

FUEL ECONOMY 1912

The following is a copy of a paper in the Ship Department Fuel and Lubricant Section's historical file on coal. By its style and position in the file, it is estimated to be the work of . . . Rabbidge* of the Engineer-in-Chief's Department circa 1912.

WASTE OF FUEL AT SEA

1. A constantly recurring waste is the habit some executive officers have of ordering steam on a number of engines for drills, not knowing which will be required, so that whatever drill be carried out the engine is sure to be quite ready.
2. Ordering steam on an engine too long before actually required.
3. An excessive number of lights are at times kept on.
4. Bad working of the helm by the quartermaster. There is a great difference between quartermasters, some have the ship "yawing" all over the place with consequent increase in coal consumption.
5. Bad station keeping. This especially applies to night steaming when the ship may be allowed to drop too far astern, when the speed has to be increased considerably to pick up station. This uses up more coal than steady steaming as is usual with good station keeping.
6. Steaming vessels in line ahead when each vessel takes the wash of those ahead; ships should steam in quarter line as much as possible when on a course.
7. In some cases known, the Admiral has ordered 10 knots (say) and after leaving harbour has put on speed that could only be obtained with the boilers alight by using forced draught.
8. The greatest waste of coal is due to the Admirals themselves or in some cases the senior Officer of a Squadron who takes out the whole Squadron to sea merely to see if the weather is clear enough outside for his target practice. The coal used for raising steam, unmooring, etc. is very large and could be generally avoided if the vessels remained under banked fires and one small cruiser (say) were sent out earlier and signalled in by wireless when it was clear enough for firing.
9. Special vessels should always be used for towing targets, not battleships or large cruisers.
10. It is not unknown for a captain to put on speed for the sake of reaching port to catch a train—not necessarily in the interests of the Service. This loss is probably very small, however.

**Editor's note:*

A 1912 Navy List lists an Engineer Lieutenant William F. Rabbidge (seniority 1st June 1904) serving in the Department of the Controller of the Navy, Engineering Branch—the term 'Engineer-in-Chief's Department' started in 1913.

A 1913 Navy List shows Engineer Lieutenant William F. Rabbidge on the list of retired officers. Whether this was due to his temerity in criticizing his senior officers or whether it was in the ordinary course is not known.