

TRAINING OF CADETS (E) IN THE TRAINING CRUISER

by

COMMANDER (E) D. A. COTMAN, R.N.
Engineer Officer, H.M.S. "Devonshire"

The Admiralty directive outlining the objectives of the training to be undertaken by cadets in the Training Cruisers is given in A.F.O. 1542/49. This syllabus, though headed as being for executive cadets, is designed for the common training of executive, (E) and (L) cadets.

General

Under each heading of this directive the preamble states that it is only the general principles, or the ground-work of each subject, which should be taught. This is a vitally important point as the syllabus for each subject is large and it is found that, if a mass of detail is given, it is quite beyond the average cadet to assimilate it, except parrot-fashion. This is not surprising with the special entry cadets who have only been four months in the Navy by the time they join for the first of their two cruises. They not only have to learn a vast amount of knowledge which is all entirely new to them but they also have to accustom themselves to a completely new and strange way of life. To all this must be added the fact that a cadet's day is a very full and energetic one and that he has practically no time left to himself when he can "take stock" or have a moment to think over for himself the large number of contrasting sides to his training which he is meeting daily.

The number of cadets in the training cruiser is varying now between 200 and 285. This number is made up of executive, (E), (L), and (S) cadets but this article will only deal with the first three branches, whose training, as already stated, is identical. The whole object is to turn out a young officer who has a background of naval knowledge. Instruction is complex, and there is no doubt that it is somewhat slowed down by the fact that during the last few cruises cadets from India, Pakistan, Burma and Egypt have been borne in addition to our own. Greater stress is now being put on the requirement of these cadets to speak English well before their acceptance for training, and, by this means, it is hoped to speed up their work and to lessen the chances of dangerous situations arising due to their inability to understand the orders being given to them.

Here it should be emphasized that the cadets form the seaman complement and are essential for working the ship. The small number of seamen appointed are required mainly for Messmen and Sweepers in the ship's company quarters, a few only being employed on special duties such as Gunner's Party and Bo'sun's Party. Thus all the general work on the upper deck is done by the cadets.

Cadets stay in the ship for two cruises, each lasting 12 weeks; during their first cruise as juniors they do two days classroom instruction followed by one day workshop, and in the second cruise as seniors one day's classroom instruction followed by two days workshop. The week is divided into 27 periods of 50 minutes each. On Thursday forenoons all senior instructional classes do

Seamanship, at the same time making this an opportunity for boat manoeuvres, etc. Wednesday afternoon is reserved for sailing races, boatwork, etc., Saturday a make-and-mend day.

Domestic and Disciplinary

The Cadet Training Officer, a general service Lieutenant-Commander, is in general charge of the organization and administration of all cadets and responsible to the Captain and Commander for their training, discipline and welfare. He is assisted by the Cadet Gunner who is in charge of the cadet office and of all the domestic details concerned with cadets (e.g. cleaning cadets' quarters, meal and punishment routines, mails, etc.). There are 15 rating Cadet Instructors including two E.R.A.'s. and two Motor Mechanics; all instructors have authority over cadets, their particular responsibility being the general behaviour of cadets when in their own quarters. They are the only ratings, apart from the Royal Marine Cadet attendants, who are allowed in the cadets' quarters. Any other rating such as a Captain of the Top or an E.R.A. to whom a cadet is acting as mate, or a Chief P.O.S.M. when boiler cleaning, has authority over cadets but this authority does not extend to cadets in their own quarters out of working hours.

Each senior cadet is a leading cadet for one week at least, during which time he is free of all other special duties (except that one day in every three he becomes a P.O. cadet for the day only). Each leading cadet is also leading hand of his mess and gunroom and since there are three per division at any time, he has to take charge a great deal on the upperdeck. This is quite the most important time for a cadet, as it is during this week that he is able to develop his officer-like qualities in taking charge. The leading cadet detailed daily as P.O. cadet carries out one of the following duties: duty P.O. cadet, P.O. cadet of the day, duty R.P.O. cadet, cadet of the mess-decks; during working hours he is also Cadet Captain of the Top in his own part of the ship.

Messing

In order to give all cadets an insight into how a rating messes, each mess of cadets spends approximately four weeks of each cruise in a broadside mess. At any one time there is one mess from each division living in a screened-off portion of one of the messdecks and carrying out a messing routine exactly similar to that carried out by seamen. The cadets get the same food and are messed by a Commissioned Catering Officer on victualling allowance plus a small additional allowance, equivalent to a general mess subscription.

Special Duties

Cadets, in their workshop time, carry out most of the normal special duties of a ship. These include the domestic and disciplinary duties mentioned above and such duties as quarterdeck staff, boats' crews, doggies, S.D.O. messengers and working with shipwright, painter, electrical and bo'sun's parties.

Engineering Instruction

The Engineering instruction is done by the four Lieutenants (E), one of whom is attached to each division, and they have as assistants two E.R.As. and two Motor Mechanics. The E.R.As. are borne for instructional duties only, but the Motor Mechanics help to maintain the boats as well as to instruct the cadets. With eight power boats and 250 cadets this is no mean task when it is realized that the cadet stoker changes every day.

The first cruise cadets spend the majority of their time in the classrooms interspersed with tours of the machinery that is being dealt with. For this

these cadets are split into three classes in each division, one each day being workshop on the upperdeck and the other two doing classroom instruction. Thus in his first cruise a cadet receives 14 periods of engineering over a three-weeks cycle during most of which time he is having theoretical instruction under his own Divisional Engineer Officer. When the class goes below it is generally split, the Engineer Officer taking one half and one of the instructor E.R.As. the other. In the second cruise when the cadet is alternatively workshop and instruction, he gets three periods a week and he spends most of his time below consolidating by practical experience what he learnt in his first cruise. The ship construction syllabus is also done during the second cruise and this of necessity somewhat curtails the amount of time that can be spent down below.

It is a pity, especially as far as the executive cadets are concerned, that there is not more time available for work down below because, without it, they get little chance of learning anything about "the way of life" of a stoker. The "way of life" of other branches is seen very readily during their workshop periods which are always spent on the upperdeck and never in the Engineerroom. This is unavoidable due to the lack of seamen previously referred to. Time does not permit cadets to do more than one forenoon boiler cleaning, and none at all with the D.B. party, cleaning bilges or oil fuel tanks, so that they never see this considerable part of a stoker's work.

Whilst at sea the cadets keep two-hour watches during the night, doing such duties as cadet E.O.O.W., stoker of a steaming boiler, throttle watchkeeper, etc. Experience has shown that this sort of work consolidates the general engineering knowledge gained more than anything else, especially if there is sufficient sea time in the cruise for them to have plenty of watches. A greatly-stressed duty of all E.O.O.Ws., whether borne for instructional duties or not, is that they must all assist in instruction by keeping the cadet watchkeepers on the move all the time they are below. This consolidation of knowledge by the practical experience gained by watchkeeping is very apparent towards the end of the West Indies cruise, which always has as much sea time as the other two cruises combined.

The engineering syllabus, together with ship construction, is considered to be a maximum at present as the object of the training cruiser is to turn out officers, the technical knowledge being gained later. A classroom does not develop officer-like qualities especially when that classroom is one of H.M. cruisers while at sea.

A further point which is always emphasized here is the importance of (E) cadets learning the work of the executive officer and vice versa. For instance, it is just as important for the future E.O.O.W. to appreciate why the fo'c'sle officer requires steam on the capstan at some unearthly hour in the morning when the ship is moored as it is for the O.O.W. to appreciate what happens down below when he rings down "Full astern".

Conclusion

I think it is needless to add that the cadets are encouraged to take part in all forms of sport, especially sailing, at which no less than five cups are competed for each cruise, and that it is constantly emphasized that, whether or not they can play games themselves, they will assuredly be better officers for taking an interest in the sports of their men when they become Divisional Officers.

Finally it must be said that a cadet has a really strenuous life, he is on the go all day from 0620, when the decks are scrubbed, until "Pipe down" at 2130, and it is essential that this should be so if the syllabus, which is enormous, is to be adhered to.