



Sail Training International

Final @ 14 11 11: NR opening remarks for the Toulon conference

... a formal welcome on behalf of Sail Training International to all the delegates attending our conference this year: close to 350 from 35 countries ... not bad given the general economic climate and budget constraints. But first our thanks, from all of us here today, to the Toulon Provence Méditerranée and to Mayor Falco for their generosity in hosting the conference. As most of you know, our conference arrangements depend on having a generous host city, one that enthusiastically embraces the work that we do ... and we certainly have that here, and personally with Mayor Falco.

Monsieur le Maire, nous vous remercions d'avoir accepté de bien vouloir accueillir notre conférence cette année avec une telle générosité... Ce sera avec grand plaisir que nous reviendrons à Toulon avec la flotte des grands voiliers en automne deux mille treize pour apprécier de nouveau l'hospitalité fantastique de votre ville.

As many of you know, we are bringing a Tall Ships event to Toulon in September 2013. It was to be a race just from Barcelona to Toulon; but we hope to add to this an Italian port and almost certainly a second Spanish port, and it will be a much more interesting event as a consequence.

Another piece of really great news for us, which we announced only yesterday, is the appointment of a new Chief Executive for Sail Training International: Peter Cardy. We have known Peter for some years, when he was Chief Executive of the UK's Maritime and Coastguard Agency. As you will see from the announcement in your conference delegate pack, he has had a very successful career outside of that as well, as Chief Executive for several Charities ... and an even longer love affair with sail training: his first voyage at the age of 15, proving for him, as for so many others, to be a truly 'life changing experience'. Don't miss the opportunity to talk with him over the next couple of days.

Over recent months, four new countries have applied for membership of Sail Training International, having created not-for-profit organisations that meet the criteria we have set for Membership. We think this is good evidence of the ever-growing interest in sail training for young people. They are Croatia, Czech Republic, Estonia, and Hungary, all represented here at the conference of course.

It has actually been a pretty good year for us in other ways too ... we'll have something to say about this year's races a little later; but we've also done a good deal of work in some other areas. I want to mention just a couple.

The self-help tool-kit that we launched at last year's conference has had a good work-out this year. This is a methodology and documentation that the operators of sail training vessels of any size can use to evaluate the effectiveness of their programmes, to see where improvements can be made but also to give them some direct evidence that will help them promote what they do. It was developed for us by Dr Kris von Wald of the Learning and Change consultancy, supported by Dr Pete Allison of the University of Edinburgh. This year's work-out has resulted in some fine tuning and the development of a second edition ... Kris and Pete will be running a couple of workshops during the conference.

This year we piloted two new bursary schemes, one generously funded by the Sultanate of Oman, and a separate scheme of our own, to help young people take part in our events. Our scheme puts money in the hands of our Member organisations that have a host port in their country, so next year this will be France, Portugal, Spain and Ireland. The Oman scheme next year will help 100 young people from around the world. The process we have put in place for this, for trainee selection and also deciding which ships they will sail on, will hopefully form the basis for a model we can market to other potential funders in the future. As part of our arrangements with Oman, His Majesty the Sultan has donated a glamorous new trophy which we will present tomorrow ... so, more about that then.

We also just launched our Safety Management System manual, a highly professional and comprehensive piece of documentation, 74 densely packed pages of it, developed as a gift to the sail training industry by our Vice Chairman Doug Prothero and Stefan Kramer of the Netherlands. It is specifically for use on sail training Tall Ships under 500 tonnes and reflects 'best practice' standards in on-board safety procedures, training and record keeping. Doug has also taken the lead for us in putting together our first seminar for Flag State regulators, held yesterday. This was an important event for us and I'll ask Doug to say a few words about it now.

(Doug Prothero speaks)

I want to say a few words now about our events, the races and regattas that we organise. For us they are, of course, the activity for which we are most widely known ... and these events are right at the heart of our charitable mission relating to sail training for young people as well as promoting international understanding and friendship.

We organised two very successful events this year: The Tall Ships Races with host ports Waterford in the south of Ireland, Greenock on the Scottish west coast, Lerwick – capital of the Shetland Islands in the far north of Scotland, Stavanger on the west coast of Norway and Halmstad, Sweden; and the Culture Tall Ships Regatta in the Baltic involving Klaipeda in Lithuania and Turku in Finland, both European Capital of Culture cities this year, plus Gdynia in Poland. Our thanks to all eight for their sterling work as hosts ... and you'll hear more about these events later this morning from Paul Bishop and Gwyn Brown.

Looking to the future we have two important working groups under way and which we created quite recently.

The economic turmoil throughout most of the world has not left sail training and Tall Ships events untouched. The operators of sail training vessels in most countries, particularly the big, glamorous square rigged ships, are under tremendous and increasing economic pressure. Host ports are under pressure too, some with fairly savage budget cuts to contend with. So we have created a working group to take a close look at ways in which we might improve the economics of our events for both the participating vessels and the host ports. It is being lead for us by Anni Walther who has long experience as a very successful host port organiser in Aalborg, Denmark, and now in fact a director of Tall Ships Races Europe, the STI company that runs The Tall Ships Races annual summer series. Anni, come and tell us how this project is going:

(Anni Walther speaks)

A second working group is tasked with helping us develop new events ... and not just in Europe. We have the resources now, staff and volunteers, that will enable

us to run at least three events every year. We've said to this working group: no idea for a new event is a daft idea. We want to look at a range of options, including events that can connect major festivals or national celebrations; events that will enable us to go to new ports that can only accommodate a small fleet; shorter races in more sheltered waters for younger trainees than we normally cater for; perhaps events designed specifically for older trainees than we normally consider as our 'market'. And beyond Europe we are advancing plans for an event series in the Caribbean; we will be running an event in 2013 between New Zealand and Australia ... and perhaps most exciting of all is an event in 2017 around the north Atlantic with a longish period of time in Canadian waters, to celebrate the 150th anniversary of Canadian confederation: Tall Ships Canada 150. We will be signing an agreement later today with [His Worship Régis Labeaume the Mayor of Quebec City](#) ... and it is my pleasure to introduce Mayor Labeaume now to say a few words about this.

(Mayor Labeaume speaks)

Mayor Lebeaume, thank you so much for being with us here today and for your kind words ... we look forward very much to working with you, your staff, and other ports in Canada to create a memorable and spectacular event.

Ladies and gentlemen ... that's all from me ... thank you for your attention ... enjoy the conference ... now back to Gwyn

Ends