

Roger told us that there was little new to say about the MLC because a meeting to discuss implementation of the Convention is currently under way at the ILO headquarters in Geneva. We should expect more news in the coming months.

The big topic for the meeting was the latest revisions to the STCW Code which, following their adoption in Manila, are now to be known as the "Manila Amendments". Roger demonstrated how the Code has grown from a small, A5 size booklet in 1978 to the current version which is the size of a telephone directory.

The Manila Amendments will come into full force in 2017 with a five year transition period from 2012 during which STCW 95 certificates will remain valid. Roger said that the intention is to enact legislation to give effect to these amendments as soon as practicable.

The Manila Amendments will introduce too many changes for Roger to tell us about all of them but he did mention:-

- Deck officers will not be required undergo refresher ECDIS training to revalidate. However, in response to the increased competency requirements, the MCA intends to increase the amount of ECDIS training in the current deck officer syllabus.
- All certificate holders will have to undergo refresher training in sea survival and fire fighting to revalidate.
- Roger reminded us that the current requirement for the Master and the person responsible for providing medical care to renew their "Medical Care" certificates every five years is an MCA and EU requirement. It is NOT an STCW requirement.
- There will be additional requirements for security training. This will be at three levels:-All crew will have to undergo "Security Awareness" training, as part of their Basic Training; those with specific security duties will undergo additional training while SSOs will have training much as it is now.
- "Marine Environmental Awareness" training will be added to the existing Basic Training for all seafarers and to the OOW syllabus for deck officers and engineers.
- A qualification specifically for ETOs will be introduced but there are no plans to make an ETO compulsory on any type of vessels. It is very unlikely that there will be a yacht-specific ETO certificate.

Roger then went on to talk about some of the other matters that are under consideration at the MCA:-

- They are looking into the possibility of combining the Y1 and Y2 engineering certificates in a single, STCW-compliant certificate.
- They are concerned about the low pass rate on the yacht engineering exams and think that candidates are not studying sufficiently prior to attending the courses. One possible solution may be to require some "distance learning" prior to attending the courses.
- They recognise that MGN156 needs to be updated.
- They would like to look again at the AEC and MEOL scheme.
- They would like to make both Deck and Engineering courses and qualifications more transferable between the different marine sectors such as work boats, fishing vessels and yachts.
- A meeting about STCW in January is going to discuss "Appropriate Sea Service" with some IMO delegates saying that service on yachts should not count towards a Merchant CoC. At present the UK administration allows service on any vessel > 24m and > 80 GT that proceeds to sea to count.

We heard then heard from Roger a long and complicated account of moves in the UK to establish a framework of training standards that will be applicable to all sectors of marine training so that successfully completed modules can count towards any CoC, merchant, fishing or yachting.

This was followed by questions from the floor and an extended discussion about the crossover from yachting to merchant service. Roger pointed out that it is perfectly feasible for yachting crew to study all the courses for a merchant CoC by distance learning and then, once they have the requisite sea time, to present themselves for the oral. However the study time is considerable and John Percival said that it needs a minimum of six months intensive full-time study to complete the syllabus. Roger suggested that it would require about 18 months of part-time study and pointed out that the current yacht syllabus requires about five days of stability tuition

whereas cadets studying the merchant syllabus receive around 20 days of tuition

In response to a question from the floor, Roger said that he was not aware of plans by any Red Ensign administration to offer "extended" certificates above the current 3,000 GT limit and that any such move would be illegal because all of these administrations operate under the authority of the MCA and are not independent signatories to the STCW convention.

We heard from the floor that Belize has been offering a 5,000 GT CoC for use on Belize registered vessels, but nobody present knew any of the details.

Another question from the floor led to a discussion of the non-acceptance by the MCA of STCW course certificates issued by Australia. Roger explained that the MCA does recognise Australian certificates for STCW Basic Training but not any of the higher short-course certificates. He said that this situation has arisen because the Australian authorities have reversed an earlier bilateral agreement with the MCA to recognise each other's certificates.

This led on to a discussion about some STCW certificates issued in Italy which, Roger said, are causing concern at the MCA. It appears that it is possible in Italy to obtain an advanced fire-fighting certificate without any practical experience at the advanced level. The MCA has accepted an invitation from the Italian authorities to discuss the matter in Rome in the near future.

At this point the formal meeting ended with a vote of thanks to the panellists followed by a rush to the bar.

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PYA

