

Seafarer Awareness for School Children: Milford Haven Port Welfare Committee Initiative



Pembroke Dock Community School
Maritime Experience Day 2012

Thursday 20th September was the day appointed for the Pembroke Dock Community School children to enjoy a day's educational visit to the facilities around the Milford Haven Waterway. Through the collaboration of the various industrial, commercial and port infrastructure partners, a n interesting and full programme was arranged for all 70 children from year 6, ten years old, going on 11. The two coaches arrived at the school for 9.30am to take the children to the points of interest, returning to the school for 3pm.

First visit was to the Port of Pembroke where Kevin Hobbs, the short sea director for MHPA met the children and explained the commercial activities at the facility. They went to see "Whithaven" which was berthed alongside, and the procedure to bunker visiting ships was explained by Kevin. There were quayside questions and answers before moving along to see the sheds where the lorries are kept, used for transporting pelleted animal feed that comes in by ship. Another shed was next where the children saw George Worrall and his men working the yellow loading machine that stacks the feedstuffs. Another interesting visit was to an empty hangar built for the Sunderland flying boats. The sheer size of the structure impressed the children.

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Returning to the coaches, the group went to see the facilities of the Irish Ferries terminal and learned about the workings of a ferryport. They viewed the freight marshalling yard from a vantage point, and stood in the areas reserved for cars boarding for Ireland. They received information about the capacity of the "Isle of Inishmore", cars and commercial vehicles and the frequency of the ferry. The work of the police and customs was understood in the context of a gateway to another EU country.

Next was a drive along Carr Jetty to see the Svitzer tugs close up and find out about the work they do. The oil port takes the largest ships in the world, so the tugs are the largest in the world to move them. Other smaller tugs for lighter duties were seen too.



After thanking the staff from the Port of Pembroke, the children boarded the coaches for the drive over the Cleddau Bridge to the Milford Haven Maritime Museum. Enjoying a packed lunch near the lock gates, they watched the gates being operated and the procedure explained to them by the lock keeper. Half the group made some sketches of the marina area while the other half went on a conducted tour of the museum to learn of the shipping history of Milford Haven. They heard of the Quaker whaling ships, and the whale oil used to light the street lights of London. Then the story of the fishing era of the port was explained, and into the present day importance of oil and gas imports and refining for the area and the country. When both groups had been through the museum, the coaches drove them to the Milford Haven Port Authority to meet Stella Hooper who gave them an overview of the estuary and explained what the MHPA does in controlling the movement of shipping, the pilot boats, the coast guard, and the LNG terminals and refinery berths. Mention was made of the Angle lifeboat, the work of the chaplains, the ships agents, the seafarer's centre and the seafarers themselves whose work and presence is largely unseen, but of immense importance to the country.

The children also received a puzzle each from MHPA given to them upon arriving back at the school.

The day would not have been possible without the grant by MHPA community funding, and the time and effort put in by the staff and workers at the various sites.

Amanda Edwards, the assistant head who came with the staff and children for the day wrote to me:

"We had a fantastic day on Thursday - the pupils were able to tell us so much about the day when we talked yesterday .The pupils and staff found the whole experience interesting and such a worthwhile educational visit. One of the best educational trips we've had!"

Hugh Michael, Port Chaplain, Seamen's Christian Friend Society