

# THE PURPOSE IN TRAINING

BY

CAPTAIN (E) C. W. JONES, M.I.MECH.E., A.F.R.Ae.S., R.N.

In all discussions on training subjects it is thought that, as in the introduction to scientific papers, it is advisable for the writer to disclose the background of experience on which his remarks are made. This procedure is an aid to the reader and enables him to discount such prejudices as may arise from the writer's background.

This particular writer was educated at a large Scottish Secondary School, a Boy Artificers' Training Ship, the Royal Naval College, Greenwich, and the R.A.F. School of Aeronautical Engineering.

He has been an Engineer Officer responsible for training Midshipmen and Sub-Lieutenants (E) afloat, Factory and Divisional Officer for 2½ years, and Senior Engineer for a similar period at the M.T.E., Chatham, when it dealt with some 22 courses, of lengths varying from some days to 4½ years, for Stokers II, Stokers, Leading Stokers, Apprentices, Mechanics, E.R.A.s and representatives of all types of naval ratings for vocational training. He served in normal appointments both ashore and afloat and has been directly responsible for the control of naval ratings and civilian workers, yellow, white, brown and black, in considerable numbers. He was an 'examining authority' on three occasions for higher technical ratings in marine and air engineering and at one period for civil air engineering licences, and served on interviewing boards for recommending ratings for commissions. He has also had civil scientists and engineers in quantity, and of the very highest qualifications, serving under him.

He was one of the witnesses who gave evidence on the shortage of lower deck candidates for commissions just before the Second World War and on the shortage of candidates for dockyard apprentices after the war.

He also has one son at Gordonstoun and one lately at a grammar school and now at Haileybury.

His experience, in brief, covers the products of elementary schools, secondary schools, grammar schools, public schools, universities and naval and air force training establishments, and people of all colours and diversities of religions.

He has been greatly interested in the articles on training which have recently appeared in the *Journal*. He would like to congratulate the writers on their excellent and clear presentation of their points of view on training.

The few remarks which follow are dedicated to them and to others who wish, as they do, to find the correct balance in the training curriculum. The remarks are not backed up, where they should be, by statistical analysis, but are based on observation and experience.

There appears to the writer to have been a fundamental change in the sources of recruitment for apprentices, and although this change has not affected all the apprentices, it has probably had a disproportionate effect on the training establishments. Up to the end of the First World War the apprentice recruits came from well defined categories, the open entry recruited almost entirely

from the home ports, the educational nomination entry which came from secondary schools all over England, Scotland, Wales and Ireland, and might also include Borman and Upper School boys from Greenwich Hospital School. There were also some Service nomination apprentices who received assistance by way of free marks.

It is the writer's opinion that the educational nomination entries were drawn from good class families and in the way of general education, recreation, including sports, music, amateur dramatics, debating societies, etc., were somewhat superior to those from other sources. It may even have been argued that they had higher moral standards as a whole but also produced the more notorious criminals. The open competition probably produced as good if not a better academic standard and there was little to choose in workmanship.

The combination of the best of these entries produced a small number of apprentices of a very high standard who set the pace for the others. After the First World War the educational nomination began to lose its wide geographical distribution and narrowed until it too was filled from the home ports. This process continued for many years and the standard of entry was consequently reduced. It is believed that the reduction was due to the generally increasing facilities for the bright boy to go further in education and due to an increasing reluctance, possibly based on the reports of the apprentices, for headmasters of secondary schools to recommend the apprentice examination to their pupils. The result was that the main body of the apprentices, while still recruited from much the same sources as before, lost its pacemakers. The 1944 Education Act probably put an end to the brighter boy from whatever source considering entry into the Navy as an apprentice.

It may be that the loss of the higher type of recruit as pacemaker academically, practically and morally is one of the causes for the alleged lack of keenness and acceptance of moral obligations.

The training of apprentices at the end of the First World War and for some years afterwards undoubtedly produced a good artificer, proud of his skill, capable and desirous of accepting responsibility, and conscious of a superiority (which may have been false) over the remainder of the lower deck. He may have been a source of annoyance to others in ships because of his aloofness and a determination 'to stand on his rights' which of course was fashionable amongst the civil tradesmen of that era. As for initiative, it is thought that on the whole he was credited with too much, and there was a desire to have him reduced in status and put in what was thought to be his proper place.

In the training establishments of that time there was no end of activity. Inside the ship there were the usual chess, draughts and bridge parties, besides the illegal but enterprising 'crown and anchor,' *vingt-et-un* and 'brag' schools; boxing, fencing, and wrestling were carried on nightly, and there were orchestras and dance bands. Musical and variety shows were put on more frequently than just at the end of term and the lyrics and music were occasionally written and composed in the ship. There were also Bible classes, literary and debating societies, photographic clubs, choirs, and so on.

Externally there were hockey, rugby, association football, cricket, water polo and athletic teams. It may be interesting to note that Keyham was defeated both at rugby and cricket by the apprentices in one of the post-1914-18 years.

There was no ceremonial band, little or no parade ground work, and only one period of physical training per week. At the end of the 4½ years, the passing out class went to local barracks and did six weeks or so in charge of a Gunner's Mate.

There were no divisional officers as such. The entire work, secretarial, financial and organizational of all these activities fell almost entirely on the apprentices.

Nowadays the divisional officer has become responsible for the success of his division. His appointment is only for two years or so. Anything wrong with his division or anyone in it is regarded as his fault. In accordance with the Service trend of thought, he is expected to be able to avoid things going wrong. As a result he cannot afford to make a mistake, so that he tends to centralize the activities of his division in himself. This reduces the opportunities of the apprentices to take on responsibilities and to learn by making mistakes. It also leads to a system of blackmail whereby the division as such indicates politely or indirectly its intention to reduce its activities in some respect unless the divisional officer increases his in some other. This may be one reason why initiative and desire to undertake responsibility have allegedly decreased with the years.

The function of a training establishment is to train personnel for their job. The work of an artificer lies in his ability to make, to repair, to tend machinery. It is to this work he dedicates himself. The American marine receives his rifle on completion of his training as part of a religious ceremony. One would hardly advocate the same treatment for the presentation of a file, a hammer, or a spanner to each artificer at a graduation ceremony, but the story illustrates the proper spirit.

Nothing during his training should detract his attention from the main object. It should be clear to him that unless he is proficient at his job all else is as nought. Games, recreation and other activities are to help him to do his job better and are not an end in themselves. It may even be that in the whole field of human endeavour as much if not more satisfaction has been had from work as it has from play.

It is the writer's belief that discipline can be equally well taught in the workshop as on the parade ground ; in the classroom as on the playing field ; and in the establishment as in extra-mural activities. The apprentice must place workmanship and academic ability above prowess at games and realize that a place in the ceremonial band is no short cut to glory. The opening words of the Small Arms Drill Book at one period stated that 'The basis of all discipline lies in small arms drill'. This misconception arose from the important fact that Frederick the Great by virtue of his close tactics in war—now parade ground drill—was able to outmanœuvre and defeat his foes. There is but one discipline—the triumph over self—and there are many ways to achieve it.

These remarks attempt to put true discipline in its proper perspective. It is not intended to suggest that parade ground drill is completely unnecessary, but to point out that it is in fact only a drill which is easy to teach and to absorb.

The organization for training in naval establishments seems to be clearly defined into three distinct responsibilities. The character and discipline building team headed by an executive officer, the functional training headed by a technical officer and the academic training headed by a scholastic officer. The executive officer is usually the senior or paramount officer in this arrangement. He possesses powers of praise, blame and punishment which are denied to the technical or academic officer as such. The writer is unaware of this distinction between academic, functional and character training being made in any other schools.

The executive officer is prone to see great value in games, parades and other activities which are readily visible to the external world, are of great publicity value, and as such have or can have a beneficial effect on morale. They are

usually easy to organize and produce in a fairly short time and therefore appeal to the paramount member of the team, especially as they are regarded as coming within the character or discipline forming activities for which he is responsible. As a result, these activities are liable to get out of perspective not only in the eyes of the training officer but also in the eyes of the apprentice, who should never be allowed to take his eye off the ultimate objective of becoming a sound artificer.

There is also the danger that these more spectacular activities become annual or periodic events, each better than the last and each demanding more time and more effort, which is unlikely to be available except at the expense of the main objective.

The effect of increases in pay has been apparent before, and the effects described in the *Journal* articles were observed in 1919 after the then new pay awards were made. Before this date the attendance at home matches on Saturday afternoon was very heavy and included practically all the apprentices whose parents did not live locally and quite a number whose parents did. All who were at the sports field had tea after the matches. A first class tea of tuff cakes, saffron cakes, Cornish cream and jam.

Within two or three weeks of the award, and despite the magnificent tea, the spectators diminished to a mere few although the numbers playing in teams were not affected. Shoregoing during the week also increased but not to a great extent, as it will no doubt be recalled that leave for juniors was up at 9 p.m., seniors 10 p.m., and the passing out class 11 p.m., and was possible only on nights free from school, i.e. one night for 4th and 9th half years and two nights for all others.

It is doubted whether the present apprentice is really much different from all other boys or from the boys of a previous generation. All boys tend to be lazy, to avoid their obligations and, let us face it, to be thieves and liars. They do develop as time goes on some form of internal code where the permissible thieving and lying is confined to recognized occasions. In some cases morals reached a very high standard but it is likely the same people would have reached the same standard anywhere. They develop also a strong sense of responsibility when responsibility is placed upon them. The present day apprentice is probably no better and no worse than he ought to be. The artificial responsibilities created in training establishments as an introduction to the future are all very well in their way, but their limitations are manifest and their artificiality not unrecognized by the young man. The last year of the apprentice's training at sea is a very important one, and that is when he will learn to take responsibility under real conditions and at his job.

The training world is a very alive world and one that almost believes in change for change's sake. It is seldom that any scheme lasts long enough for its true merits to be assessed, and this is aggravated by the comparatively short appointments of officers, who feel they ought to contribute something during their time. It used to be called the five-year cycle, two years to think of it and get it approved, one year to work it up and two years to destroy it in preparation for the next.

The one unchanging thing in those days was the apprentice, who whether divided vertically or horizontally, ashore or afloat, over organized or under organized remained much the same. The changing schemes have their success mainly in the eye of the originator, who can prove nearly anything in the intangible training world. The success of a training scheme lies not in the scheme but in the personality of the people who operate it. I would go so far as to say that, provided the scheme is conducted by first-class officers who have enthusiasm

and a belief in their mission, and that those receiving training know just where they are and what is happening, then the results will not be greatly different whether the scheme itself is good or bad. It must also be emphasized that people engaged in training are subject to considerable self-delusion. Training schemes and plans really have their effect on a small minority, the difficult or the best. It is probably true that the great body of those trained would be much the same under any reasonable scheme because the individual has and retains his own reasonable estimate of what is right and should be done. We should therefore be very chary of change for change sake and in estimating the effects, which are usually intangible anyway, claimed by the changers.

These notes so far are mainly critical but from them one can suggest some principles on which training should be based.

As regards the alleged lack of responsibility, this might be improved by giving each apprentice in turn definite duties, by reducing the number of divisional officers and by allowing the apprentices to run all their own activities in sports, pastimes and cultural pursuits, which it is understood is done in some establishments.

It is argued that the apprentices have too much leisure. The leisure should be reduced and the time filled by active pursuits connected with their work. Night school should be given on three or four nights a week, while the day activities should lead to the boy being healthily tired at the end of the day. It may be that day school and night workshop might be a suitable variation, especially as a lot of his future work will be done by artificial light.

The apprentice is alleged to have too much money. If he were to pay, as he should, for all or at least part of the recreational activities provided for him, some of this excess money could be drained away. Instead of providing so many games inside the establishment, he should be encouraged to join local clubs where he will meet people in other walks of life. This should broaden the apprentice's mind, make him realize his place in the nation and possibly broaden the local people's minds as regards the Navy, besides giving financial help to the local clubs.

The task is to train boys to become satisfactory operators and repairers of machinery by the use of men, material and tools. The training in the establishment should be devoted to this end and if the correct emphasis is placed on this aspect, other activities will fall into their correct perspective. This may even mean a redistribution of responsibility to the guiding officers so that those responsible for the ultimate aim take the principal part in the organization. In any case the artificial division between character, technical and academic training should be forgotten. The head of the establishment could well be chosen from the best man available from any of these divisions as it is done for other educational establishments. Responsibility for blame or punishment could well be spread amongst those in control of each main division of the curriculum.

The apprentice must be encouraged to believe that workmanship and technical knowledge are of the first importance, that in the exercise of his skill and knowledge he can develop character and acquire discipline with the help of God.

---