

## **Lawrence of Arabia's launch is the last RAF boat to set sail on historic final voyage.**

**Date:** April 30<sup>th</sup> – May 4<sup>th</sup>

**A Seaplane Tender from the 1930s is to sail around the south coast and up the Thames to complete a display at the Royal Air Force Museum. It will be the last RAF boat to fly the RAF Ensign on the water.**

The small launch, ST206, was used by the RAF to ferry passengers and crew to and from the giant flying boats of the 1930s and was used as a fire tender and rescue launch during the Second World War.

The launch was developed by TE Lawrence – Lawrence of Arabia – in his little-known career after his famous desert exploits in World War One. He entered the Royal Air Force's Marine Section in 1925 under the pseudonym TE Shaw and worked with the British Power Boat Company to develop faster and more effective rescue boats after witnessing a fatal seaplane crash in 1931. The project made a vital contribution to speed boat design and ensured that the new generation of boats specially designed to rescue pilots during the Second World War were faster and more effective.

The 1930s was the golden age of the flying boat and enormous craft flew around the world offering luxury conditions for international travellers. The RAF used them as transport and long-range escort bomber aircraft in Coastal Command. ST206 was built to service the Short Sunderland and will join the RAF Museum's Sunderland on display at Hendon, North London.

Nearly every major port in England was used as a rescue base and ST206 will visit many former seaplane bases on her journey where the RNLI have kindly offered their facilities. The launch will set sail at Lymington on a four day journey by sea to St Katherine's Dock in East London and then on to Shepperton Marina. En route it will be docking at Shoreham; Newhaven; and Dover. At Shepperton it will be lifted out of the water and placed on a lorry for the final leg of its journey as it travels by road to the Royal Air Force Museum London.

The boat will be skippered by its previous owner Phil Clabburn with a crew that includes veteran members of the RAF Marine Branch. The voyage and subsequent restoration for display of the launch has been organised by the RAF Museum's Marine Craft Team Volunteers. As part of the voyage, they will also be recreating the speed trails conducted by T.E. Shaw on ST206.

The RAF formed its Marine Section in 1918 to service the needs of its extensive and expanding fleet of seaplanes. Its motto was 'The Sea Shall Not Have Them' and the service saved 13,000 lives during World War Two. The branch was disbanded and its remaining role was privatised in 1986.

...Ends

## Notes To Editors:

- Day 1 Friday 30<sup>th</sup> April  
Depart Lymington Yacht Haven. Sail for Horsham making a short stop (45 mins) at Calshot. (0930 Pier side Calshot RNLI Lifeboat Station)  
1345 Arrive Shoreham RNLI station.  
1430 Press conference). Harbour side where boat is moored Mooring to be confirmed).
- Day 2 Saturday 1<sup>st</sup> May  
0900 Depart Shoreham for Newhaven  
1030 Meet offshore by lifeboat and a flotilla of other craft.  
1100 Press Conference at Newhaven RNLI Lifeboat station outside if weather good  
Inside if bad.  
1230 Depart Newhaven  
1830 Dover
- Day 3 Sunday 2<sup>nd</sup> May  
1130 Press conference at RNLI Lifeboat Station  
1200 Depart Dover  
1400 Arrive Ramsgate  
1430 Press conference at Pilot Boat base Pier side  
1530 Depart Ramsgate  
1830 Arrive Sheerness  
1900 Press conference at RNLI  
1930 Depart Sheerness  
2130 Arrive ST Katherine's Dock
- Day 4 Monday 3<sup>rd</sup> May  
1000 Press conference at St Katherine's Dock at Outer Dock Pier side  
1100 Depart St Katherine's Dock for Shepperton Marina
- Day 5 Tuesday 4<sup>th</sup> may  
Arrive at Museum
- Royal Air Force Museum, Grahame Park Way, London, NW9 5LL
- Open daily between 10am – 6pm (Last admission 5.30pm)
- Free admission
- For further information and all media enquiries please contact  
Ajay Srivastava on 020 8358 6410 or [ajay@rafmuseum.org](mailto:ajay@rafmuseum.org)

