

URCHIN CAPERS

BY

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On 1st May, 1963, H.M.S. *Urchin*, a Type 15 Frigate of the Dartmouth Training Squadron, officially took over the task of providing sea experience for trainees from H.M.S. *Raleigh*. To say the least, the officers and ships company were a little apprehensive of what was going to happen. The thought of running a ship on a very reduced complement, where nearly all the junior rates, particularly seamen, were replaced by green trainees, seemed virtually impossible.

NAME <i>Funnel</i>	RTG. <i>M.(E)2</i>	MESS 9
BOAT STATION <i>11</i>	P.O.S. <i>E.R.</i>	WATCH <i>1st Star.</i>
	<i>Forenoon</i>	<i>Afternoon</i>
<i>Wednesday</i>	Part of Ship	Domestic
<i>Thursday</i>	Training	Part of Ship
<i>Friday</i>	Domestic	Part of Ship
<i>Saturday</i>	Part of Ship	As per Routine
<i>Sunday</i>	Divisions and Church	
<i>Monday</i>	Training	Part of Ship
<i>Tuesday</i>	Domestic	Part of Ship

FIG. 1—VISITING CLASS TEMPORARY STATION CARD

At any time, there are to be found in *Urchin* nearly 100 young men under training. About 75 of these are M.(E)s and about 25 seamen.

The type of training provided can most readily be divided into two categories. Firstly, there is the 16-week technical training for the Specially Selected Engineering Mechanics Course and secondly, one week's general training for the visiting classes of seamen and engineering mechanics.

Visiting Classes

On arrival in the ship, the classes are 'welcomed' by the Afloat Training Officer, an engineer officer appointed to H.M.S. *Raleigh* and who has spent at least three months there as a divisional officer. It is considered important that impressionable young men should not conceive any wrong impressions and several things are

explained on arrival. For most, the cramped conditions in a ship are a rude shock after living in quite a spacious mess at *Raleigh*. The living conditions in *Urchin* for the Visiting Class are below standard. On their mess deck, there is only room for 32 lockers, so that up to 36 out of 50 ratings may have to share. This is partially overcome by each rating bringing a reduced kit with him. There are only 24 slinging billets so that more than half have to sleep on camp beds. There is not room for this number in a messdeck 20 ft × 26 ft and 12 ratings have to sleep in the instructional charthouse on the upper bridge.

'Joining routine' for the trainees classes (usually one class of M.(E)s and one class of seamen) occupies about 1½ hours, while the First Lieutenant waits patiently. Each rating is issued with a temporary Station Card (FIG. 1) which fits inside an identity card cover, and tells him what he should be doing a.m. and p.m. each day while he is onboard. His time is divided roughly as follows:

Instructional Training—25 per cent;

Domestic Party—25 per cent;

Working Part of Ship—50 per cent.

Normally the ratings join on Tuesday evening/Wednesday morning and are all turned to part-of-ship after stand easy during the forenoon. The classes do not have shore leave the first night in the ship. They are all given a questionnaire to complete. The answers required are short, often only one word, but require each man to find his way to the piece of equipment or compartment. On more than one occasion the Captain has returned to find his day cabin taken over by young sailors looking for the Captain's cabin Sir! The wardroom sometimes suffers the same fate. The questionnaire has to be completed within 24 hours of joining and serves to familiarize each young man with the geography of the ship.

Before leaving at the end of a week's training, each man is given a questionnaire of a more technical nature. A separate paper is given to classes of M.(E)s and seamen whereas the initial questionnaire is common to both classes.



FIG. 2—A GROUP OF YOUNG SAILORS AT GUNNERY DURING THE DOG WATCHES



FIG. 3—A YOUNG M.(E) RECEIVING INSTRUCTION IN CHANGING SPRAYERS

Employment

During the training period, an instructor who joins with the class and has had the class throughout their training to date, will have a group of ratings to whom he can give almost individual instruction. Each group consists of 4 to 6 ratings, and should during the course of the week have at least two periods of 'training'. In this time it should be possible to cover everything including a tour of the ship from stem to stern.

The domestic party covers jobs where normally a tanky or a working hand would be provided. The hands are distributed to S.P.O.(V), S.P.O.(S), galley, mess-deck, bathrooms, etc. By this means it is hoped to make a sailor realize what goes on in a ship outside his own particular environment.

The hands working part-of-ship are divided to employ the M.(E) ratings in the Engineering Department under the Chief M.(E) and

H.M.S. URCHIN—SUMMER TERM—VISITING CLASSES—TRAINING PROGRESS

17th September, 1963

<i>Class No.</i>	805	706	907	608	909	610	611	812	713	818	CCF Training	920	621	<i>Total for Term</i>
<i>No. in Class</i>	21	23	21	25	16	18	19	20	22	15	40	20	22	282
Complete Questionnaire	21	23	21	25	16	18	19	20	22	15	40	20	22	282
Complete D.C.	21	23	21	25	16	18	19	20	22	15	40	20	22	282
Seaboats	15	23	25	25	16	20	20	15	25	3	40	15	22	264
Lookout	26	40	44	60	32	38	15	50	22	18	40	20	56	461
Helmsman	21	25	21	35	16	20	15	25	22	15	40	20	34	309
Bosun's Mate—Sea	2	5	4	6	4	4	2	5	3	2	9	2	13	61
Bosun's Mate—Harbour	21	23	21	25	62	18	19	20	25	34	20	35	25	348
Emergency Stations	—	23	21	25	16	18	19	20	22	—	40	20	22	246
Forecastle—Leaving Harbour	10	12	21	25	8	18	19	20	22	15	40	20	66	296
Quarterdeck—Leaving Harbour	11	11	21	25	8	18	19	20	22	15	40	20	66	296
Prepare Anchor for Letting Go	21	23	21	10	8	18	19	20	11	15	40	—	22	228
Anchor	21	23	21	10	8	—	19	20	—	—	40	—	11	173
Weigh Anchor	21	23	21	10	8	—	19	20	—	15	40	—	11	188
Secure Forecastle for sea	21	23	21	10	—	9	19	20	—	15	20	—	—	158
Prepare for Coming to a Buoy	10	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	10
Come to Buoy	10	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	10
Slip from Buoy	12	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	12
Moor Ship	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Tow Forward	—	—	—	25	—	—	—	20	—	—	—	—	22	67
Tow Aft	—	—	—	25	—	—	—	20	—	—	—	—	22	67
Heaving Line Transfer	—	—	—	—	—	18	19	—	—	—	40	22	—	99
Jackstay Transfer	—	23	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	40	—	—	63
Fuel at Sea	—	—	—	—	—	—	19	20	11	—	—	—	—	50
Spread Awnings	11	—	—	—	12	9	—	10	11	8	20	—	12	93
Furl Awnings	11	—	—	—	12	9	—	10	11	8	—	11	16	88
Frap Awnings	11	—	—	—	—	—	—	10	—	8	—	8	10	47
Mortar Firing	—	—	21	25	16	—	—	—	22	—	40	20	22	166
4-inch Firing	—	23	21	25	16	—	—	20	22	—	40	20	22	209
Gun Training	21	23	21	25	16	18	19	20	22	15	25	20	22	267
R.P. Training	21	23	21	25	16	18	19	20	22	15	20	20	22	262
T.A.S. Training	21	23	21	25	16	18	19	20	22	15	20	20	22	262
Hear Ping	15	23	10	20	16	18	15	10	18	15	40	20	22	242
Motor Boat	—	—	10	—	16	—	5	3	—	—	20	—	—	54
Ceremonial Sentry	21	—	—	—	—	—	—	10	—	—	1	—	—	32
Guard	21	9	18	15	23	12	9	15	18	15	—	10	16	181
Sail in Whaler	—	—	5	—	—	—	—	—	5	5	20	—	—	35
D.C. Exercise	21	23	21	25	16	—	—	20	22	15	10	—	22	195

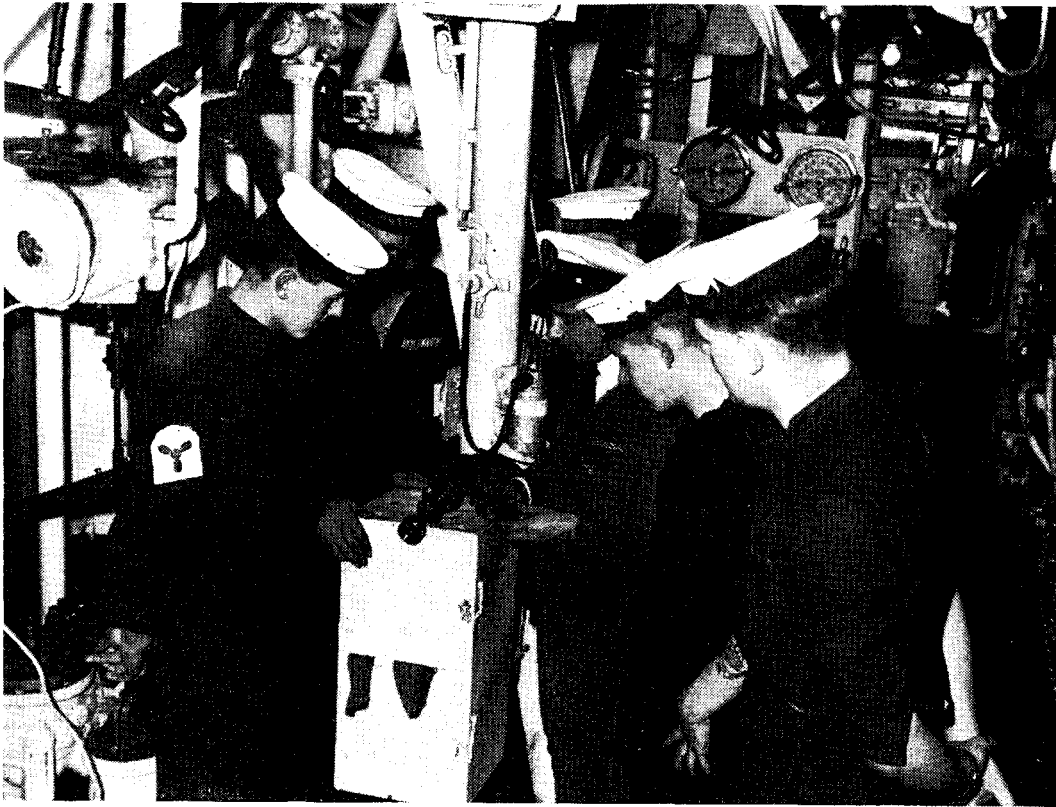


FIG. 5—A GROUP OF M.(E)S HAVING A SPRAYER EXPLAINED DURING AN INSTRUCTIONAL PERIOD

the seamen under the Chief Bosun's Mate. Normally there are two parts of the watch working part-of-ship. At sea one of these parts is on watch.

Every endeavour is made to cover everything that a young sailor should see. Time is often very short due to a variety of reasons; the ship's programme, due to a requirement for COQX or N.D. training, and bad weather during the winter months, sometimes interferes greatly with the training schedule; it is not considered wise to send away an inexperienced seaboat's crew in a heavy swell. The seamen ratings probably have a greater variety of things to see and do while on board. Most are keen to have a look at the Gunnery, T.A.S. and R.P. specializations with a view to making a choice for their own S.Q. The popularity for these specializations varies from class to class and does not seem to follow any set pattern. On balance, T.A.S. is probably top of the pops. A good instructor is often influential as the ratings wish to emulate him and select his branch.

As far as the seamen are concerned, great stress is made to see that all have a trick on the wheel, at lookout, and go away in a sea-boat. Many other facets of naval life are covered but these three are considered most essential. A check off list is kept by the class instructor and as each rating covers an item he is marked off the list. During weeks when the ship spends a lot of time at sea ratings manage several tricks and become quite proficient. It is very noticeable how quickly they learn when the ship is at sea overnight as opposed to just day running. The ship routine is continuous and makes sense. More is achieved during a full 24 hours at sea than would be during three day runs. A record is kept of what is achieved each week for interest and to show the training staff where any particular item is not being fully covered. Any tendencies to ease off towards the end of term are quickly uncovered. A copy of such a chart is shown in FIG. 4.

The M.(E)s have more technical instruction during their training periods. Most of these are spent below with their instructor. The trainees on the whole

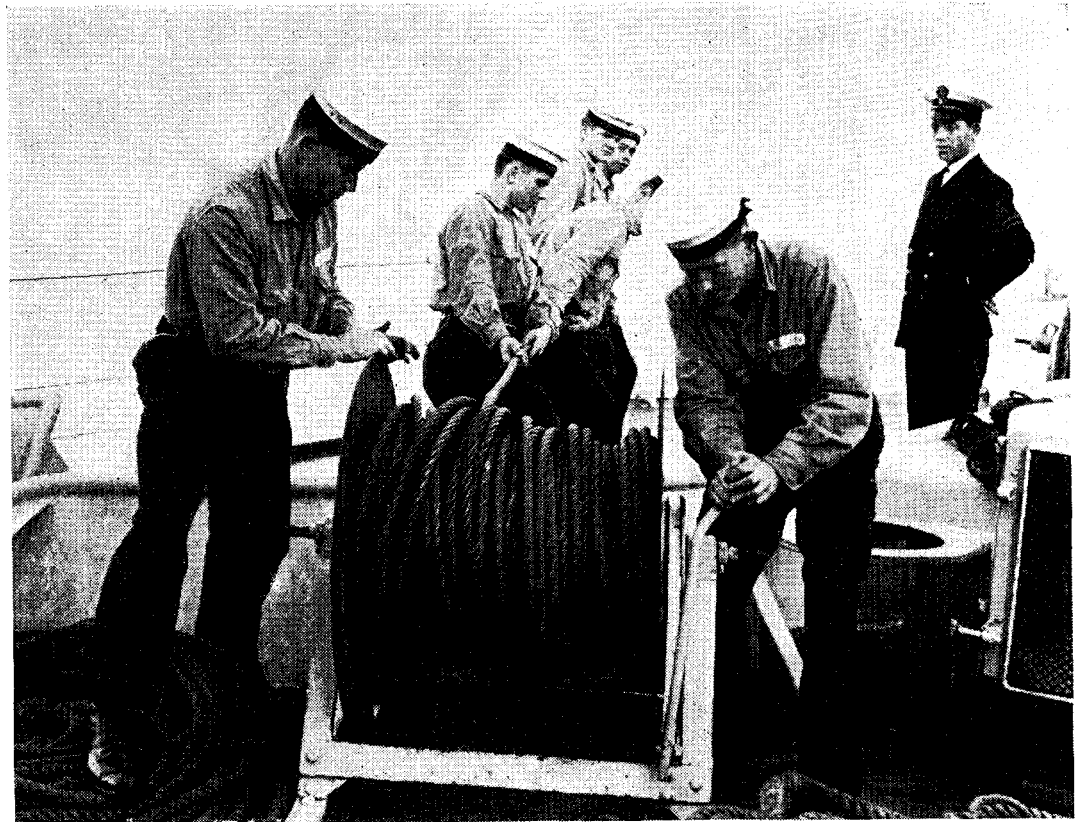


FIG. 6—A SEAMEN'S INSTRUCTIONAL CLASS LAYING OUT THE PICKING-UP WIRE WHILE PREPARING THE FO'C'SLE FOR COMING TO A BUOY

are keen and alert. They are encouraged to ask questions. The ships company are now tuned in to this frequency and are only too willing to spend a few moments explaining a particular item. The engineering ratings are asked the same questions week in and week out but still respond. While on board the M.(E)s all keep a watch in the boiler room and the engine room; if time allows a watch in the gearing room is fitted in. On watch ratings are made to change sprayers and take temperatures usually under the eye of a ships company M.(E) or a S.S.M.(E). A certain amount of cleaning up has to be done by all watchkeepers—this is restricted to a maximum of 50 per cent of the time down below. Stress is laid on the importance of cleanliness and why it is next to godliness. This they find difficult to appreciate and cannot understand why it is so important to replace the cap on a bluebell tin or the cover on an oil box.

At sea the trainees go to evening quarters at 1630. The opportunity is taken to run a small exercise in damage control for the M.(E)s and for the seamen to rig 'tow forward' or 'light jackstay'. This is particularly useful as the ship is not often in company and it is not possible to do any replenishment at sea.

Recently a period of General Drills lasting about 40 minutes has been introduced. About 40 drills are covered which require a certain amount of preparation in advance. Several items of equipment have to be made available in duplicate (two teams). All the seamen senior rates and several officers are needed to supervise but the enthusiasm shown and the results produced so far have made the effort well worth while. The classes are divided into Watches to provide a spirit of competition. Each drill is required to be performed by two ratings from each Watch so that everyone has to contribute something. On completion of a drill to the satisfaction of the referee on the spot, trainees report back to the scorer stating the number of the drill, and their Watch. The scorer places a red or green counter as appropriate over the number on a



FIG. 4—THE GUARD PROVIDED BY THE S.S.M.(E)s BEING INSPECTED BY THE CAPTAIN

Tombola board, borrowed for the purpose. At the end of the period the count is made and a suitable prize given to the winning team.

Finally, shortly after departure a report on the class and its instructor is forwarded to *Raleigh*. The report covers what the class has done, and comments on individual ratings. The reports from the ship are most interesting and comments about individuals are often the same as those held in *Raleigh*. Frequently the not so bright lad, who is below average at *Raleigh* doing the theory, shines in the ship and continues to do so on return to the training establishment. Truly, seeing is believing.

Specially Selected M.(E)s Course

This course has been running under various titles since about 1947, but there are still many senior rates and officers who do not know what a S.S.M.(E) does or why. About 120 of these young M.(E)s join the Fleet each year. These ratings are selected on completion of their Part II training at H.M.S. *Raleigh* and H.M.S. *Ganges* and represent approximately the top 10 per cent of each class. Candidates for course are proposed by divisional officers in the training establishments. The final selection is done each week by a board at H.M.S. *Raleigh*. This consists of three officers including when possible the Afloat Training Officer. In order to qualify as a candidate before the Board, a rating must achieve the following standard at the end of Part 2 training:

Final Mark 65 per cent (rarely is less than 75 per cent considered)

E.T.L.R. 65 per cent

Personal Qualities 70 per cent.

The qualities for which the Board are looking are those of a potential leading rate rather than just good technical ability, although this is obviously essential.

A new class joins every four weeks and consists of 12 ratings. A class has an

instructor, an E.R.A. or mechanic, appointed to it and he takes the class through the complete course. The course lasts 16 weeks so that the maximum number on course at any time is 38. The time table is planned on the basis of alternate weeks in harbour and at sea. The idea is that ratings should have technical instruction followed by practical experience. A new class should always join at the beginning of a harbour week. They have examinations at the end of the 4th, 7th, 8th, 9th, 11th, 13th and 15th weeks. The exam at the end of the 9th week qualifies the rating for M.(E)I, and that at the end of the 13th week constitutes the award of the Auxiliary Watchkeeping Certificate. The final exam at the end of the 15th week exempts a man from the Fleet Board for L.M.(E).

Provided a man is successful and is still recommended he is placed on the roster for L.M.(E) after 20 months as M.(E)I. As no one can progress, advancement wise, until he is 17½ this scheme benefits the older man more than the junior, who may have to mark time for about three years. Juniors who come to the Fleet qualified technically for L.M.(E) should be given every encouragement to take the H.E.T.

When a class is not filled it is made up with ratings who, although suitable are not educationally qualified. These ratings do not take the final exam and leave after the 14th week qualified for M.(E)I, and with an A.W.K. Certificate. An instructor officer is borne in the ship who instructs these ratings for E.T.L.R. While in the ship they have a further opportunity to achieve 65 per cent in this exam and if successful they may be transferred to the S.S.M.(E) course.

The S.S.M.(E) course is the main reason for having a training ship attached to H.M.S. *Raleigh*. It is only fair therefore, that the S.S.M.(E)s should play a full part in the ship's life. They do in fact provide the backbone of the ship's cleaning force. During an instructional week they are employed on general ship's duties for one hour each morning before going to instruction at 0900. During a watchkeeping week, they work part of ship during normal off watch working hours.

Every opportunity is given to these young men to develop their abilities to take charge. This is not easy with so many on course and much of the time being given to instruction and watchkeeping. It is left, therefore, until they are in the senior class. During the final four weeks on course, the change which comes over one or two nonentities is unbelievable. They can be seen to develop almost day by day.

A duty leading hand is detailed off each day from the duty part of the watch. He takes charge of all musters of the S.S.M.(E)s and of the messdeck. In addition two S.S.M.(E)s are detailed to supervise the cleaning of the Visiting Class messdeck. In harbour the day starts with early morning P.T. for the Visiting Class. This taken by a S.S.M.(E) under the eye of the duty instructor. This is often not very well done and but a few elementary standard exercises are forthcoming. When possible, a Colour Guard is paraded. This normally consists of 12 ratings from the Visiting Class with a S.S.M.(E) in charge. This is something with which they are familiar and on the whole the rating in charge of the guard does very well. It may be that we are going back to the days of 'Stokers Guns Crews', because the S.S.M.(E)s do provide the crew for the twin 4-inch which is fired about once per week.

The S.S.M.(E), on completion of course, is not a wonder man and too much should not be expected from him on joining his first ship. There is no reason why he should not learn very quickly and be given a little responsibility at an early stage. There is no feed back to the training ship on S.S.M.(E)'s progress nor is it intended to start one. However, suggestions from the recipients of these young men would be welcome.