



MAIN DINING HALL—COURSES AT DINNER

## H.M.S. 'ROYAL ARTHUR'

BY

LIEUTENANT-COMMANDER R. A. H. DRING, R.N.

The fact that chief petty officers and petty officers constitute a vital link in the chain of naval command has been fully appreciated for a great many years. This fact was further emphasized by Their Lordships when the Royal Naval Petty Officers School was established at Kingsmoor Camp, Corsham, where the first course started instruction on 2nd January, 1947. It was then a separate entity with a Commander-in-Charge, within H.M.S. *Royal Arthur*, which was the Adult New Entry Training Establishment for all branches of the Service.

In March, 1950, the New Entry Training Camps were closed and the Petty Officers School, alone, became H.M.S. *Royal Arthur*.

### History

As the Navy became more and more mechanical, petty officers tended to deal more with machines than with men and, by the nature of their job, had very few opportunities of exercising their power of command.

Petty officers courses in each of the Home Ports were first started as far back as 1919. These courses were of a fortnight's duration and consisted primarily of parade work. They were lengthened to three weeks after the Invergordon mutiny and were finally abandoned at the outbreak of war in 1939. The

Admiralty, however, attached so much importance to the problem of leadership that a short course for petty officers was started in 1943, in *Excalibur*. This was subsequently transferred to *Raleigh*, and finally put on a proper business footing when the present site was selected for the school in 1946. Since then, over 500 courses have received instruction and more than 16,800 petty officers have passed through the school.

### **Aims of the School**

The course is non-technical and is designed to :—

- (a) Develop the qualities of leadership in petty officers
- (b) Improve their understanding of responsibilities, and stimulate pride in rate
- (c) Broaden outlook
- (d) Increase their knowledge of, and pride in, the Service to which they belong.

### **Description of the School**

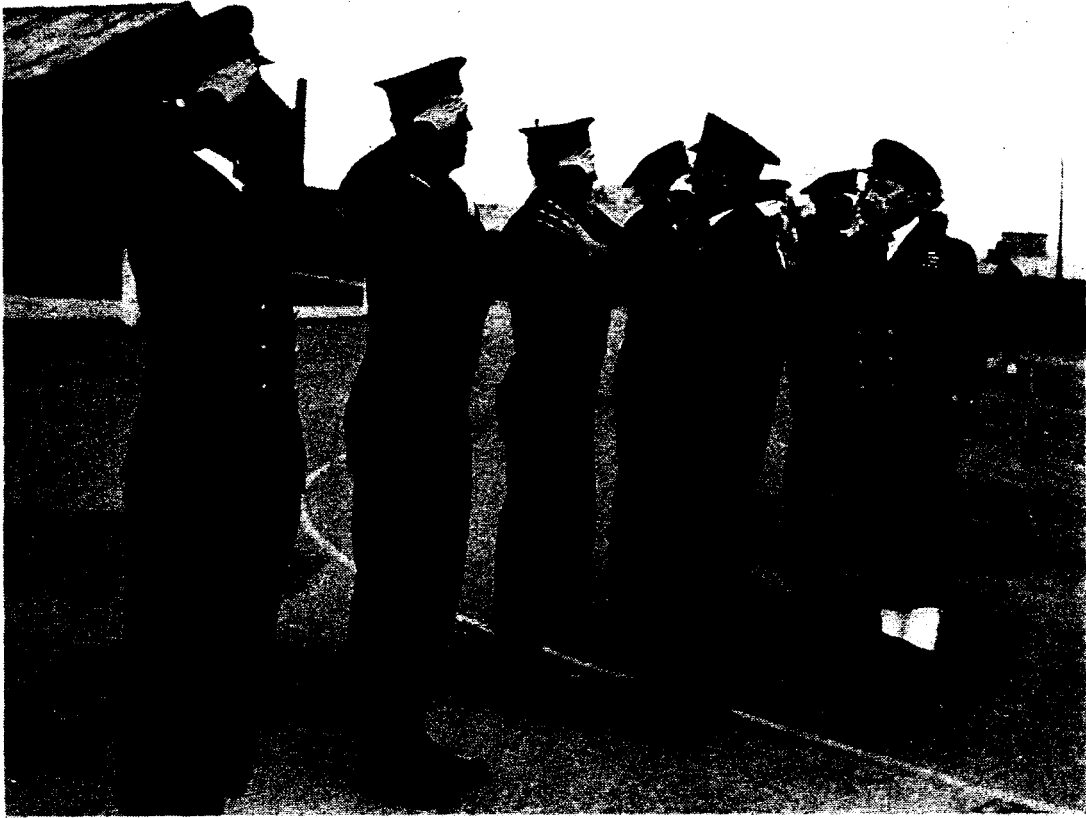
H.M.S. *Royal Arthur* is essentially a camp comprised of a central block and some thirty asbestos-roofed brick huts. The grounds cover twenty-eight acres. It is situated nine miles from Bath and six miles from Chippenham. Originally the camp was built to house the workers from an underground aircraft factory nearby, but it was never used for this purpose. It was, however, used by the Army as a demobilization centre before being taken over by the Royal Navy.

The central block contains the main galley and dining hall for petty officers on course. (Numbers under instruction have varied in the past twelve months between 120 and 260.) In addition, the block contains a billiards room, a N.A.A.F.I. beer bar, a shop, an information room, the Post Office and the Regulating Office. There is also a gymnasium which is used for physical training, dog-watch games and, having a good stage at one end, for concerts, cinema shows, demonstrations of all kinds and any lecture which the whole school may be required to attend. In the single-storey huts are the excellent Library and Information Room, the War Room (where tactical demonstrations are given) and lecture rooms, the wardroom and instructors' messes and petty officers' accommodation. This accommodation is very good, two petty officers sharing a cabin and the bathing facilities are well above the average found in the Service. There is a good parade ground and drill shed and an indoor .22 rifle range. The outdoor sporting facilities are rather limited as there is only one sports field. In winter, this provides one soccer and one hockey pitch, and in summer, a cricket square and grass athletic track. Two hard tennis courts presented by Lord Nuffield were completed a year ago. Two bowling alleys of the 'Hong Kong' type, also presented by the Nuffield Trust, are housed in one of the huts and are the venue of much keen competition.

Cinema facilities are excellent as, in addition to the 35-mm. projectors in the gymnasium, there are two 16-mm. projectors in the lecture room. Apart from their value during instruction, considerable use is made of them to show current affairs and other educational films during the evenings after supper. A projection type television set housed in the War Room also attracts much attention.

### **Permanent Staff**

The establishment is an independent command with a Commander-in-Command. The Second-in-Command carries out the duties of First Lieutenant



PARADE GROUND—CLASS RECEIVING INSTRUCTION IN STATIC DRILL

and Training Officer. There are nine Course Officers, all of whom are lieutenant-commanders, taken from nearly all branches of the Service. At present these include seaman, air arm, submarine, engineering, supply, electrical and instructor specialists. The Course Officers are each assisted by a Course Instructor who is a chief petty officer belonging to any branch : among these are a chief shipwright, a chief engine room artificer, chief electrician, chief cook, chief yeoman of signals, chief air fitter and a chief engineering mechanic. The Parade Gunner and the P.T. Officer, each of whom has a small staff, are both within the instructional framework. The Chaplain, quite apart from his normal duties, is called upon to assist in the training programme. The Medical Officer and Sick Berth Petty Officer give lectures on first-aid and some ships officers, the Supply Officer and the Commissioned Boatswain, are also called upon to assist in training.

The ship's company itself is small. It is predominantly composed of Supply Department ratings, the galley being staffed by Service personnel. A small number of seamen ratings carry out many of the camp chores with a team of civilian sweepers to assist in the indoor cleaning.

### **Method of Instruction and Syllabus**

When the school first started in *Royal Arthur*, the course was a month in duration. A year later, however, early in 1948, this was increased to six weeks. Experience indicates that this is still the ideal length. The instructional work in *Royal Arthur* starts on Thursdays, the day petty officers join and leave the establishment. The day is split into six 55-minute periods, four being before dinner and two in the afternoon. There is no 'make and mend' during the week, but by having only three periods on a Saturday morning the petty officers are completely free at the week-ends from 1100 on Saturday. They are, how-

ever, required on board for duty for one week-end ; but during their fourth week they are granted a long week-end from Friday afternoon.

To go into the syllabus in great detail would not be of any great value but a brief description of the various lectures and the reason for their inclusion in the course might be of interest. The bare outline of the syllabus will have been seen already by those who have read *Royal Arthur's* Annual Report dated 15th September, 1956.

Apart from the formal instruction given by the staff, the petty officers gain an enormous amount of knowledge from their fellow members on course. Lengthy informal discussions frequently take place in the 'common room', of which there is one in each accommodation block, and these play a large part in teaching about the other man's job and in breaking down departmental prejudices and 'Trade Unionism'. To further this, careful planning goes into the allocation of cabins when a course joins, and as far as circumstances permit, no two petty officers of the same specialization are put in the same cabin and National Servicemen are always put in a cabin with someone of greater experience.

Leadership, being abstract, presents a much greater teaching problem than a factual subject. It is desirable that all those in positions of authority should study the problem, and constructive criticisms are always welcomed by the staff of *Royal Arthur*.

### **Lectures on Leadership, Discipline, Morale and Religion**

These lectures may be regarded as the core round which much of the course is built. Their aim is to ensure that petty officers fully understand all the responsibility of their position, at the same time, they give them guidance to improve their qualities of leadership. Two lectures only are given on the subject of leadership itself. The first defines and analyses the qualities that are required in any leader. The second shows how the different qualities are required in practice, if success as a leader is to be achieved. Leadership and discipline are connected, and these ties are explained, as well as the factors upon which naval discipline and high morale depend.

Religion is presented as something bound up in everyday life. Many prejudices about religion are dispelled, and the fact that the lecture on this subject is given by the Training Officer and not the Chaplain helps considerably to eliminate the idea that religion is a matter only for parsons.

### **First Aid**

This is designed to give sufficient knowledge to deal with emergencies at any time. The subject matter taught is purely First Aid and does not include any subsequent treatment. Lectures are given on wounds, shock, fractures, burns and bleeding. These are backed up by films and practical demonstrations in artificial respiration and bandaging. On completion of the course here, ten of the sixteen hours instruction in First Aid, which all officers and ratings are now required to receive, have been given.

### **Physical Training and Dog Watch Games**

Physical Training, in addition to making the petty officers fit, is regarded as a method of improving power of command and aid to gaining self-confidence. They are instructed how to take junior ratings in daily exercises and are examined in this at the end of the fifth week. Monotony is avoided by the use of the box horse, rope climbing, and finally, a passing-out table prepared and executed under the guidance of the course's P.T. Instructor. It is surprising



OBSTACLE COURSE—BARREL SAFELY OVER SECOND HAZARD

what tenacity and guts are displayed by the older members of courses who frequently show up the youths who lack the real 'will to have a go'.

Games are played in the dog-watches to try to instil the meaning of team spirit and sportsmanship. The enthusiasm displayed by supporters is quite amazing and frequently success can be attributed to their efforts, regardless of the energy displayed by the participants. The games are organized on a competitive basis and a shield is presented to any course leaving *Royal Arthur* with a success factor of 65 per cent or over. Games played include deck hockey, volley ball, basket ball, parade hockey, skittles, bowls and .22 rifle shooting. It can be seen, therefore, that all tastes are catered for, including those of petty officers who have confined their activities to indoor games.

#### **Parade : Use of Small Arms**

Here again the aim of parade work is the development of power of command and self-confidence, coupled with making the petty officers well disciplined and smart. To achieve this object, individual members, under the supervision of the Course Instructor, frequently take charge of classes on the parade ground. Handbooks are issued so that those under instruction can learn beforehand the drills which have to be carried out. Instruction in the use of fire-arms is given and all senior ratings have a good grounding in their safe-handling and confidence in the different weapons. During the Course, firing practices at varying ranges are carried out with .22 and .303 rifles, pistols, Lanchesters, and bren guns.

#### **Field Day**

Each course takes part in field-days during the third and fourth weeks of instruction. On the first occasion, a night parachute drop into enemy territory at about 2000 is simulated by dropping the petty officers from blacked-out

vehicles. They are dressed in khaki denims for camouflage and are provided with rations for twenty-four hours. They are briefed to rendezvous some seven miles from the dropping zone and there they find shelter for the night in an empty hut. In the morning they receive instructions to go to another rendezvous, given as a map reference, and from there they are briefed by 'agents' for their last task which is to reach safety, namely return to *Royal Arthur*. In all, they travel about thirty miles on foot, and get about five hours uncomfortable sleep over-night. Lifts are forbidden. They receive instruction in field-craft before the exercise and an intelligence report has to be written after their return.

During the fourth week the members of the course act as defenders, and are organized entirely by their President, who is aided only by the rough map which is given to the parachutists. The defenders have the use of bicycles and set out after the 'prisoners' have left their last rendezvous.

The exercise is popular and is of great value in that it gives each individual a sense of personal achievement as well as showing him some of the problems involved in moving about in a strange country with possible opposition. The defenders gain an appreciation of the problems and organization involved in detecting enemy forces.

### **General Drills and Obstacle Course**

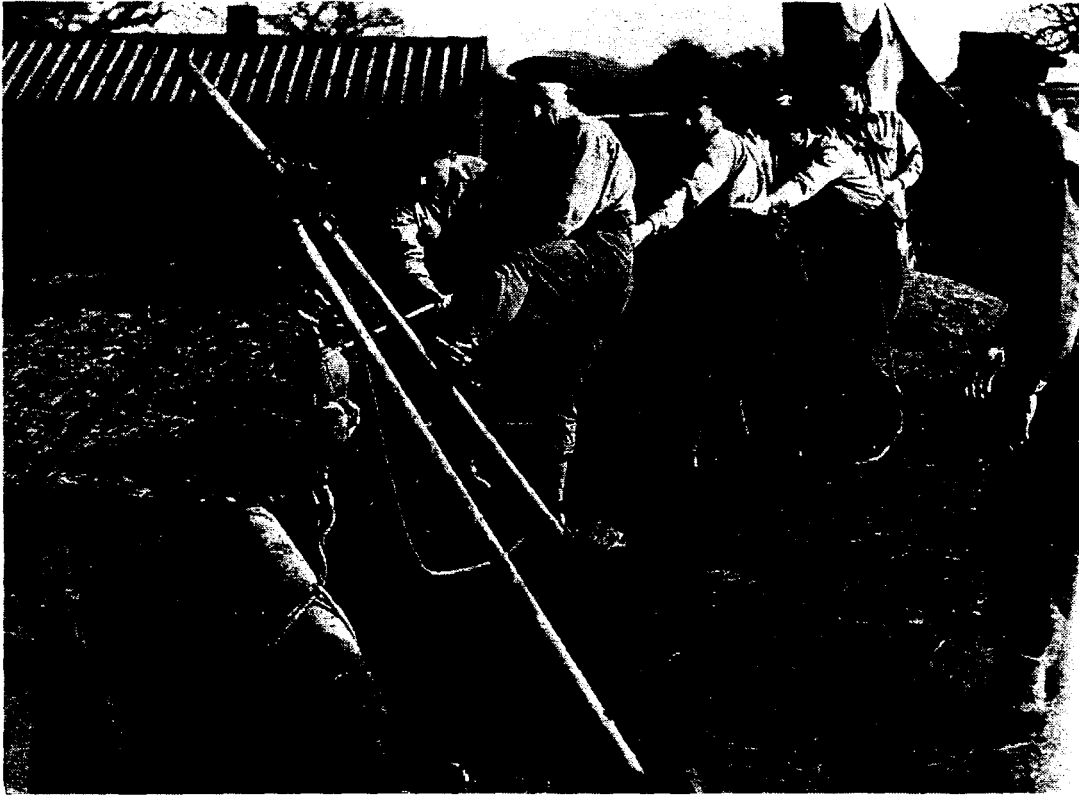
These two sections of the syllabus give the petty officers an excellent opportunity to improve their ability to take charge and to display initiative and improvisation ; it also gives the staff a particular opportunity of assessing the ability of the rating in charge.

Every petty officer is required to do two general drills during the course, and these are planned partly to give as much variety as possible, and partly with the object of choosing a task which the individual in charge is not likely to come across in his normal duty. These drills vary from getting a lorry out of a ditch to building a road block, and from building a rope suspension bridge over a chasm to removing an unexploded bomb from a crater.

The Obstacle Course is a team effort where each class (courses are divided into 'A' and 'B' classes) does a 'run' under the leadership of one petty officer who is chosen by the class. It takes place on the last Monday of the course and is one of its highlights. The story which the Obstacle Course seeks to enact is that of a small party of ratings who have to withdraw from enemy territory to a rendezvous on a beach, taking a radar set with them. In *Royal Arthur* this delicate equipment is represented by a barrel of sand weighing 120 pounds and it makes a perilous journey over the bough of a tree, across a chasm, through a tunnel and over a wall. The success of the operation is judged by the time taken to cover the course, penalties being incurred in a similar way to the Field Gun competitions. The courses are allowed one practice run, but the method of tackling the problem is left entirely to them.

### **Self Expression**

This group includes written as well as verbal practice. It is neither designed nor intended to be an Instructional Technique Course, but the lectures on self-expression are based on such a course. The aim is primarily to increase self-confidence and secondly to improve powers of expression. The oral aspects are dealt with by each petty officer giving two twenty-minute lectures, the first of their own choice, usually on some Service matter, the second is nominated by the Course Officer and can vary from biographies of famous men to plastics, or from pigmies to universities. Snap talks lasting one minute also come under this heading and during these periods use is frequently made of the tape recording machine. These talks are useful preliminaries to the lectures.



GENERAL DRILL SITE—REMOVING BOMB FROM CRATER

A debate is held during the last week in *Royal Arthur* and such matters as 'colour bar' and 'capital punishment' produce carefully prepared arguments. In addition, each petty officer writes an essay at the beginning and end of the course, as well as the report on their observations when at large as 'prisoners' during the field days.

#### **Q.R. and A.I. ; Punishments ; Courts Martial and Defaulters ; P.O.'s Mess Demonstrations**

The lectures on *Queen's Regulations* are included to show the general layout of the volumes, as well as how to look up any article. Attention is drawn to certain of the articles with emphasis on those which particularly concern them.

The punishment lectures, coupled with the Defaulters and Courts Martial demonstrations, indicate the correct procedure to be followed, and the effects that punishment has on a man's career. Many misconceptions are banished in these periods. By doing all this, it is hoped to increase the petty officer's confidence in authority.

The Mess demonstration clearly shows the difference between how a mess should and should not be run.

#### **Lectures on the Navy by the Staff**

Some of these lectures are designed to show why sea power is important and explain the necessity of maintaining a Navy in peace-time, whereas other lectures are designed to give a wider knowledge of such subjects as the Admiralty and the training of officers. Specialized lectures are given on naval aviation, submarines, stores, pay, food, boat signals and survival at sea.

The result of these lectures should be a much wider general knowledge of the Service, which should enable the petty officers to explain naval matters with

far greater assurance from a greatly strengthened foundation. They should inculcate self-confidence and pride in the Service.

### **Lectures on Naval Subjects by Visiting Lecturers**

These lectures are designed to broaden the outlook of the petty officers and to foster a real and lively interest in the Service to which they belong. The subjects include drafting and advancement, the W.R.N.S., welfare, future trends in habitability, and the Navy of the future.

### **Current Affairs Lectures**

These are given by outside lecturers from Bristol University as well as by the staff. In this way it is hoped to increase interest in world affairs and to widen the petty officer's general knowledge. The subjects covered include democracy, parliament, British justice, the Middle East, the English educational system, the U.S.A. and N.A.T.O.

### **Sea Warfare Lectures and Tactical Demonstrations**

The object here is twofold. First, an attempt is made to show in a very general way the influence of sea-power on European history. Secondly, the use made by Britain of naval power is examined with particular reference to the Napoleonic struggle, World War I and World War II. The lectures are complemented and enlivened by tactical demonstrations of naval actions ranging from Chesapeake Bay to World War II convoys and the handling of the modern fleet. Amphibious warfare is included in a demonstration devoted to the Normandy Landings.

### **Question Period and End of Course Discussion**

These two periods give the petty officers an opportunity of expressing their frank opinions and asking questions about the syllabus or the Service in general. Suggestions regarding the course or the syllabus are noted, but action is only taken if several courses over a period of time want the same alteration made. Frequently, what one course likes another deplors. Several questions on Service matters keep on recurring, however, and one or two regarding engineering personnel might be of interest to those reading this *Journal* :—

- (i) Should not fifth class artificers live in a broadside mess on first going to sea, with only leading rates' privileges and thereby have the chance to get experience of Lower Deck life in general ?
- (ii) Would it not be beneficial if the different types of artificers wore distinguishing badges ?
- (iii) Would it be a good thing for the Lower Deck to have two distinct avenues of advancement (a) Command, (b) Technical ?
- (iv) Why are artificers rated petty officers and chief petty officers before they have the experience to carry out the duties of those rates ?

It is intentional that no answers to these questions have been given here : they have been stated as items of interest and *Royal Arthur* does not necessarily agree with any inference that may have been drawn from their wording.

### **Service Documents**

With, of course, the exception of S.264s, these are shown to the petty officers. Many queries are answered and misunderstandings are straightened out, but errors or omissions have from time to time to be referred to the



authority concerned. There is still a tendency not to underline in red detrimental remarks on S.264s. and not to inform the ratings concerned of the words used.

A report is made on every petty officer who completes the course at *Royal Arthur*; this is S.265—Petty Officers' School Report. The Course Officers prepare the reports, assessing general ability as a leader, ability to take charge and powers of self-expression. The report is based on every possible source of information. The object of the report, which is shown to the individual concerned, is to indicate to him what his faults are, and how he can correct them. To the Commanding Officer of the rating's parent ship or establishment, it shows what effort the petty officer has made during the course and what may be expected of him in the future. The reports are frank and, as far as possible, constructive. A petty officer once remarked on reading his report, 'Lucky it's printed on asbestos paper'.

### **The Pupils**

The term 'Petty Officer' has been used throughout this article to describe those on course. This, however, is not strictly true as those who have done the course include chief artificers and 'Fifth Fivers', leading rates passed for petty officers and National Servicemen.

The ideal time to take the course is as a junior or acting petty officer. Great steps have been made in the Engineering Specialization to implement this, and all mechanics III and P.O.M.(E)s will be coming to *Royal Arthur* in the future when they have completed their technical courses at H.M.S. *Sultan*.

Representatives of Commonwealth Navies are frequently sent here and appear to take full advantage of the facilities. Not long ago one of these petty officers distinguished himself by carrying the barrel half way round the Obstacle Course on his head!

The normal weekly intake comes chiefly from naval air stations and the three main depots, with ships and establishments sending in a small number.

### **Conclusion**

There is an increase in the interest taken by the petty officers in their general duties and in 'the other man's job'. They are extremely interested in what is being taught in *Royal Arthur* and, on the whole, agree on its need and value. An undercurrent, however, can be sensed regarding the relationship between junior divisional officers and senior ratings which is caused by a lack of confidence in the junior divisional officer and a feeling that he does not know what *Royal Arthur* teaches. The remedy is simple—to encourage the junior officers to visit the establishment when possible and see for themselves the standards at which the course aims.

Admiralty Fleet Order 217/56 is exclusively about how to visit *Royal Arthur* and how to send petty officers to the course. Candidates for course and visiting officers are always welcome.

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