

"Life at sea is great" according to Russell

Like Keith Henderson, Russell Anderson was a member of the first intake of engineer cadets. Since qualifying as Officer of the Watch in July 2007, he has been sailing with his sponsoring company North Star Shipping as both second and third engineer. He's currently onboard the stand by vessel Grampian Cavalier in the North Sea.

Do you enjoy the responsibility associated with your position?

Absolutely! Being given a high level of responsibility for the first time was such a good feeling and really enjoyable.

Do you think your cadet training has prepared you well for a career at sea?

Yes – you get taught all the theory you need to know in the classroom and the time spent at sea is great for putting that into practice. I have to say that nothing can prepare you for being in charge until you actually do it.

What are your plans for the future?

I'm planning to get the sea time I need before returning to college for my second engineer qualification and then I'm going to set my sights on my Chief's ticket. Then, I might stay at sea as Chief or come ashore to become a surveyor or even a lecturer at the NAFC. I've definitely made the right career choice – life at sea is great!

First minister congratulates NAFC Marine Centre on "remarkable reputation"

Scotland's First Minister Alex Salmond has congratulated the NAFC Marine Centre on its "remarkable reputation" and, during his visit there in March, stated that it had "so much more to offer".



The First Minister expressed his delight at being able to visit the Centre, saying: "Shetland's success is based on its relationship with the sea and the islands are undoubtedly surrounded by some of the world's most productive fishing waters. It is for these reasons that I felt it was appropriate to visit the NAFC Marine Centre.

"Since the Centre was established 16 years ago it has expanded its activities to achieve a remarkable reputation as an expert in all things marine. It has built a fine track record in qualifications and course completions but, confirmed by what I've seen this morning, has so much more to offer. It has a top class facility in SSQC Ltd and is helping to nurture the next generation of Shetland fishermen. The simulator itself is a very impressive teaching resource.

"My Government is working hard to ensure that the young people who come through these doors will join a fishing industry with a bright future. There will be ongoing challenges facing the marine industry but with the work I've seen at the Centre there's a great deal to be positive about. I wish the NAFC Marine Centre all the best for the future, particularly in establishing itself as a centre of marine excellence."

His visit included calling in along a class of Merchant Navy officer cadets, he took the helm of a virtual vessel in the Centre's state-of-the-art simulator and saw trainees under instruction in the marine engineering workshop.

Careers ideas for school pupils

At the end of March, we welcomed a visit from secondary 3 and 4 pupils and teachers from Baltasound Junior High School, Unst, Shetland. It was a chance for them to find out more about the opportunities available for school leavers.

Maths and physics teacher, Angela Fraser, said:

"We wanted to take the older school children to give them an idea about the further education options available locally. A few had already shown interest in the NAFC but the visit has really opened their eyes to what's available. We also have a pupil possibly interested in a career in the Merchant Navy.

"There's such a range of activities and courses at the NAFC, that we found there was something to interest everyone - including the labs, simulator and engineering training.

"It definitely was well worth a visit and has demonstrated to the children that training is not just something that ends at school but is an ongoing activity that everyone needs to continue to do."

Schools are invited to visit the 'Seas Around Us' area at the NAFC, which will be open from 20 May to 18 July. Bookings can be made by contacting Anne Birnie on 01595 772000 or email info@nafc.uhi.ac.uk



Newsletter

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Welcome to the second edition of our newsletter, albeit my first. Having recently taken over as interim director, I am very much looking forward to working closely with staff, trustees and industry representatives to help lead the Centre forward to provide a high quality service for Shetland. This issue puts the spotlight on our training activities. As always, at this time of year, we are in the throes of recruiting for our successful cadet programme. We've caught up with some of our current cadets back from travelling around the world to complete their final phase of training, as well as those who have already qualified.



Read on to find out more about their experiences and their reflections on a programme that acts as an excellent springboard to their future careers.

Look out for our next issue which will turn attention to the latest developments from our Marine Science and Technology department.

Tony Hawkins
Interim Director

Cadet recruitment campaign launched for 2008

When September rolls around this year, it will bring with it a fresh intake of students to the Shetland School of Nautical Studies.

Head of School, Jan Rigden, has already begun advertising across the Highlands and Islands for candidates to apply.

He said: "Recruitment is now underway for the September 2008 intake and the signs so far are positive. There is no doubt that the programme to raise the profile of the Merchant Navy and treble Scottish recruitment – funded by Scottish Enterprise – is having a positive effect and we expect to have full classes of deck and engineer cadets again this year."

Please see www.careers-scotland.org.uk/MaritimeCareers/MaritimeHome.asp for further information on Scottish Enterprise's recruitment drive.

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Are you considering becoming a fisherman? We can set you in the right direction...

The fish catching Skillseekers' programme, delivered by Train Shetland and the NAFC Marine Centre, provides quality training opportunities to give you the right start in your chosen career.



We are now seeking new entrants to the programme and would encourage interested candidates to get in touch with the Centre.

We are also hoping to attract fishing vessels looking to take on a Skillseeker for on-the-job training. The good news is that funding has now been secured for another two years courtesy of Shetland Fishermen's Association and Shetland Development Trust to cover the cost of paying trainees a training allowance.

While the training elements of the course, including travel and accommodation if required, are covered through the Skillseeker scheme managed by Train Shetland, allocating funding for training allowances in the fish catching sector can be difficult given that all Shetland fishermen are self employed.

The funding that has been secured by Shetland Fisheries Training Association covers a 12 month programme for six young people with a view to attaining SVQ Level 2 Marine Vessel Support (Fishing) qualification. During this time students will be paid a training allowance of £50 per week from the Fund, which means less financial pressure on any vessel wishing to provide a training place.

Commenting on the programme, training co-ordinator Caroline Hepburn said:

"This is a valued course of learning for young people giving them an opportunity to earn while undertaking training. The programme enables trainees to take up a placement on board local vessels, providing them with a breadth of experience in the fisheries sector.

"The main parties involved in the Shetland fish catching sector sponsor this programme, which demonstrates valuable joint working within the industry and further develops co-operation between the organisations involved.

"We hope to successfully attract the maximum number of candidates over the coming years to fully utilise this valuable contribution to industry training."

Kenneth Reid – an exemplary student

Kenneth Reid is about to complete his final year of the engineer cadet programme, which he joined in 2005. He's been sponsored by SSTG throughout and has benefited from experiences with different contract shipping companies.

Why did you decide to join the programme?

I've always been interested in engineering and a career at sea. It seemed a natural progression to apply to a programme that I was confident would be useful for my future and that I would enjoy.

What did you enjoy about it the most?

I've enjoyed being at sea the most as I get to meet new people and see things I might never have done if I hadn't left Shetland.

The countries I've visited include China, Hong Kong, New Zealand and Fiji. I've also passed through both the Suez and Panama Canals.

In your last placement, you stepped in when the second engineer was injured. What was that like?

The second engineer hurt his hand and was out of action for a week so I was asked to step in. I was proud to be approached and relished the challenge. It was more responsibility than I had as a cadet and I really enjoyed it.

What happens now?

I'm back at the NAFC Marine Centre for my final term and hope to graduate as an Officer of the Watch in the summer. At the moment I'm looking at several different companies to see what opportunities are on offer.

What would you say to anyone thinking to apply to join the cadet programme?

I'd tell them it's a really good training programme and would recommend anyone to apply. The course is a good mix of practical work and lectures giving you all round training.

Kenneth's last placement was with Whitaker Tankers on board the Wilberforce where, as mentioned, he stepped in as acting second engineer at short notice. Here's what Captain Harry Williams had to say:

"I've spent quite a lot of time on board the Wilberforce over the last couple of weeks. I've been able to monitor Kenneth's work during that time and, together with the onboard reports by the Master and Chief Engineer, it is very clear that he is a top class cadet with above average ability.

"We would be delighted to have Kenneth in our fleet and, should he ever have the desire to join the Wilberforce Group in the future, we would be more than happy to snap him up."



Murdanie MacLeod is top of the class

Deck cadet Murdanie MacLeod has spent the last two months on an LPG (gas tanker) in the North Sea, calling into ports such as Gdansk, and signing off in Norway. Before that, he spent eight months on a PCTC (car carrier) travelling around Europe, the Gulf, the Far East, Kenya, India and Singapore.

Rejoining his class at the NAFC Marine Centre in April to begin his last phase of his cadetship, we found out more about his experience...

Why did you apply to join the cadet training programme?

My brother was an engineer cadet and he suggested I consider a career in the Merchant Navy. He spotted the Shetland School of Nautical Studies advert in the West Highland Free Press and I applied. I liked the idea of moving to another island community like Lewis, where I'm from.

After ten weeks of training in the classroom, I joined my first vessel – the famous Napoli – for four months. Then I spent alternate periods at the Centre and at sea until now.

What have you enjoyed the most?

I'd have to say learning the job! The travel is a bonus but shore leave is a luxury. I've enjoyed putting what I've learned in the classroom into practice at sea.

So, what happens now?

Well I'm back in the classroom for the final phase. We'll be learning the background to the Mate and Masters Level as well as undertaking the MCA oral preparation. There are lots of exams ahead!

Once I've reached the end, I'm hoping to be able to stay with the company that is sponsoring me – Zodiac Maritime Agencies.

And, to anyone thinking to apply, do you have any words of advice to pass on?

Yes – make sure you're absolutely serious about it before you apply. It's not all about seeing the world – that's just an added bonus! It's hard work and you need to be totally committed to the study.

And enjoy it! I can thoroughly recommend every part of the programme – the training facility in Shetland is great, as are the periods spent at sea and the additional short courses which we undertake.



Catching up with Keith...

Keith Henderson was a member of the first ever group of engineering cadets to start their training at the NAFC Marine Centre, back in 2004. No stranger to the Centre, he'd already completed a number of other courses including SVQ Level II Marine Vessel Support (Fish Catching). Keith has been working as third engineer on board the Adams Surveyor, a dive support vessel owned by Adams Offshore. He was part of a team currently completing the West African gas pipeline known as WAGP.

Keith tells us more...

There's a lot of responsibility attached to the position of engineer on board a dive support vessel. With diving operations, there's always someone walking around the seabed 50 metres below you carrying out the work. You can't afford any equipment failure and so you must check and monitor machinery at all times to ensure absolute safety for everyone.

What's been your biggest challenge?

I think it was adapting to the heat - even on a cold day it was 33°C and always 10 degrees more in the engine room! But I gradually got used to it.

What are you doing now?

I've been offered a two year contract which will give me the sea time required for my second's ticket. This will open up a lot more doors for me!

Looking back on your training – how would you sum it up?

All in all, I think my cadetship has set me in good stead for an excellent career where I can gain vast experience, make new friends and – most importantly – I get paid to see the world!