

Communications ratings come from two sources. The major is the Boy Entrants to the Seaman branch, and the minor is the Adult Entrants who come in as Ordinary Signalmen or Ordinary Telegraphists. Both Boy Seamen and Adult Communications Ratings are recruited by DNR's staff at recruiting centres throughout the country. The Boys who are to become Signalmen or Telegraphists are later selected from volunteers in their training Establishments as described below.

All applicants for entry to the Royal Navy complete a questionnaire (SP Form Q1, copy attached) and a short selection test (described below). The questionnaire, which is completed by the candidate in his own handwriting (thus affording a rough and ready test of literacy) provides the basis for an interview by the Naval Recruiting Officer, who writes his notes in the right-hand margin. The emphasis throughout the interview is on eliciting factual evidence on the candidate's perseverance, keenness and suitability of character for Naval service.

The selection test is of the paper-and-pencil type and has four parts: (i) 30 simple mechanical questions; (ii) 30 questions in arithmetic and mathematics; (iii) 20 spelling questions; (iv) a pure intelligence test of 20 questions. The time limit is 30 minutes, and the maximum score 100. The aim of the test is to give the Recruiting Officer a guide to the general ability of each candidate. (It is sometimes assumed that selecting e.g. telegraphists is merely a matter of testing a special auditory capacity. Far from it: although a special ability undoubtedly does enter into morse learning, much of a telegraphist's training depends upon general intellectual ability.) For security reasons it is not possible to provide specimen copies, but fairly detailed descriptions of suitable tests are available in the two books quoted below.

The aim of the recruiting routine is to give the Recruiting Officer as full a picture as possible of the applicant. For his knowledge of the job and its requirements he depends mainly upon his many years' experience of Naval Service. His final task is to gauge the extent to which the applicant's assets and the job requirements can be reckoned a satisfactory fit. Discussion of the precise category in which the applicant may be entered usually comes towards the end of the interview; and in reaching a decision as to whether the applicant's choice is sound the Recruiting Officer has a useful additional guide in the form of a suggested minimum test score for each category. This, it must be emphasised, is a guide only and not a requirement. ~~Minimum suggested test scores for each category are: 40 for Boy Seamen, 45 for Signalmen and 50 for Telegraphists.~~ The minima suggested at present are 40 for Boy Seamen, 45 for Signalmen and 50 for Telegraphists. Put in another way, these minima suggest that the Recruiting Officers should select the Boys from the upper two-thirds of the applicant population in intelligence, the Signalmen from the upper half and the Telegraphists from the upper third.

Competition to enter the Communications Branch is fairly intense, and Signalmen and Telegraphists are therefore fairly highly selected on general and educational ability and character. But the adult entries are not formally selected for special aptitudes, except in so far as the training courses discover a few who are unable to master the necessary techniques. The Boys, however, who provide the major source of recruitment, do go through a further aptitude examination. In HMS GANGES, the larger of the two training establishments for Seaman (and Communications) Boys, those who volunteer for W/T are given an aptitude test consisting of the following items:

- (i) Morse Aptitude Test.
- (ii) English examination.
- (iii) Arithmetic examination.
- (iv) Typewriting Dexterity Test.

Volunteers making 52 marks or more on the morse aptitude test and 90 marks or more on English and Arithmetic are considered to show aptitude, and may be accepted up to the quota allowed. Since material received is now often typed as it comes in, a typewriting dexterity test is also employed: but this is still on an experimental basis. The research investigation which led to the institution of an aptitude testing battery in HMS GANGES is described in a report attached.

Aptitude testing in the British and U.S. Navies has followed similar lines. Anyone wanting to investigate the subject thoroughly is advised to read: (i) "Personnel Selection in the British Forces" by Vernon and Parry, University of London Press, and (ii) "Personnel Research and Test Development in the Bureau of Naval Personnel", by Stuit et al., Princetown University Press. Very broadly the conclusions which emerge are that standardised arithmetic and verbal tests give good results for modest expenditure in selecting communications ratings. For visual signalmen, a test which incorporates a perceptual factor - as the Progressive Matrices test does - can profitably be added. Apparatus tests are expensive in time, can be very unreliable and necessitate the services of highly skilled and experienced test technicians if they are to give - as they can do - additional validity to a simple test battery. Much particular information on methods of teaching morse and on testing morse aptitude can be gleaned from studies published in the American O.S.R.D. reports.

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