

THE ROYAL NAVAL ENGINEER OFFICERS' CONFERENCE 1988

UPDATE 88

The Royal Naval Engineer Officers' Conference was held at the Royal Naval Engineering College, Manadon, on 8 April 1988. The title of the Conference was 'Update 88'. Five presentations were given, covering the Fleet, training, support, Trident, and 'the gleam in the eye'. Time was allocated for questions at the end of each session. The Conference programme was as follows:

WELCOME ADDRESS

Captain J. A. MARSHALL, L.V.O.,
Captain of RNEC, Manadon

INTRODUCTION

Vice-Admiral Sir HUGH THOMPSON,
K.B.E., Chief Naval Engineer Officer

FLEET

a review of C-in-C Fleet's
primary and secondary roles

Rear-Admiral R. C. F. HILL presiding:
Lt-Cdr. J. D. BRAY *C-in-C Fleet*
Lt-Cdr. N. C. F. WHALES *C-in-C Fleet*

TRAINING ESTABLISHMENTS an update on training at: H.M.S. <i>Sultan</i> H.M.S. <i>Collingwood</i> H.M.S. <i>Daedalus</i>	Captain T. J. MEADOWS presiding: Cdr. R. F. JOHNS <i>H.M.S. Sultan</i> Cdr. P. A. MOORE <i>H.M.S. Collingwood</i> Cdr. R. T. DORE <i>H.M.S. Daedalus</i>
SUPPORT a presentation on ship refitting and aircraft maintenance	Rear-Admiral D. R. SHERVAL presiding: Captain J. S. GRENFELL <i>DGSR</i> Captain C. J. ESPLIN-JONES <i>ASPT</i>
TRIDENT an overview of the Trident project and its progress to date	Rear-Admiral I. H. PIRNIE presiding: Commodore T. W. CRAVEN <i>DGSWS</i> Captain R. C. SHARP <i>DGSWS</i> Captain N. B. KIRBY <i>DGSM</i> Mr N. MOORES <i>DGSM</i>
'A GLEAM IN THE EYE' a forward look to the sys- tems and platforms we might see in the 21st century	Captain S. A. V. VAN DER BYL presiding: Cdr. J. D. BASS <i>DFP(N)</i> Cdr. N. J. D. FULFORD <i>DFP(N)</i>

The Conference concluded with an address by the Chief Naval Engineer Officer, summing up the day.

The addresses are printed below. Many of the subjects treated in the presentations are too highly classified for publication here, or else have been adequately covered in recent articles. Nevertheless, edited versions of the presentations on the Trident project and on training at H.M.S. *Daedalus* and *Sultan* are included in this issue.

WELCOME BY THE CAPTAIN OF RNEC MANADON

CAPTAIN J. A. MARSHALL, L.V.O., C.ENG., M.I.MECH.E.

Admiral Thompson and gentlemen, good morning. It is my great pleasure, on behalf of all Manadon officers warmly to welcome you back to the College on this Conference day.

Most of you cannot fail to have noticed a new modern building that has been put up to the north of the parade ground between the Instructional Block and No. 3 Hangar. Gestating as ever for a number of years, this new block of mechanical engineering laboratories has now been built and accepted as a structure by the College. It is being fitted out with laboratory equipment before being used to support, in an up-to-date way, the first and second degrees that are read here. It is to be named the Keyham Building and we are planning an official opening in the autumn.

September will see a revised B.Eng. degree, introduced in order to best align engineering officers with the evolving needs of the Royal Navy. Structured around a systems approach to engineering design, we shall see specialist streaming occurring in the second rather than the third year. There will, to begin with, be Marine, Weapon and Air Engineering packages, plus the potential for a nuclear option.

The third development that I should mention is the imminent formation of the RNEC Advisory Council. I understand that this was originally proposed as far back as 1976 but the impetus to formation has been given by my immediate predecessors over the last two years or so. Formal approval for the council to be formed was granted in February. The first meeting will be held in early May under the chairmanship of Sir Herman Bondi, when eleven eminent engineers, scientists, industrialists and academics will sit down together. Their role will be to advise the Admiralty Board on a full range of matters associated with the timing and qualifications of our Chartered and Technician engineers, most particularly as this College is concerned.

These are the most significant things that are occurring in the College apart from perhaps a few domestic matters like putting the grounds maintenance out to contract. I'm happy to be able to report that the specification has been tightly drawn and the Commander is able to manage the contract with consummate ease.

OPENING ADDRESS BY THE CHIEF NAVAL ENGINEER OFFICER

VICE-ADMIRAL SIR HUGH THOMPSON, K.B.E., C.ENG., F.I.MECH.E.

Good morning Gentlemen and welcome to this year's Conference. The theme is printed on the cover of the blue conference booklet—'Update 88'. I think it is very appropriate because if we look back over the two years since the last Conference it's hard to find something in Naval Engineering which is still the same. The Dockyards have changed, Support has changed, there are new things in the Repair World, the methods of doing business are continually changing; and so perhaps an opportunity to update ourselves is the right thing.

We can see from the programme that we are going to have a series of presentations from Fleet, from the Training World, from the Support Area, from the Strategic Systems Executive and from Future Projects. The point really of the presentations is not for you to sit down and be spoon-fed information, some of which you may already know, but to provoke a discussion and to appraise me and other senior Engineer Officers who are responsible for representing your views at other levels within the Ministry of Defence, as to the real impact of these changes, as I know that we do become remote from what is actually going on at the coalface. Thus we have left a fair amount of time at the end of each presentation for discussions and I hope that they will be lively and topical ones because that is what conferences are supposed to be about.

I will talk very briefly, without stealing anyone's thunder, about the various presentations that are there to provoke a debate. You will hear from Commander-in-Chief's team about their problems of diminishing resources, directed commitments, the load on the Fleet, trying to update the Fleet with the modern technology which lies on the shelves in Copenacre, A & As waiting to be fitted, their view of the change in the roll of the Dockyards and the other things that they are trying to do off their own back to improve the performance of the Fleet, such as signature reduction.

We then move on to the three Training Establishments and it had to be three otherwise I would have provoked a 'Holy War'. In some ways they are in an even worse position because they are desperately trying to train the people who will man the future ships that we will hear about. They are

trying to do this against problems that are not just manpower ones, for we know that if there are to be gapped billets then to a large degree they tend to fall on Training Establishments.

The one that I am especially looking forward to is the third presentation, on Support, particularly as regard Air Support reorganization. This has been going on for some time now and offers large financial savings.

After lunch we move forward into the Trident programme. They must be fairly happy this morning realizing that the hull section that was welded in upside down into a submarine in Barrow wasn't actually a Trident submarine but was one of the TRAFALGAR class. Trident is the biggest and most expensive project that I think the Navy has ever undertaken. I know that one of my predecessors, to stop any bad press, used to carry a bit of cardboard around in his pocket which actually showed Defence expenditure and he used to whip it out on every occasion or opportunity to demonstrate that Trident was only taking something like 3% of the overall Defence Budget. In one sense it was true but for those of us who are interested in money, or who have to be interested in money and the Long Term Programme, it is of course having a dramatic effect on what we are able to do with the rest of the Navy. That is not in any way to argue against Trident because I believe that Trident will be one of our major assets of the future in terms of the country's defence.

For those of you who are very young at the back, Captain Van der Byl and his people from future Naval Projects will describe some of the things that if money comes and the Trident build programme finishes, might be around in 20 years which hopefully you will be able to enjoy. This is a particularly important area of the business of looking forward and trying to make sensible judgements about where we should be going and what we should be doing in that well-known management arena where there are no firm facts. It's all speculation and manufacturers tell you that there's nothing that they can't do. I hope you will find it of interest and perhaps be able to provoke some thought as to things that we might even be doing that we are not.

Finally you will hear directly, or perhaps implied, about people and the man. You are all well aware of the pressures; I mentioned Training Establishments earlier on. We sometimes get besotted about hardware, platinum, stainless steel or bits of equipment or their repair or maintenance but we all must never ever lose sight of the fact that we need two things; we need the equipment and we need the man. I hope for those of you who perhaps tend to concentrate a bit on the equipment that today might give you pause to ponder and recognize that unless we pay some attention to the man then we're likely to preside over the demise of the Engineering Branch of the Navy.

That's enough from me, Gentlemen, lets turn now to the Conference itself.

CLOSING ADDRESS BY THE CHIEF NAVAL ENGINEER OFFICER

VICE-ADMIRAL SIR HUGH THOMPSON, K.B.E., C.ENG., F.I.MECH.E.

When I looked forward at 9.30 this morning to what I might feel like at 16.30 I can only tell you I believe we have more than achieved our target. What we have had has been a good, and better than I had hoped for, active discussion. Some of it was a bit heavy when we got to the LTCs and things

like that and perhaps turned off some of the younger officers but generally I thought the dialogue between people today was what I had hoped it was going to be. Perhaps we have got here the beginnings of a successful recipe for future conferences, because if the younger people here don't make any comments in these sort of discussions to older people around, who tend to be the managers, then we'll wind up in 5 or 10 years time as a moribund organization.

There were lots of points made today, lots of which were side-stepped and avoided by 'do we need to re-introduce the shipwright?' There will be points that haven't been made at all but if you take away the ones that struck you and do something about it then we will all be that much better off. A lot of problems are practically insoluble; but there are balances and you will be pleased to know that the Chief Naval Architect and the Director General Surface Ships were down in Portland the other day looking at a German frigate and a Dutch frigate to see if there were any lessons to be learnt. All these things are going on in the background but the prime ones need exposing and the only way they get exposed is by debate and I don't care how that debate takes place. This Conference only occurs once every two years but there are other vehicles for it. There are the Advisory Panels, the *Naval Engineering Review*, the *Journal of Naval Engineering*, and there are your line managers of the Engineering Branch. If you have got things you feel strongly about or you want to air, then drive them up through the channels somehow or other because that's the way, if they get pushed into the limelight and they've really got substance in them, we will make progress.

I would like to say finally on behalf of everyone here in the audience to all the presenters today, thank you very much indeed. You have done a first class job. There's been a lot of hard work in thought, planning and arrangement of the visual aids, the exhibition, the writing of the words and the rehearsal. All I can say to you is that in my view it has certainly been very worth while.
