

First, a little input from a Ganges Magazine of 1956.

Before WW2 and the shift to HMS St George for all

boy's under training, all the instructor ratings

at HMS Ganges came from the Chatham Depot.

On return to HMS Ganges from St George in 1946,

instructors came from either the Chatham or

the Devonport Depots.

Now read the Ganges article.

Centralised drafting has begun to have its effect on us in two ways. Juniors are being drafted to ships not manned in the past by ratings of their particular Port Division and Portsmouth senior ratings are now being drafted here as instructors. In the past the instructors have with one exception, come from the Chatham and Devonport Divisions. We were very pleased to welcome back, after a spell away on a G.S.C., P.O. Telegraphists Walklett and Hunter which should be a good enough proof to anyone considering a draft here that some instructors like the place so much they even come back for more!

CENTRALISED COMMUNICATIONS DRAFTING

Drafting has always been a sore point with most ratings, right from the days when they first found themselves in a ship suffering with a headache, after a brush with the press gang, to these modern days when, owing to the evil machinations of the Drafting Office, they have a pierhead jump to a ship going "foreign". The object of this article is to explain to you the present arrangement of Centralised Drafting and to promulgate some information which might help you to understand the situation a little better, which in turn will assist the Drafting Officer.

We were all told some time ago that all drafting was going to be centralised. In other words, instead of a set of Officers in each Port Division drafting ratings from that Division to ships and establishments manned by that Division, there would be only one set of Officers, known as the Naval Drafting Authority and stationed in a centrally-situated spot, who would draft all the ratings in the Navy to any ship or establishment. The advantages of this system are obvious to most of you. They are, in short, that since you are all in the same Branch in the same service your drafting cycle (more about this later) and your advancement prospects should be the same. In the past this, of course, has not always been the case by any means. To implement this Admiralty policy the Naval Drafting Authority (N.D.A.) is establishing itself at the old A.S.R.E. at Lythe Hill, Haslemere, and it will draft all ratings from there, starting on 1st April, 1957.

For various reasons, the principal one being the Suez Crisis with its big demand for Communications ratings, the Admiralty decided that the Communications Branch should centralise in advance of the rest of the Navy, and this was done on 1st October of this year. A Communications Officer was appointed to the staff of the Portsmouth Drafting Office, where all Communication ratings' records were centralised, to do all Communications drafting. The exceptions are Coders (Ed.), who remain in their own Divisions for the present, and Submarine and Air ratings, who are drafted by Flag Officer, Submarines, and Combrax, Lee, respectively. For the present, the advancement Rosters, although all at Portsmouth, are still being run on a Port Division basis. *These will be centralised at the same time as those of all other branches.* Family Welfare Officers are remaining in their own Depots and will continue to advise their respective Commodores on welfare matters. There is, therefore, no change in the procedure in force in the past in this respect. One immediate result of Centralisation is that a review is being made of ratings, senior ones to start with, on Home Sea Service, in order that those whose previous service demands it may be moved to Port Service.

It has been stated that one object of centralisation is to give you all a similar drafting cycle, as far as possible. There is nothing mysterious or difficult

about a drafting cycle. All it means is, given a certain number of ratings of a certain category, and the number of billets in the various types of service, i.e., Overseas Service, General Service Commission, Home Sea Service and Port Service, it is possible to calculate how long each category of rating should spend in each type of service in order to complete a cycle bearing in mind that 18 months are laid down for a General Service Commission and 30 months for an accompanied billet ashore abroad. This cycle, however, has to be amended, because for some categories of ratings, for instance, the period calculated for Home Sea Service, only comes to, say, 5½ months. We obviously cannot accept such a short period in a ship; so, to avoid too much moving about and a more settled ship's company, we arbitrarily make the period, say, 12 months. This results in (a) the Port Service period being reduced and (b) some ratings home from foreign missing a spell of Home Sea Service but doing a longer spell in Port Service. In such a case, we would ensure that these ratings go to Home Sea next time round. It is our policy, from now on, that after Foreign Service, ratings should go to a Home Sea Service billet, followed by a Port Service billet before going foreign again, as amended in the previous sentence.

It must be borne in mind for the future that it is impossible to work such a thing as a drafting cycle unless men are available in the drafting pool. The Drafting Officer is faced with quite a different situation in continually being obliged to meet commitments within a certain period of time with men available who are out of phase in the drafting cycle. He has no option, therefore, but to break the cycle and put the first man available into the billet which requires filling most urgently.

Future theoretical average cycles for various category of rating show that after a period of about 12 months Home Sea Service the period of Port Service varies from 24 months to about six months, depending on the category of the rating. Where it is not possible to fit a rating into Home Sea Service after return from foreign, he goes straight into Port Service for 30 reducing to about 12 months, the period again depending on the category of rating.

The physical amalgamation of the drafting cards showed a preponderance of Plymouth ratings at the top of the Foreign Service Rosters. The reason for this is, of course, that in the past Devonport ratings, on the whole, had a very much better drafting cycle than the other two Divisions.

You are advised to forget the old saying of: "Keep your mouth shut, your bowels open and never volunteer for anything". Certainly as far as the never volunteering is concerned! Every effort is always made to draft ratings to jobs or places they have volunteered for, providing in the case of U.K. based billets, they are due for that type of service. You must, however, put in your requests to volunteer

for particular billets in good time. When a ship recommissions, for instance, her new crew is detailed some months beforehand. The Drafting Authorities, having already prepared a crew to recommission a ship, are not awfully inclined to change their arrangements at the last minute and thereby upsetting a rating's arrangements in order to fit in a latecomer volunteer for this ship. So remember, volunteer in good time! One further piece of advice is, make certain your next-of-kin card is up to date.

I would like to conclude this article by assuring all ratings that the Drafting Authorities spend much time in trying to be fair and just in their drafting. They are often handicapped, however, by events outside their control, for example, the Suez crisis.