

MEMBERS AT WORK



The emergency towing vessel Anglian Monarch leaves port Picture: Andrew Lansdale

ETV easing an entente cordiale

Andrew Lansdale explains how the UK emergency towing vessel Anglian Monarch has developed a healthy cross-Channel relationship...

A tug is being used to cement Anglo-French maritime relations. But this is no ordinary tug — this is the Anglian Monarch, one of four emergency towing vessels on charter to the Maritime & Coastguard Agency.

Following recommendations made in the Donaldson Report into ship safety after the 1993 Braer tanker disaster, the UK has developed ETV cover around its coast and the four vessels now used by the MCA are deployed around the UK, with the Anglian Monarch based at Folkestone and serving the busy Dover Straits.

Although the smallest of the four, Anglian Monarch is a monster. The vessel has a huge open after-deck where towing operations are conducted. The two towing winches, with a brake limit of 300 tonnes

each, are housed in an area the size of a small house. The main towing wires are the thickness of Popeye's forearms; powerful is an understatement.

Anglian Monarch plays its part in Anglo-French cooperation by spending a week in Folkestone and a week in Boulogne — the costs being shared by each country. And this is where the 'trés' is added to the 'cordiale'.

The French recognise the truly professional nature of this resource. And the tug's officers and crew play to their strengths.

The French coastguard is an arm of the French Navy, with admirals in control. Captain John Reynolds, the Anglian Monarch's master, wears his uniform with four rings and his officer's cap with 'scrambled eggs' on the peak. Thus the French Navy

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chart-plotters, no big screen graphics — just paper charts, a compass, parallel rulers and a 2B pencil.

The crew also have the luxury of a modern radar set — but, like the towing procedures themselves, this is old-fashioned seamanship with every operation presenting its unique challenges.

‘We only have a small crew, but total over 400 years of experience onboard. It would be criminal negligence to ignore that,’ Capt Reynolds told the Telegraph.

The Channel is acknowledged as the world's busiest shipping lane, with more than 400 vessels passing through the area every day. Surprisingly often, ships lose power in the busy traffic separation zones and drop anchor and the Anglian Monarch is fitted with special grapples to hook into anchor cables to tow vessels out of the way.

The big main engines provide a bollard pull of more than 150 tonnes. ‘But we use very little of the installed power,’ Capt Reynolds explained. ‘We usually use about a 15-tonne pull on small ships. On a big container ship we once used 80 tonnes briefly.’

Towed ships aren't designed for this sort of power. ‘We would pull normal mooring bits out of the deck and perhaps the windlass as well,’ Capt Reynolds added. ‘But we need to have this amount of power at our disposal. With a large tow in heavy weather, it's like taking a mad dog for a walk.’

And with increasing questions being posed about the standards of many seafarers now at sea, there are more mad dogs out there every day.

recognise his rank and his place in the pecking order.

The vessel was in Boulogne for Bastille Day this year and fired off its fire-fighting monitors in salute. Anecdote has it that it performed this same operation a few years ago but there was a high wind and the vessel was too close to the muddy shallows. Many of the onlookers were reported to have been drenched in mud. But as the vessel is extremely popular in Boulogne, there is perhaps a measure of exaggeration in the tale.

Anglian Monarch is responsible for emergency towing in a huge area west of the Varne to east of the Goodwins. Old-fashioned mariners would be pleased to see how this ship navigates its patch. No



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» Anglian Monarch

Built:	Matsuura Tekko, Japan 1999	Speed:	Eco 11.75 knots on 25 tonnes MDO per day; max 16 knots
Dwt:	1,308		
LOA:	58m	Able to sail from UK to Panama without refuelling	
Beam:	14.1m	Bollard pull:	152 tonnes
Draught:	5.9m	Two towing winches each 300 tonnes brake load	
Depth:	7.1m	Two tugger winches	Two hydraulic towing pins
Power:	two x 6 cyl Niigata diesels, each 5,701 bhp, 2 x C/P propellers	Hydraulic Kaarm forks	
		Accommodation for 16 persons	