



H.M. SUBMARINE 'TIRELESS'

SUBMARINE BASIC TRAINING

BY

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Introduction

Although it is stressed, and not least by submariners, that submarines are a branch of the Service and not a private navy, there are many ways in which service in submarines differs from general service.

The submariner has a different outlook on many things by virtue of the different life he leads and the conditions under which he lives. A submarine crew is a very closely knit organization and on any one man's actions can depend the safety of his shipmates : there can be no passengers. A mistake made in a surface ship may merely mean a defect item in the next defect list ; a mistake in a submarine may mean a new submarine.

In general service, general ship knowledge is not always high and the interest of officers and ratings is confined mainly to their own department ; it may not be an exaggeration to say that in some cases a number of the ships company may not visit more than half of the compartments in the ship during a commission. Submarines are, of course, much smaller than most surface ships, but they are very complicated and it is essential that all the crew know their boat and the basic operation of their boat, thoroughly. There is a certain basic submarine knowledge which all officers and men must have, irrespective of specialization or seniority ; it applies equally to an E.R.A. or a cook and includes such things as the safety and operation of the submarine, diving,

surfacing, changing depth and snorting. It is with this basic training that H.M.S. *Dolphin* is mainly concerned.

Entry and Training

All officers and men who join submarines come to H.M.S. *Dolphin* for their basic submarine training. Before they are accepted, all officers must be recommended and medically fit and ratings must fulfil certain conditions as laid down in Q.R. and A.I. concerning character, efficiency assessments and medical fitness.

Some, however, seem to slip through the net and have to be sent back to general service before they start training.

Naturally, the ideal would be to have a surplus of volunteers for submarines so that only the best would be selected for training, but this is regrettably not the case. Officers are all volunteers with the exception of engineer sub-lieutenants (S.D.), who invariably enjoy the life when in, but the percentage of volunteers among ratings varies considerably from branch to branch. On an average, the volunteer rate among E.R.A.s and mechanics, who are interchangeable in submarines, and M.(E)s is 90 per cent and 50 per cent respectively and ratings other than for engineering 85 per cent. This is not as black as it looks, however, as the fact that a man is not a volunteer does not mean that he does not like submarines. It may well mean that 'Mum' doesn't, that the idea of volunteering never entered his head, or that he never volunteers for anything on principle but doesn't mind when the decision is made for him. It does mean, however, that one or two men arrive for training who are absolutely solid or who are extremely anti-submarine and these can cause a lot of wasted effort.

Officers of all specializations do a course lasting about fifteen weeks. Some of their training on very basic subjects they do together but they have to diverge for the greater part of the time to fit themselves for their responsibilities in a submarine. The engineer officer is taught the rudiments of attacking technique because he forms part of the attack team, and he also has very short instructions in W/T methods, weapons, O.O.W. duties, etc., but obviously he must spend most of his time on the main and auxiliary machinery and systems, maintenance routines and other aspects of his everyday job. In the middle of the course he spends a month at sea in a submarine, with a comprehensive syllabus covering all aspects of submarining. This makes it very much easier to understand the classroom instructions as well as helping him to be a better submariner.

The engineer officer is older than the executive officer, who comes for training direct from his 'Subs.' course, and is spurred on by the fact that when he gets to his first submarine he does not get a probationary or understudy period but immediately becomes head of his own department, and is responsible to the Captain for pretty well everything that makes a submarine behave like a submarine.

The executive officer learns something about the working of the steering gear, hydroplanes, main engines and fuel systems and other things for which the engineer officer is responsible but naturally has to know all about submarine communications, radar, weapons and O.O.W. techniques.

About 40 executive, 15 engineer and 8 electrical officers are trained annually.

E.R.A.s and mechanics have the longest of the ratings' courses—12 weeks. They are the mechanical experts of the submarine and have a very great responsibility; the safety of the submarine is frequently in their hands and consequently their training is comprehensive and detailed. All other ratings have

a seven-week course and this varies according to specialization. Engineering mechanics do a straight seven weeks and it is disappointing to find that some of them know no more about general 'nuts and bolts' than able seamen. The remainder do a five-week general course together and then split up, the electrical, U.W., U.C. and R.P. ratings having two more weeks instruction in their particular specializations.

The number of ratings under training depends on the general requirement of the Submarine Branch. This depends on such things as the re-engagement rate, the number of ratings who opt to return to general service on completion of their first five years in submarines, medical and other reasons which make the number fluctuate and difficult to forecast accurately. An average figure of ratings under training at any one time is about 150.

Submarine Escape Training Tank (S.E.T.T.)

Before any officer or man can call himself a submariner and draw submarine pay, he has to qualify in submarine escape. A 100-foot submarine escape training tank is situated in H.M.S. *Dolphin* and is used for this purpose. To step out of a compartment 100 feet below the water and rise to the surface, with no breathing apparatus, might appear somewhat excessive to the uninitiated but the number of men who fail 'mentally' and 'cannot' do it is infinitesimal. The escape training has to take place during the basic training course because no one is allowed to go to sea, even for a day, until he has been instructed in escape.

Sea Training

Classroom instruction is supplemented by days at sea in a submarine, where the class see in operation what they have been told by their instructor. They operate the machinery, work the hydroplanes and generally get a bit of submarine atmosphere. It is considered that, ideally, a class should spend three days at sea before completion of training but, as billets in submarines are like gold dust, this is not always possible.

Instructional Facilities

The training area is particularly depressing and the young rating who is drafted for training and doesn't like the idea very much has little cause to change his mind on his first introduction to submarines. The wooden and the asbestos huts are sandwiched between C.E.M. compounds and interspersed with coke dumps and sullage compounds. The only reasonably adequate space at the moment is a model room which contains all kinds of machinery, both working and sectioned, which are to be found in a submarine. Among the items of machinery, there is a complete and working steering gear, an H.P. air compressor and, of course, that very necessary mechanical item, the air-blown heads.

That most of the young ratings are so enthusiastic, and that they learn what they do in the time available, is largely due to their instructors who are chief petty officers of all specializations, experienced submariners, all among the best in the Navy.
