

JUNE 2022

# THE ST HELENA AMBASSADOR



## Editorial

Hi, welcome to the St Helena Ambassador!

In this month's edition you can find out about how we celebrated the Queen's Platinum Jubilee, what the Health Services Directorate did to commemorate Diabetes Awareness Week, and read Captain Adam's 'then and now' story as a seafarer!

If you'd like to contribute a story to the St Helena Ambassador or have any suggestions on what you'd like to see included, please feel free to contact me on tel: 22470 or via email: [jodie.s-constantine@sainthelena.gov.sh](mailto:jodie.s-constantine@sainthelena.gov.sh).

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# Diabetes Awareness Week 2022



Participants taking part in the lunch time walk

Diabetes Awareness Week took place between Monday, 13, and Sunday, 19 June. In recognition of the week, the Health Services Directorate, led by Dietitian, Sarah Mattinson, and the Diabetes team, hosted a Diabetes Workshop, 'Denim for Diabetes' mufti-day, and a lunch time walk.

The first Diabetes Workshop was held on Wednesday, 15 June, at the Jamestown Community Centre. Persons diagnosed, friend or relatives, or those who work and care for people living with type 2 diabetes were invited to attend. Expert speakers, who were present at the interactive workshop, talked about diabetes and the importance of medication. The Dietitian was able to provide advice on how to eat a portion controlled healthy balanced diet on St Helena.

Dietitian, Sarah Mattinson, commented:

*"Diabetes Week is a great way to raise awareness, but it's important to remember Diabetes is not just confined to one week of the year. If you are living with Diabetes, what you do every day of the year is important when trying to avoid complications like poor eyesight, kidney disease, foot ulcers, and heart disease."*

*"Very positive feedback was received from the attendees of the workshop such as "a very well put together workshop", "interactive", "excellent presentations", and finally "a very good day". People were also keen to see more workshops of this nature in the future."*

On Friday, 17 June, businesses, organisations and the general public were invited to participate in a 'Denim for Diabetes' mufti-day as well as a lunch time walk. The walk started at 1pm from the General Hospital, Upper Jamestown, and concluded at the Cenotaph at the Seafront.

The lunch time walk raised just over £100. The monies raised on the walk will be donated to Diabetes UK who supported the week with leaflets and promotional material. Monies raised from the mufti-day will be donated to the St Helena Diabetes Association.

Anyone who would like to arrange an appointment with the Diabetes Nurse to discuss the management and support available on St Helena can call the Outpatients' Clinic on tel: 22321 or contact Dietitian, Sarah Mattinson, via email: [Sarah.Mattinson@sainthelena.gov.sh](mailto:Sarah.Mattinson@sainthelena.gov.sh) to be included in the next Diabetes Workshop in August.



Health Promotion Lead, Kate Heneghan, delivering presentation



Display showing 100 Kcal sweet treats



# St Helena celebrates the Platinum Jubilee of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II



A number of events took place on St Helena to celebrate the Platinum Jubilee of Her Majesty the Queen Elizabeth II.

The first event took place at 3.30pm at Signal House, Ladder Hill, on Thursday, 2 June, where the Union Jack was unfurled for the first time on the newly reinstated flag pole in honour of the Queen's 70 year reign. The ceremony was opened by the Right Reverend Lord Bishop of St Helena, Dale Bowers MBE and included speeches by HE the Governor, Dr Philip Rushbrook, the Curator of the St Helena Museum, Adam Sizeland, and ex RMS St Helena Deck Officer, Mia Henry. The ceremony also involved the 1st Jamestown Scouts who played the appropriate flag raising bugle call 'Salute' as the Union Flag was raised by members of the St Helena Veterans Association.

At 8.45pm on Thursday a short ceremony took place at the sea front where 'The Queen's Platinum Jubilee' Beacon was lit. Over two hundred people attended. The Ceremony was opened with prayers of thanksgiving for the Queen and a blessing of the beacon by Bishop Dale. Speeches were delivered by Chief Minister, Julie Thomas, the Governor, Tyler Anthony from the 1st Jamestown Scout Group, and Taylor Bennett from the Jamestown Girl Guides. The 1st Jamestown Scout Group played the bugle call entitled 'Majesty' and the Chief Minister lit the

beacon at 9.15pm whilst the Creative St Helena Choir sang the winning song of the Commonwealth competition, dedicated to Her Majesty, entitled 'A Life Lived with Grace'.

On Friday, 3 June, a Thanksgiving Service took place at the Sea Front. The event began with a formal parade involving all uniformed contingents. The Thanksgiving Service involved a number of religious denominations and included bible readings, prayers and congregational hymns to honour the Queen becoming the first British Monarch to celebrate a Platinum Jubilee. Following the Service, the Governor made an announcement from the Queen that the St Helena Police will now be known as the 'Royal St Helena Police Service'. The Service concluded with the presentation of commemorative Jubilee medals, awarded to personnel who work in the emergency front line services. The day was followed by fete celebrations, which included novelty sports, an African dance display, hat and crown parade, and cutting and sharing of a large Jubilee cake, donated by Solomon's.

On Sunday, 5 June, the Governor hosted an official garden party celebratory event at Plantation House to honour the Queen's 70 year reign. During the party, the Governor made a loyal toast to the Queen and planted a tree as part of the Queen's Green Canopy initiative. The Governor also cut and shared a Jubilee cake, and hosted a pub-style Platinum Jubilee quiz. Musical entertainment was provided by local singers/musicians.

The final event took place at the Ginger Patch, High Peak, Blue Hill, on Monday, 6 June 2022, where the community planted 70 endemic 'She Cabbage' trees as part of 'The Queen's Green Canopy' initiative and to celebrate the Queen's 70 years of service.





Participants of the fancy hat competition at the seafont



The Chief Minister lighting the beacon



Uniformed contingents and members of the public formed a figure of '70' at the seafont



The Governor presenting Jubilee medals to members of the St Helena Fire & Rescue Service



Invited guest during the garden party at Plantation House



Members of the St Helena Veterans Association raising the Union Flag



St Helena Police Service during the march-past Ceremony



Tree planting at the Ginger Patch, Blue Hill



The Governor cutting the Jubilee cake at the seafont



Invited guest planting a tree at Plantation House



# Day of the Seafarer

## Captain Adam Williams shares his 'then and now' story as a seafarer



Captain Adam Williams on-board the MV Helena

The annual 'Day of the Seafarer' was celebrated on Saturday, 25 June 2022. This year's theme is 'Your voyage - then and now, share your journey'.

This year, Captain Adam Williams, who started his career on the ex RMS St Helena and is still at sea serving the Island on-board the MV Helena, has given us a humanised account of his 'then and now' as a seafarer, a story most touching and real:

*My career in the maritime industry thus far has spanned almost 25 years, a small passage of time for man but a giant leap for the maritime industry. I could bore you to death with a nice clear list of things that have changed over this time that I have been at sea, but it isn't that simple. There is a journey between then and now, a journey not in clinical or sequential lists but a journey through time as told in a good old story, just the way our forebears in the industry would have told it, this is my list, my way, the seafarer's way!*

*Throughout my relatively short time at sea I have witnessed a number of gradual but recently more accelerated changes which can be attributed to the industry as a whole constantly evolving, not just through technological innovation, but also that very human quest to become better, smarter and more economical with how we do things.*

*Saturday, 27 December 1997, I sat in the Honeymoon Chair at the seafront in Jamestown with a few of my friends marking my imminent departure aboard the RMS St Helena in less than 48 hours. A warm and humid evening; the sun had already set and the mosquitos buzzed around like a squadron of jet fighters. The conversation varied from one topic to the other, my thoughts however were very far away, tranced and mesmerized as I watched the RMS roll gently about her anchor in James Bay, her orange floodlights piercing the inky blackness of the otherwise moonless night. A few stars twinkling like diamonds in the velvety sky while the dark and menacing horizon stretched from Munden's Point through to West Rocks and way off into the distance; to faraway lands beyond my wildest imagination.*

*The same few questions rattling around in my youthful brain, "What's beyond that horizon?" "What new things am I going to see*

*and experience?" "What weird and wonderful new people, cultures and lifestyles am I going to encounter?" Most importantly for a boy who grew up safely sheltered behind St Helena's motherly veil of isolated nurture and protection; I kept asking myself "Am I brave enough, strong enough and capable enough to survive this big new world?" Very green around the gills and wet between the ears, I was desperate to enjoy this new adventure and make the most of this invaluable opportunity I am given to explore the world and grow as a person.*

*On 29 December 1997, along with my dear friend and future colleague Melanie Furniss, at 16 years of age I took my first brave new steps towards the wider world, stepping out of the boat and onto the wildly swaying aluminium ship's gangway. What's our itinerary you ask? Well I am told that we are sailing to Cape Town then flying on to Johannesburg, London Heathrow then take the GNER Service to Newcastle-Upon-Tyne before taking the Metro Service to South Shields Maritime College. South Shields, a fun and exciting seaside town with wonderful people with an odd but pleasant accent, this town was to become my new home for the next almost 10 years. Planes and trains until then were only things I saw in the VHS movies rented from Brown's Video Shop in Jamestown or sent recorded from the telly by my Aunt in the UK. In only a few weeks I had seen four different cities, been on a ship, on a plane and a train, this was much more fun and interesting than I had first envisaged.*

*So then, this was the UK at the tail end of the 90's, Oasis' Wonderwall blared on the radio in the college refectory, soggy potato chips drenched in salt and vinegar wrapped in yesterday's tabloid newspaper, Peggy Mitchell dominated Albert Square in EastEnders, Harold had died and miraculously come back to life in Neighbours, khaki beige trench coats with Doc Martens were all the fashion and my first mobile phone was a second hand Motorola MR1 the size of a house brick which could only make very expensive local calls, had no SMS function and the internet had only just been born so my brick had no other smart technology to offer. In all honesty it would probably have been better used as an emergency tyre breaking stopper behind the wheel of my Papa Neddy's old Morris Minor 1000 on the slopes by Three Tanks in Half Tree Hollow, or perhaps as a 'Portuguese Nail' to hold down the asbestos roofing sheets on his chicken coup!*

*Technology at sea at this time was still somewhat rudimentary. There was talk of fancy new ships being built with integrated bridge navigation systems, complete with all the bells and whistles but this was the cutting edge end of the industry and at that time only the select few enjoyed these wondrous new things, a far cry for those of us still squarely in the antiquated mainstream. For us things were a little less space age and a little more like my Grandma Dottie's beautiful veneer covered sideboard styled radiogram with the little knitted doilies on top. Big, bold and very fancy but ultimately still only played the radio on mediumwave with a constant backdrop of static or the dozen or so once trendy 78 LP's in the cupboard section. "You are listening to 1548kz, 194m in the medium wave band and you are listening to Radio St Helena" the beautifully soothing voice of Joy Lawrence would echo out of the side speakers.*

*The RMS being only six years old at the time, was considered very much a modern ship, but even then there were clear indicators that progress*

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Adam as a cadet with fellow cadets Nicola O'Loan (nee Mittens) and Jolene Sim

and thought was still very much stuck in a time past. She had big knobs and buttons on the bridge console, huge full cabinet radars with anti-glare screens, Decca and Loran navigation systems. GPS was available in its infancy to the commercial world but we were constantly reminded that it was owned by Uncle Sam and should never be trusted as the Americans would somehow introduce an error meaning it would not be accurate and we were somehow always at risk of being lost if we followed it blindly.

Radio Officers were still twiddling buttons and causing a myriad of indicators and dials to flicker as the strange and eerie sounds of the static blared out over the tinny speakers. The old Sailor SSB Radio on the bridge tuned to the BBC World Service, 'Top of the Pops', 'Wright around the World' with Steve Wright, 'The Sunday Bells' from beautiful landmarks such as Winchester Cathedral and the 'Sunday Worship' or 'Desert Island Discs' kept the Officer of the Watch company through the long hours while the passengers armed with large Panama styled hats, leather strapped sandals and 'up the leg' socks played quoits on the Sun Deck, or through excited laughter and giggles galloped around the Main Lounge in their flowered dresses and khaki desert trousers with black idler shoes, pretending to be horses at the Derby while being spurred on by Geoff Shallcross or Colin Dellar on the screeching microphone. At that moment life at sea gave elderly men and women the sense of youthfulness and excitement that far outweighed the painful effects of the gout or arthritis or creaking hip joints.

When heading North of Dakar in Senegal as we sailed back to the Motherland, through the fearsome Bay of Biscay, we could listen to Atlantic 252 on the SSB radio and of course at the insistence of Captain Smith or Captain Robert's, switched over and intently listened to BBC Radio 4 at the precise time, paper and pen at the ready as the familiar sound of 'Sailing By' drifted across the airwaves the BBC Radio 4 Shipping Forecast was about to begin. The old Weather fax machine slowly churned out the latest grainy black and white images of the weather facsimile. "Low Southeast Iceland 992 filling slowly" announced forecaster on the radio in the regulated but highly respected BBC monotone. "North Utsire", "South Utsire", "Dogger", "Cromarty", "Fitzroy"; surely these were just some made up fictional babble designed with only one aim, to confuse this boy from the South Atlantic who knew only of places like Egg Island, The New Shovel, Southwest Point and Speery Ledge?

Cargo plans were drawn by hand and segregation highlighted with coloured pencils. Noon sights were a must, bums in white shorts with knee high white socks swaying side to side on the bridge wing as we skimmed the sun's lower limb across the crispy clear South Atlantic horizon, calling time and then running like there was no tomorrow to note the chronometer. Recording the chronometer error was an extremely important task for the Officer of the Watch, patiently listening for the pips on the BBC on the hour and then noting the error in the chronometer logbook. Windows 98 was available but on the RMS we were still using Windows 95, for what purpose is unbeknownst to me as everything was done by hand anyway and the computer just sat there in the corner of the Radio Room looking all very special but very much untouchable. Only the Chief Mate or the Captain was allowed to use it, we could only admire it from a safe distance.

At South Tyneside College, my lecturers were proper 'Salty Sea-dogs' who smoked tobacco, drank gallons of coffee and were keen to tell us stories of their 'good old days' spent tramping across the pacific to exotic lands, chipping decks shirtless in the burning midday sun while bronzed bodies shimmering aloft to change a halyard without a harness or permit to work in sight, stuffy accommodation with their dowdy Bakelite fixtures, side scuttles wide open with cowls and scoops to capture the salty breeze to direct at the sweaty occupants. In those days the old periscope covered cathode-ray tube radars were only switched on when necessary, plotting was done on the screen with china graph pencils, all to the consistent rhythmic tump of the old but faithful two stroke Doxford engines; like a heartbeat, constant but reassuring. "Mark One Eyeball lads, never mind all that fancy nonsense like electronic charts and the rubbish they're making these days" the lecturer would proclaim in his horse but authoritarian Geordie drool. "It's all gimmicks and fancy toys. Don't ever trust these new things lads, mark one eyeball, that's all you need, nothing else", before casually suggesting we take lunch over cigarette and a pint at the local student watering hole.

Back in the 2000's slowly but surely the past idea that technology was going to be the destruction of all things good in the maritime world was coming to an end. New and more advanced radars and navigational equipment were being developed and fitted aboard ships at an alarming rate. Windows 98 was finally installed followed by Windows 2000. We were now allowed to use the computer unsupervised. Assignments, documents and even cargo plans could now be draw up



L-R: Captain Adam Williams and Lt Carol Yon during the RMS farewell celebrations



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*easily on the computer and as an added bonus, we could print them, first in black and white and later in beautiful colours. Oh how we printed, we printed multiple copies, we printed because we could print it. As fast as they could deliver the ink cartridges we used them. If we used a ream of paper in a day, this was a sign that we were getting more and more done, output was at an all-time high, surely this was a good thing? But when I think about it, what exactly was it we were printing and achieving, and why did we feel it so necessary to create huge piles of useless printed documents to put in storage boxes to be eaten by weevils and gather dust?*

*We were constantly told that computer technology was going to reshape the landscape, less need for paper and less time having to do countless longwinded calculations by hand or writing lists and reports with the old parchment and quill. Computers were going to make life a heck of a lot easier and subsequently we would have more time to spend generally enjoying life on the ocean waves, or so we were lead to believe! The reality however is very much different. As the computer-age wangled its way into our everyday lives, the mountains of paper generated increased exponentially and we spent more and more time staring into our computer monitors. By the end of the first decade of the Naughty's, we were generating more and more documents, reports and forms than could be stored on-board sensibly.*

*Attitudes to safety had changed, for the better I must add, but with it came the age of bureaucracy. Initially we started spending more and more time huddled over computers, hunched up like creatures peering into the void, poking the keyboard with our two index fingers, just like chickens picking corn. We are simple sailors, not very computer literate and definitely not trained to touch type. Ultimately we were now finding that we spent less time enjoying the finer pleasures of life being at sea and more time keeping the new technology happy. Floppy discs littered the desk. The Chief Mate shouting profanity at the computer monitor and sucking through his teeth each time a pop up pinged telling him the disc is full or that the file has been corrupted, throwing his helmet across the bridge in a fit of anger he would storm out on the bridge wing to have a few drags on his nippy to calm down before continuing.*

*Sadly we also watched as many of the older sea-dogs struggle to keep up with this rapid change of technology and pace, we all struggled to keep up with the changes but for some of the old salty's it was all becoming a bit too much, one by one sadly they fell behind, a simple matter of sink or swim. Change was a difficult pill to swallow, but change was entirely necessary to keep up with the rapid advancement in technology and human development.*

*As the second decade of the Naughty's was coming to a close, the mind-set of the seafarer and life itself had certainly evolved very differently to when I first came to sea only a mere 20 years previously. New improved technology, reliable electronic precision instruments, fast and accurate navigational equipment, even faster and hugely more powerful computer systems allowing us to do more things, more quickly and with a far superior degree of*

*accuracy. A newer drive and emphasis placed on company, shipboard and international safety systems. The continually advanced development of primary operational, communications and safety equipment, fail safe and back-up systems and a myriad of other advances all designed to make the modern life at sea easier, safer and with a greatly enhanced degree of reliability. While it wasn't always the case, today the industry places the seafarer at the forefront of the operation. In recent years, seafarers have seen increased personal and social protection with a greater emphasis being placed on health, wellbeing, rights and safety. The modern seafarer is now the cornerstone of the industry and while there will always be unscrupulous ship owners out there who still put profits over the safety and wellbeing of their men and women; they are now becoming the exception as opposed to the norm.*

*We still have a long way to go as an industry, I often look up to the skies and observe in awe how the aviation industry is quickly advancing with the development of newer technology and processes. We on the other hand still cling on tightly to the old ways, afraid to let go, afraid to step outside our comfort zones. Yes we must admit we still have a very long way to go, especially in respect of safety; we simply have to look at how we are still getting seafarers off ships in an emergency for example, its already 2022 and we are still dangling men of the end of davits on lifeboats by thin unreliable wires or shooting them off the back of ships on so called freefall lifeboats for goodness sakes! It is time to push forward, shake off the old ways and close the gap between us and our younger siblings in the aviation industry. To embrace change for the better, no matter how difficult it may be.*

*Through it all however, we are an industry of principles and history, some things will never go out of fashion, some things we must never allow to change and even with all this new technology, 'mark one eyeball' is still just as relevant today as it has ever been. We must however ensure that critical skills are not lost through the advancement of technology, the simple seafarer was in all fairness anything but simple. He knew many things and could do many complex things before the computer-age. As we push forward into the future, it is critical we ensure the basic knowledge and understanding of our art is not lost or allowed to become lazy or fogged by the very machines and technology which were designed to enhance our abilities and skills.*

*We still often look back to the good old days with a sense of nostalgia and passion. Yes, it is only right we continue to remember and celebrate our ancient maritime heritage, traditions and journey of discovery, however we must also look forward to the future, just like that 16 year old boy did sitting on the seafront in Jamestown that December evening in 1997!*

