



MAIN ENTRANCE TO ACCOMMODATION AND RECREATION AREA

H.M.S. SULTAN

BY

CAPTAIN J. D. FARROW, O.B.E., R.N., A.M.I.MECH.E.

On 1st June, 1956, the present H.M.S. *Sultan* was commissioned as a Mechanical Training and Repair Establishment.

In future practically all men of the Engineering Mechanic Branch who become Leading Engineering Mechanics will pass through H.M.S. *Sultan*, and may well return a second time as Petty Officers or Mechanician Candidates.

Historical Note

The present H.M.S. *Sultan* is the fourth holder of that name.

The first *Sultan*, launched in 1775, was a 74-gun ship of the line. Commissioned on the 28th August, 1777, she sailed for North America and joined the squadron commanded by Admiral Byron, the grandfather of Lord Byron, the famous poet, and took part in the action with the French Fleet off the Island of Granada. She also took part in several other naval engagements both in the North Atlantic and later in the Indian Ocean. At one time she was commanded by Captain Thomas Troubridge, one of Nelson's 'Band of Brothers'.

After periods as a convalescent ship and as a prison ship, both in Portsmouth Harbour, she was renamed *Suffolk* in 1805, and was finally broken up in 1816.

The second *Sultan* was built at Deptford and was commissioned in 1807 by Captain E. Griffith. She was paid off into reserve in 1815 and broken up in 1864.

The third *Sultan*, an armoured ship of 9,000 tons displacement, carrying 12 guns, was built at Chatham, and first commissioned under Captain F. W. Vansittart in 1871. Some five years later she was recommissioned at Portsmouth for the Mediterranean Fleet by H.R.H. The Duke of Edinburgh. It is interesting to note that there is in the wardroom of the present *Sultan* a picture of H.R.H. The Duke of Edinburgh whose flag as C.-in-C. of the Mediterranean Fleet was worn by the third *Sultan*. The picture was presented to the mess by the present First Sea Lord, Admiral the Earl Mountbatten, whose father was serving in the ship at that time.

Among the varied actions in which this *Sultan* participated was the bombardment of Alexandria in July, 1882, during which the anchor was struck and shattered by a cannonball from the shore batteries. The broken shank and one fluke of this anchor are now displayed in front of the main office block of the present H.M.S. *Sultan*, having previously been for many years in Victoria Park, Portsmouth.

It was in 1888 that this *Sultan* struck an uncharted pinnacle of rock in the Comino Channel off Malta and sank in shallow water. After attempts at salvage by the Royal Navy, she was finally recovered and taken to Malta by an Italian firm after five months work and at a cost of £50,000.

Between 1893 and 1896, some £200,000 were spent in 'reconstruction' but only once again did she go to sea—during the 1896 manœuvres. Thereafter she remained in reserve until 1906.

She was then dismantled and entered a new phase of her existence as *Fisgard IV*, one of the hulks comprising the Artificer Apprentice training establishment, H.M.S. *Fisgard*. During this period, she was moored in Portsmouth Harbour. When *Fisgard* was transferred to Devonport, H.M.S. *Sultan* ceased to be *Fisgard IV* and became known once more by her original name, and was employed in the training of the Engineering Mechanic Branch. In 1945, the Mechanical Training Repair Establishment was set up ashore at Portsmouth and all *Sultan's* tasks were transferred to it. The third *Sultan* was finally sold in 1946.

The present H.M.S. *Sultan* occupies a site which, as early as 1912, was a Royal Flying Corps airfield, one of the first five airfields in the country.

In 1914, the First Royal Naval Air Squadron was formed and trained here, while from 1921 onwards it was a permanent R.A.F. Station giving a considerable amount of training to the Fleet Air Arm.

In 1945 it was transferred to the R.N. as a Naval Air Station and became known as H.M.S. *Siskin*. Later, in June, 1956, the establishment was commissioned as H.M.S. *Sultan*.

COURSES HELD IN H.M.S. SULTAN

There are some fourteen standard courses held in H.M.S. *Sultan* and in addition, special courses are arranged from time to time to meet the requirements of foreign navies.

The principal courses are the Mechanics' Course, the General Engineering Course and the Mechanical Training Course.

It is hoped it may be possible to give detailed descriptions of these courses in subsequent articles, but a brief description of the major courses is given here.

The Mechanics' Course

The Mechanics' Course is of two years duration with a six-monthly intake. Ratings are selected for the course from among those who achieve a



PART OF THE MAIN WORKSHOP

sufficiently high all-round standard in the Mechanical Training Course, which they undergo as leading engineering mechanics, and further selection is possible from the General Engineering Course. Mechanical Training Courses have until recently been held at the three major ports of Portsmouth, Devonport and Chatham, but H.M.S. *Sultan* has now absorbed the M.T.C. tasks of Devonport (previously carried out in H.M.S. *Alaunia*) and Chatham (with the exception of the I.C.E., E.V.T., welding and P.I.P. courses, which are still held at the M.T.E., Chatham).

The objects of the course are to train men as fitters and turners, and to give instruction in engineering and academic subjects so that they may be able to carry out skilled maintenance and watchkeeping duties. This will render these men interchangeable with E.R.A.s in the functions they are able to perform in H.M. ships.

The training in school subjects reaches the H.E.T. standard in mathematics, mechanics and english, and a considerable proportion of the candidates qualify educationally for Special Duties List Officers during the course.

The final test jobs are taken from the same range as those performed by the artificer apprentices in H.M.S. *Caledonia* and are carried out after eighteen months' training. This is a recent innovation, the previous time under craft training being the full two years. In the last six months of the course, the candidates are now instructed in the outside trades, including welding, and they also carry out training in practical maintenance of machinery, thereby exercising their acquired skills under controlled conditions.

Throughout the whole course, leadership training is carried out and due regard is also given to sport and organized recreation. A highly competitive but friendly rivalry exists between the four terms of mechanician candidates, and also between them and the other courses and sections of the establishment. They contribute very materially to all the establishment sporting activities, and indeed to all facets of establishment life.

The General Engineering Course

The General Engineering Course lasts for six months and there are two entries a year, in January and July.

The object of the course is to give P.O.M.(E)s, A/P.O.M.(E)s and L.M.(E)s, with Boiler Room Watchkeeping Certificates, sufficient additional knowledge of the operation, construction and maintenance of machinery and systems to enable them to obtain a Unit Watchkeeping Certificate after a suitable period of sea training and to be competent semi-skilled maintainers.

The first course commenced on 2nd July, 1956, with a total of 23 P.O.M.(E)s selected from the three Port Divisions. The present course consists of 26 P.O.M.(E)s, but the number under training in future classes is expected to increase considerably.

Over 70 per cent of the course is devoted to instruction in engineering and practical maintenance.

School instruction is given in mathematics, heat, mechanics, elementary chemistry and electricity to such a standard as to ensure that the engineering can be properly understood.

The curriculum is supplemented by outside visits such as those to the Internal Combustion Engine Centre at Blackbrook Farm, Fareham, the Preservation, Identification and Packaging department at the Naval Store Depot, Woolston, and to the Admiralty Fuel Experimental Station, Haslar.

When possible, a visit is made to a unit of the Fleet for the survey of a boiler, both externally and internally, under the supervision of a C.E.R.A. boilermaker.

On completion of the survey the P.O.M.(E)s replace internal gear, sight, close-up and water pressure test the boiler. Finally, without junior assistance, they prepare and carry out a complete external clean by the 'water washing' method.

The average age of each class to date has been 31 years and there was an initial difficulty in settling down to instructional routine. Interest has rapidly developed during the course and the keenness shown by the men on the two 'pilot' courses is a good omen for the success in this radical change in the organization of the Engineering Department.

It has recently been decided that ratings who do sufficiently well on this course may be considered for selection as prospective mechanic candidates. This gives a second chance to men who were not selected from the Mechanical Training Course.

The Mechanical Training Course

All L.M.(E)s must successfully complete this twelve-week course before they are eligible to appear before a Fleet Board for P.O.M.(E). Courses commence at approximately three-weekly intervals.

The object of the course is to consolidate and supplement the training already given on entry, and at sea, and to prepare the L.M.(E) to play a more skilled and useful part in the Engineering Branch.

The course is divided into three main sections : engineering, school subjects and practical work, and in addition there are periods set aside for leadership training, recreation, and for spiritual and general education.

Engineering

The emphasis is on boilers and associated auxiliary machinery, the aim being to produce competent operators with some degree of semi-skilled maintenance knowledge.

School

The educational syllabus includes english, mathematics, mechanics, heat and hydraulics to such a standard as to ensure a good understanding of the principles of the construction and operation of boilers and other aspects of engineering practice.

Practical Work

Bench work, bricklaying, lagging and practical maintenance form the nucleus of this section.

Practical maintenance instruction has probably become the most popular part of the course. It covers lectures in ship preservation, storekeeping and spare gear, and materials used in the Engineering Branch.

Additional Subjects

Every Saturday forenoon a Current Affairs film is shown lasting about an hour. Once a fortnight a recreational training afternoon is allocated to each class. During these afternoons, the L.M.(E) spends half an hour with the Padre, an hour with the Gunnery Instructor and the remainder of the afternoon at games or physical training. The hour's drill is used to develop the power of command and to refresh the memory on parade training.

On the results of the final passing-out examination, mechanic candidates are provisionally selected from among those who attain about 70 per cent aggregate marks. In considering candidates for this selection their bearing and power of command as well as their potential ability to cope with the

mechanicians' course, are taken into account. All ratings who pass the M.T.C. are qualified technically to appear before a Fleet Board for P.O.M.(E).

Additional Courses held in H.M.S. 'Sultan' include:—

Engineers' Office Writers' Course
 Ship Type Pre-commissioning Course
 Direct Entry E.R.A.s Engineering Course
 Standard Welding Course
 Shipwright Artificers' Familiarization Course
 Refrigeration and Air Conditioning Machinery Courses
 R.N.V.R. M.(E)s part 1 (b) Course.

In addition to the above, several short refresher courses are available, and trade testing for direct entry E.R.A.s is either carried out or marked on the premises.

SHIPWRIGHT BRANCH

The Shipwright Department in H.M.S. *Sultan* forms one of the largest gatherings of the branch, whether ashore or afloat.

This unusually large number of shipwright artificers is accounted for by the fact that, besides a normal routine maintenance staff, H.M.S. *Sultan* also has shipwright artificers undergoing instruction on the Shipwrights' Familiarization Course and on the Welding Course.

The Shipwrights' Familiarization Course lasts fourteen weeks and is carried out by all direct entry shipwright artificers and joiners transferred to shipwright artificers, to familiarize them with the various tasks previously performed by the blacksmith, plumber and painter in the Navy of the past, and who are now no longer entered in the service.

The Standard Welding Course of twelve weeks duration normally includes about six shipwright artificers.

The trade testing of all direct entry National Service and R.N.V.R. candidates for shipwright artificer, also artisans R.N.V.R., either takes place here or is marked by the *Sultan* marking team.

ACCOMMODATION

The layout of H.M.S. *Sultan* falls naturally into two major sections, the technical and administration area on the west side of Military Road, and the accommodation and recreational area to the east of the same road.

The living accommodation is of a good standard comprising a number of two-storied blocks attractively laid out amid lawns and trees, bordering a spacious parade ground. A typical block, consisting of four large rooms, at present houses about 70 petty officer mechanic candidates.

The Chief Petty Officers' Mess

This is a single storey block catering for over 100 chief petty officers. The accommodation available is inadequate for the numbers borne, and future plans envisage building an extension. Despite the overcrowding, the present mess is comfortable and a number of successful mess functions have been held in the course of the year.

Accommodation for L.M.(E)s and Junior Rates

This is above the average standard, but due to the increase in the numbers of L.M.(E)s to be housed, owing to the absorption of the Devonport and

Chatham mechanical training courses, the accommodation available will have to be rearranged.

During *Siskin's* days, when the establishment was occupied by naval airmen, the accommodation blocks were named after well known aircraft carriers. It was now thought fitting to rename the blocks with the names of those ships which had made outstanding contributions to the advancement of engineering in the Navy.

The ship names for accommodation blocks with a very brief description of the unusualness or importance in naval engineering are :—

AMPHION (Mechanician Candidates)

The only ship in the Royal Navy to be fitted with Ericsson's Screw.

ACHERON (Mechanician Candidates)

Incorporated advanced steam conditions when built in 1928.

ADVENTURE (Mechanician Candidates and General Engineering Course)

The first Diesel-electric warship.

DARING (Ships Company and Short Courses Ratings)

In 1893 achieved the record speed of 28·2 knots.

CALLIOPE (L.M.(E)s)

Steamed out of Apia Harbour in the Island of Samoa against a hurricane when all other vessels were driven ashore or sunk. This was in 1889.

RATTLER (L.M.(E)s)

The first naval ship to be fitted with a screw. She engaged in the historic dual with the *Alecto*, an identical ship but fitted with the then conventional paddle wheel. They were lashed stern to stern and, with both developing full power in opposite directions, *Rattler* soon took complete charge and towed *Alecto* backwards at a steady speed.

VIPER (Petty Officers' Mess)

The first turbine driven ship in the Royal Navy. A torpedo-boat destroyer built in 1898, she had a maximum speed of 36½ knots.

PERSEUS (Chief Petty Officers' Cabin Block)

The first aircraft carrier to be equipped with the steam catapult.

Adjacent to the wardroom is Moat House, the residence of the Commanding Officer of H.M.S. *Sultan*. Close to the establishment Church, but outside the precincts of the establishment, are situated Red House, the residence of the Flag Officer, Admiralty Interview Board, and five houses for officers of *Sultan*.

A proportion of the Married Quarters adjacent to H.M.S. *Sultan* has been allocated to rating personnel, and new houses and flats are in course of erection on the far side of the airfield.

The Wardroom

The officers of H.M.S. *Sultan* are indeed fortunate to inherit the old wardroom of H.M.S. *Siskin*. Attractively designed and well built, it stands in pleasant grounds secluded but easily accessible. Its amenities include a hard tennis court, two squash courts and a croquet lawn.



THE CENTRAL BLOCK OF THE WARDROOM

ADMIRALTY INTERVIEW BOARDS

The officers of the Admiralty Interview Boards are accommodated in the wardroom.

Administered by the Flag Officer of the Interview Boards, and having in their composition other senior naval officers and distinguished civilians in the educational field, the Boards are responsible for the selection of all officers for the General List of the Royal Navy.

Practical tests of initiative and ability to take charge are carried out in the two gymnasiums, previously part of an aircraft hangar, situated in the technical area on the edge of the airfield.

FORT GRANGE

The western half of H.M.S. *Sultan* is flanked at either end by an old fort, part of Lord Palmerston's fortifications of Portsmouth and district built late in the 19th century. These forts are respectively, Fort Rowner to the north, now administered by the Admiral Superintendent, Portsmouth, and Fort Grange to the south, which is part of H.M.S. *Sultan*.

Due to the expansion of the mechanical training courses in H.M.S. *Sultan* to include those from Devonport and Chatham it was necessary to find extra accommodation to house them. The site chosen was Fort Grange, which during *Siskin's* day housed R.A.F. personnel attached to the station. This accommodation has now been renovated and, with the heating, sanitary and ablution arrangements modernized, was ready in October, 1957, to house all L.M.(E)s on course.

Recreation rooms and N.A.A.F.I. facilities have also been installed in Fort Grange but, as this is an interim and temporary scheme of accommodation

only, no cooking and dining facilities are available, and all meals are obtained in the large dining hall in the main part of the establishment.

FUTURE DEVELOPMENT

Since the accommodation afforded by Fort Grange is only of a temporary nature, plans to erect a new petty officers' block on the accommodation site are now under consideration, together with some modifications to the existing chief petty officers' and junior rates' blocks. The new petty officers' block, when completed, will house all petty officers, thereby releasing some of the existing blocks for the mechanical training courses.

The remaining blocks will continue as accommodation for ships' junior rates and short course personnel.

SPORT

H.M.S. *Sultan* is very fortunate to possess twenty-five acres of playing fields, and the easy accessibility of the pitches has a great effect upon the number of men availing themselves of the sporting facilities.

During the past year, while the physical training side has been 'working up', representative teams have been entered in a variety of sporting events, showing in many cases a marked degree of talent. Rugby, association football, cricket and shooting teams have represented the ship in inter-establishment matches. The football teams were runners-up in the United Services' League Junior Challenge Cup and won the League Division II championship. The rugby fifteen proved to be a most useful side, and elements from this team progressed to the semi-final of the United Services seven-a-side tournament. The shooting team were runners-up in the Portsmouth 3rd Division of the '22 league, and second in the '303 Saturday League. A number of *Sultan's* officers and ratings have taken part in representative matches for the Command during the past twelve months in association football, swimming, cross-country, shooting and fencing, while one officer came second in the R.N. Modern Pentathlon Championships. In addition, one officer and one P.O.M.(E), on course, were selected to represent the Navy in the Inter-Services Swimming Championships held at H.M.S. *Ganges*.

With regard to indoor sporting activities, which prove most popular during the winter months, H.M.S. *Sultan* was fortunate in inheriting a large hangar which, though designated the 'drill shed', is transformed out of working hours into a gymnasium. Matches and classes in deck hockey, badminton, indoor tennis, basket ball, and fencing are arranged and foster a keen inter-divisional spirit among both officers and men.

In view of training commitments it is not always possible to field the strongest sides but it nevertheless does mean that a maximum number of men represent their ship in inter-establishment and friendly matches.

Two 14-ft R.N.S.A. dinghies held by the establishment are kept at Hardway, about one and a half miles to the east, in Portsmouth Harbour, and are entered for Command races and regattas. Provision of an additional two whalers is being sought so that interest in sailing may be fostered and ratings instructed on a more economic basis.

In order that officers and ratings may obtain sufficient instruction in dinghy sailing to enable them to qualify for helmsmen's certificates, qualified helmsmen from among *Sultan's* officers are available during the sailing season to instruct novices.

THE CHURCH

The establishment Church is situated opposite Fort Rowner, well outside the establishment, about half a mile from the main gate.

It was built in 1872 as a temporary building for use by the army units inhabiting Forts Elson, Brockhurst, Rowner, Grange and Gomer.

Not a beautiful church externally, though it stands in pleasant grounds, nevertheless the inside is quite impressive and it has seating capacity for about 250. There is a good regular Sunday congregation consisting not only of *Sultan* families but also of civilians who have used the Church for many years. Some *Sultan* ratings have been married and many have had their children baptized in the Church.

Besides the Church, *Sultan* also possesses a small Chapel more in the centre of the establishment, in the N.A.A.F.I. block. The fittings for this Chapel came from the Royal Naval Air Station at St. Merryn.

The future of the Church, which before long will require extensive structural renovation, is at the present not completely clear. It is earnestly hoped that approval will shortly be given for a new, but smaller, church to be built inside the establishment.

VOLUNTEER BAND

The band was first formed at the end of July, 1956, and of the twenty original volunteers, only two had previously played an instrument. It is probably unique in the Royal Navy in that all the members are petty officer engineering mechanics.

The band mace, with a Sultan's head mounted on the top, was made in the establishment.

Over the past year the band has made remarkably good progress and it is to be hoped that this progress will continue despite the difficulty of losing some key members at frequent intervals, which is inevitable in a training establishment.

THE GUARD

The standing Guard for ceremonial occasions is drawn from the first term mechanic candidates, and their bearing and smartness has received much favourable comment from inspecting officers.

SICK BAY AND DENTAL SURGERY

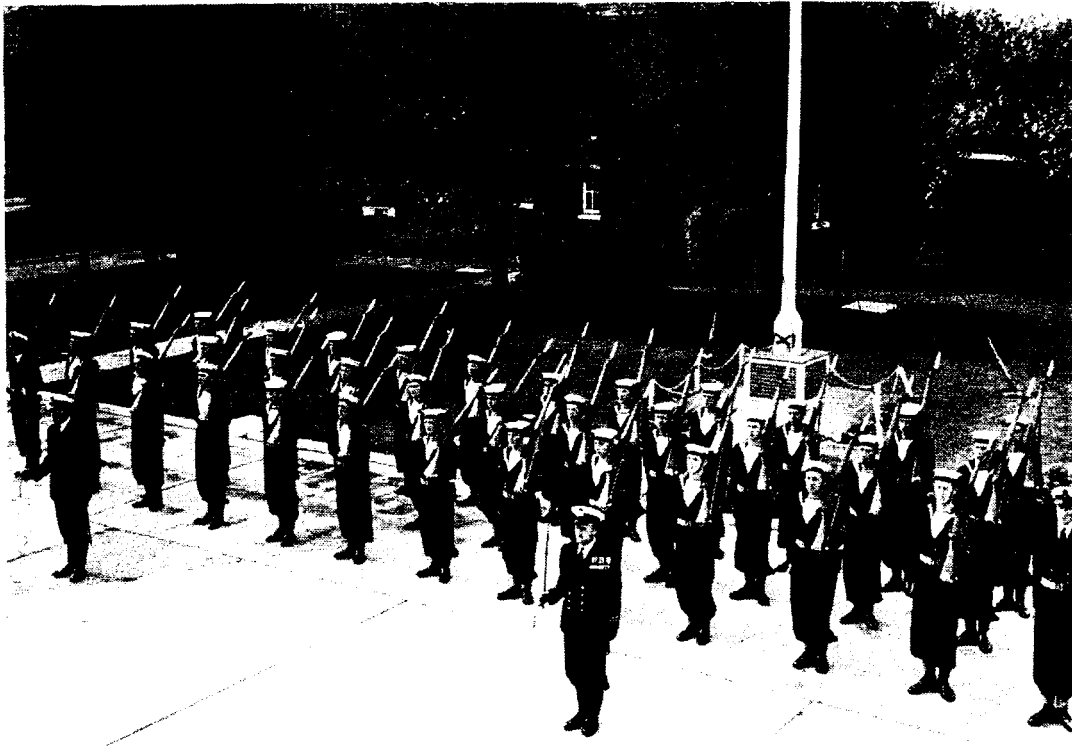
H.M.S. *Sultan* is fortunate in having a conveniently situated and well-equipped Sick Bay. It is a single storey building lying between the workshops and Fort Grange, and contains treatment rooms, offices, a dispensary and a pleasant six-bedded ward.

A recent addition to the Sick Bay is the small Dental Surgery, fitted out with the latest apparatus, which came into operation shortly before Christmas, 1956, following the conversion of a redundant operating theatre.

In addition to the health commitments of H.M.S. *Sultan*, the Sick Bay also affords medical security for the helicopters from H.M.S. *Daedalus*, Lee-on-Solent, which uses the adjoining airfield for training. Happily, accidents are infrequent, but should one occur, all necessary facilities are kept at instant readiness and an ambulance stands by during flying hours.

ENTERTAINMENT

Entertainment in H.M.S. *Sultan* centres largely round the 'Concert Hangar', a legacy from the Fleet Air Arm.



THE GUARD—FIRST TERM MECHANICIAN CANDIDATES

Plans have been approved and work is now in hand on a reconstruction scheme, which will provide a new cinema projection room and first-class cloakroom and other subsidiary facilities, as well as removing most of the fire risk which was very evident in the former state of the building, and which had virtually put the hangar out of commission since March of this year.

On completion of this work *Sultan* will have cinema, theatre, and dance facilities second to none in the area.

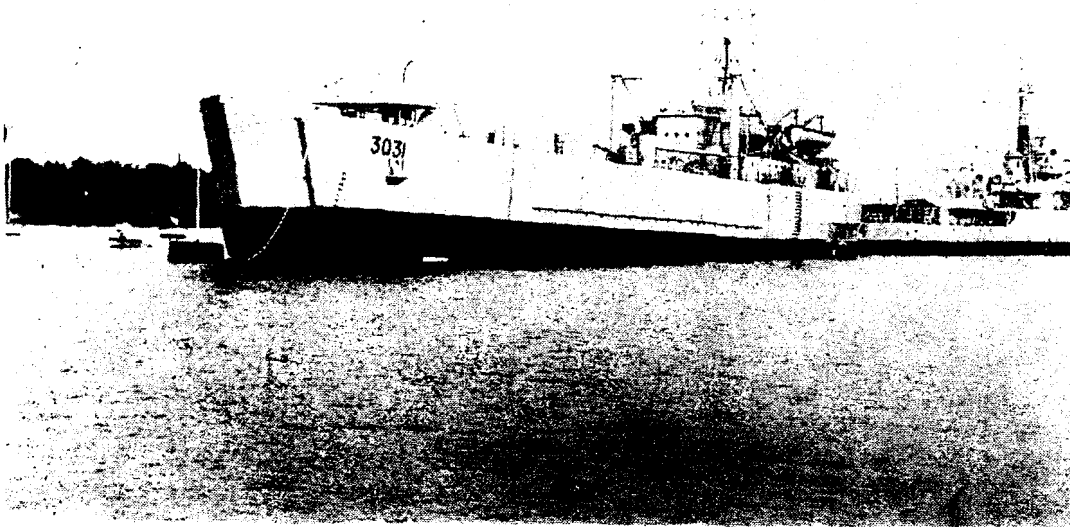
In spite of the condition of the hangar during the past year, a very successful entertainment programme was carried out, which included the production by *Sultan's* Dramatic Society of 'The Cure for Love'. The great success of this show, with an all-rating cast, proved that 'straight' plays are very far from being 'wardroom perks'. J. B. Priestley's one-act play, 'The Rose and Crown', was *Sultan's* entry in the R.N. Drama Festival.

The Drama Group is now preparing for the re-opening of the theatre, when it is hoped to present Rattigan's 'Harlequinade' and Coward's 'Fumed Oak'.

H.M.S. SULTAN'S L.S.T.

H.M.S. *Sultan* possesses a Tank Landing Ship (L.S.T. 3031) for training purposes. L.S.T. 3031 was built in 1945 and placed in reserve in the Gareloch in the following year. She was brought down to Portsmouth and beached at Hardway on the 19th February, 1957, but subsequently moored in the harbour adjacent to Hardway.

All machinery in the L.S.T. is now being completely refitted by mechanician candidates on course, all machining being done in H.M.S. *Sultan's* workshops.



L.S.T. 3031 AT HER MOORINGS

It is intended that the main functions of this vessel shall be the training of :—

- (a) Mechanics in practical maintenance
- (b) L.M.(E)s in boiler operation under harbour load conditions
- (c) P.O.M.(E)s in internal cleaning of boilers
- (d) Engineers' Office Writers in keeping machinery records.

It has also been used to acquaint direct entry E.R.A.s with reciprocating machinery, and facilities have been extended to our sister establishment, H.M.S. *Collingwood*, to give practical training in the L.S.T. to ratings of the Electrical Branch.
