

Tuesday 28th June 2005

SUBMARINE ESCAPE AND RESCUE EXERCISE SORBET ROYAL 2005

GULF OF TARANTO, ITALY

1,000 Dives for the UK's Rescue Submersible LR5



(Above: The LR5 Operating Team in Taranto Italy for Sorbet Royal 2005)

There were great celebrations onboard the UK's chartered ship *Fennica* in the Gulf of Taranto today. LR5, the UK's submarine rescue vehicle achieved her 1,000th dive since first being launched in 1974.

LR5 is participating in the NATO and Partner country Submarine Escape and Rescue (SMER) Exercise Sorbet Royal 2005 – the longest and most challenging live SMER exercise ever conducted. LR5 is one part of the UK's contribution to the exercise. The UK is one of more than 25 other NATO, NATO partner and other participating nations.

For this momentous dive LR5 was controlled by her most experienced pilots, Senior Pilots Eric Wrightson and Tom Heron who are both based in Renfrew. They were accompanied on this dive, amazingly, by one Doug Scott, who

piloted LR5 on her very first dive in Loch Linnhe way back in 1978. He took control again in what was for all was a very emotional occasion.

LR5 has been at the centre of the UK's Submarine Rescue Service (UKSRS) for the last 22 years. LR5 is operated by James Fisher Rumic Ltd on behalf of the Ministry of Defence and is based at UKSRS Headquarters in Renfrew, Scotland where she remains at 12 hours notice to be airlifted anywhere in the world. Her primary role is to provide a rescue capability to the UK Royal Navy but she is able to mate with submarines of all nations of the world as long as they are fitted with a NATO common rescue seat.



(The LR5 Pilot Team through from Doug Scott centre, who piloted LR5 on her first dive in 1978 in Loch Linnhe of the West Coast of Scotland, to Tom Heron and Eric Wrightson who piloted LR5 on 28th June 2005 for her 1000th dive.)

Brief history of LR5 operations

The manned submersible LR5 has been retained on permanent contract with the Ministry of Defence to provide a submarine rescue service since 1983.

LR5 was originally designed and built as a diver lockout craft and worked in the North Sea oil and gas industry, operating in that role for five years. During earlier dry transfer operations LR5 remained fully equipped for her original role, but following a commitment by Ministry of Defence, diving orientated equipment was removed which allowed LR5 to act more effectively as a dedicated rescue craft. During Sedgemoor 1998, LR5 carried out the first ever under pressure transfers from the pressurized fore ends of a Dissub to a pressurized hovering SSBN which was acting as a recompression chamber.

Early trials to achieve a 1 atmosphere dry transfer intervention system with the aim to rescuing submariners commenced in 1973, when basic techniques using less advanced submersibles were developed. These trials were conducted by Vickers Oceanics before their departure from the industry in 1978. The results of these trials formed the basis for further development by British Oceanics. Under British Oceanics LR5 became the dedicated dry transfer submersible and further development work and major modifications followed. These modifications, coupled with new procedures based on growing experience, produced an efficient operation for the mating and transfer of personnel from military submarines.

Having developed the equipment and established the procedures to conduct submarine intervention, LR5 under James Fisher Rumic Ltd and other predecessor companies has undergone an almost continuous programme of upgrading to meet the ever demanding requirements of submarine rescue. LR5 is now complimented with a purpose built rescue chamber capable of mating with a Dissub at 60 degrees and transferring 16 rescuees at up to 5 Bar internal pressure, to a dived mother submarine or surface support vessel.

Eric Wrightson – LR5 Senior Pilot

1973 - 1974: Submersible technician and air diver

1974 - 1983: Submersible pilot / senior pilot / diver lockout pilot and manned submersible operations. He undertook pipeline surveys, spool piece alignment, midwater platform inspections, torpedo recovery, debris clearance, 1 atmosphere wet transfer trials and wellhead demolition.

1984 – present day: Eric has been the dedicated LR5 Senior pilot and project engineer.

Eric was responsible for the early development of LR5 from a conventional lock out submersible to a dedicated submarine rescue craft. He has been instrumental in the design and developments of the craft, associated support equipment and the portable launch and recovery systems. In addition he has continued throughout to develop and improve the Company's subsea operations and procedures.

Tom Heron – LR5 Senior Pilot

1978 - 1980: Submersible technician and air diver

1980 - 1985: Submersible pilot / senior pilot – manned submersible operations. Work included – pipeline survey, bathymetric surveys, spool piece alignment, midwater platform inspection, torpedo recovery, debris clearance and ROV pilot / supervisor.

1985 – present day: Has been a dedicated LR5 Senior pilot / Project engineer. He has been a prime mover in all improvement and developments of the craft, associated support equipment and launch and recovery systems. In addition Tom has continued throughout to develop and improve subsea operations and procedures.