

SI VIS PACEM PARA BELLUM

H·M·S  
EXCELLENT

**150<sup>th</sup>**  
**ANNIVERSARY**  
**PAGEANT**

1830 - 1980

JUNE 1980

SOUVENIR PROGRAMME · 50P

· ALL PROCEEDS TO SERVICE CHARITIES



HMS EXCELLENT SEARCHLIGHT TATTOO

150th ANNIVERSARY 1830-1980

for the benefit of Service Charities

1980

HMS EXCELLENT, WHALE ISLAND

12, 13, 14 JUNE

2130-2330

by permission of

Captain R K S BETHELL OBE FBIM ROYAL NAVY

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Mrs B Reitz

Lieutenant Commander L McA Jay Royal Navy



## FOREWORD

I would like to welcome you to the Tattoo which is being staged tonight to celebrate the 150th anniversary of the commissioning of HMS EXCELLENT as the first School of Naval Gunnery and I hope that you will enjoy the performance.

On another page is a more detailed account of the history of HMS EXCELLENT but here are the broad outlines of the story. The Royal Navy's first gunnery school was started as an experiment in 1830 in the old three-decker EXCELLENT which had been Captain Collingwood's ship at the Battle of Cape St Vincent thirty-three years before. Under Commander George Smith, whose idea it was to teach "one general and perfect system of gunnery" using a ship moored in Portsmouth Harbour and able to fire her guns over the mud flats, the experiment succeeded and the standard of gunnery in the Royal Navy rapidly improved.

The gunnery school remained afloat for over 60 years, several ships bearing the name EXCELLENT during that period, but it was finally transferred to Whale Island in 1891. This island was originally no more than two small mud banks in the harbour which were joined and built up by convict labour with soil excavated when new basins were built as Portsmouth Dockyard was extended in the second half of the nineteenth century. It had been used as a rifle range and for training landing parties for many years before the transfer of the gunnery school was completed.

For 85 years covering the period of great naval expansion at the beginning of this century and including both world wars, naval gunnery was taught on Whale Island until, in 1976, the School of Maritime Operations became responsible for gunnery and missile training. HMS EXCELLENT has acquired a new essential role as the School of Naval General Training - it is the naval lead school in discipline and leadership, in ship survival and land warfare, in photography, in ceremonial and in firefighting among many other subjects. Its



motto remains "If you wish peace, prepare for war". You will see something of this today.

I would like to thank all those who have put so much work into the preparation of this Tattoo and those who are taking part in it tonight, in particular the officers and men of the Queen's Regiment with which HMS EXCELLENT has such a long historical association.

## THE HISTORY OF HMS EXCELLENT

The commissioning of HMS EXCELLENT in 1830 as a training ship for naval gunners had its origin in the low standard of British gunnery in the American War of 1812, when our ships were in general outgunned by their opponents and suffered unexpected reverses. Although the Admiralty took no immediate steps to remedy the situation, it eventually adopted a "Plan for the Improvement of Naval Gunnery, without any Additional Expense" put forward by Commander George Smith and supported by Admiral Sir John Pechell, Bart, who was a member of the Board.

This plan involved mooring a ship in Portsmouth Harbour in such a position that it could fire across the mud flats towards Fareham, and equipping it with guns of every description then in use, together with different types of sights. The gunners of all ships in commission were required to attend at stated times "to learn one general and perfect system of Gunnery, not only to be able to give the Words of Command but also to see that they are executed as they ought to be".

The vessel selected was HMS EXCELLENT, a 74-gun ship launched in 1787, which took part in the Battle of Cape St Vincent under the command of Captain Cuthbert Collingwood, and Commander Smith was appointed to superintend the new arrangements and to become the first Commanding Officer of the gunnery training ship. Having successfully implemented his plan, George Smith was promoted Captain in 1832 and relieved by Captain Thomas Hastings who held the appointment for thirteen years and did much to improve naval gunnery in that time. The success of the new methods of training was demonstrated by the accurate fire of the British ships at the bombardment of Acre in 1840.

The first EXCELLENT was replaced in 1834 by HMS BOYNE (104 guns), which had been launched in 1810 and was of the same design as HMS VICTORY. She took the name of her predecessor and remained the gunnery training ship for



25 years.

Near EXCELLENT's berth in Portsmouth Harbour were two small islands, little more than mudbanks, known as Big and Little Whaley. These were bought by the Admiralty from Portsmouth Corporation for £1000 in 1853 and used for training seamen from the ship in musketry drill and landing exercises. A pontoon pier was built in the early fifties to facilitate landing and in due course the two islands were joined and enlarged by dumping soil excavated when the dockyard was extended and new basins were dug. This island was originally known as Mud Island and the work of building it up was carried out by convicts.

In 1859 HMS QUEEN CHARLOTTE, a 108-gun ship launched in 1810 which had taken part with success in the bombardment of Algiers in 1815, became the third EXCELLENT. She was the second ship of that name, the first, built 20 years earlier, having been Lord Howe's flagship in the Battle of the Glorious First of June 1794.

Mud Island, or Whale Island as it came to be known, was increasingly used for musketry drill and firing in the 1860s. This led to the need for some form of accommodation ashore and in 1864 Mr Reeves, a senior Gunner, built the first brick house on Whale Island, known as "The Excellent House that Jack built". It was in the south-east corner of the island but no longer exists.

For another 25 years gunnery training continued in the EXCELLENT but the revolutionary ideas of Lieutenant Percy Scott that the island should be levelled and drained, the ship abandoned and a School of Naval Gunnery established ashore, gradually prevailed with the vigorous support of Captain "Jackie" Fisher. The proposals were accepted by the Admiralty in 1885 and the move ashore was completed six years later when the old ship was paid off.

The years leading up to the First World War saw great changes in naval gunnery, many inspired by Scott and Fisher, and the Gunnery School was at its peak of

activity during this period, training thousands of officers and ratings to man the guns and control systems of the rapidly expanding Fleet.

During the 1914-18 War many thousands of reservists were trained in EXCELLENT in addition to the regular officers and ratings, and special courses were run for officers of the newly established Royal Naval Air Service and for Army tank gunnery instructors. To commemorate the latter the War Office presented a Mark IV tank to Whale Island in 1919 which remained here until it was moved to the Tank Museum at Bovington in 1971.

The Gunnery School continued to flourish between the wars and increasing emphasis was given to the defence of ships against air attack in the 1930s, leading to the establishment of an anti-aircraft range at Eastney, later to be called Fraser Gunnery Range after Admiral Fraser, a distinguished Gunnery Officer, then Controller of the Navy. The centenary of the commissioning of HMS EXCELLENT was celebrated in 1930 with a spectacular tattoo and a dinner attended by 300 officers, including thirty-six Admirals.

In the Second World War there was another great expansion of training in EXCELLENT and again large numbers of reservists passed through the Gunnery School, including nearly 200 Reserve and foreign officers who qualified on the Long Course. Early in the war the tank was resuscitated and played an important role in anti-invasion preparations. But Whale Island did not escape unscathed in the blitz on Portsmouth and in one of the worst raids in March 1941 the Warrant Officers' Mess was badly damaged and there were 27 casualties, six of them fatal.

After the war gunnery training continued on a reduced scale during the 1950s and 60s, and with the replacement of big guns by guided weapons EXCELLENT became responsible for missile training. During this period several new buildings were erected on the Island, notably the Senior Ratings' Mess (Edgar Evans Building), the WRNS Accommodation Block (Dame Mary Lloyd House) and the Naval Weapons Trials Centre (Fraser Building).

The role of Whale Island changed in the 1970s however, and the last Long Gunnery Course finished in 1972. With the establishment of the School of Maritime Operations in HMS DRYAD, EXCELLENT ceased to be the Gunnery School of the Royal Navy and became the School of Naval General Training, responsible for training officers and ratings in leadership, ceremonial, internal security, damage control, firefighting and man management - a far cry from Commander George Smith's "Plan" of 1830.

## PROGRAMME OF EVENTS

ARRIVAL OF VIP - General Salute

FANFARE - 'EXCELLENT'

The Band of HM Royal Marines, Commander-in-Chief Naval Home Command. Director of Music, Captain G A C Hoskins IRAM RM. Guard provided by the Royal Naval Display Team under the command of Lieutenant Commander B R Nicolle Royal Navy.

PORTSMOUTH COMMAND FIELD GUN DISPLAY

By the Portsmouth Command Field Gun Crews under the command of Lieutenant R E Eves Royal Navy.

LANDFIGHTING AND PARACHUTE DISPLAY

By members of the Internal Security School, HMS EXCELLENT under the direction of Captain S Sefi RM and men from the 1st Battalion Queen's Regiment, under the direction of Major P R Hitchcock. The Royal Artillery Parachute Display Troop under the command of Sergeant Major L Melville. Helicopter by kind permission of Flag Officer Naval Air Command.

THE PURCHASE OF WALEY ISLAND

Enacted by the Solent Theatre Company under the direction of Miss J Pressey.

THE HOUSE THAT JACK BUILT

Enacted by the Gunnery Instructors' Association under the direction of Fleet Chief Petty Officer M Cooper.

THE HORNPIPE

A display of dancing by the Women's Royal Naval Service serving in HMS EXCELLENT under the direction of Second Officer R Wilson WRNS.



## NAVAL WEAPONS TRIALS ORGANISATION

A display by personnel of the Naval Weapons Trials Organisation under the direction of Lieutenant Commander B Wheeler Royal Navy.

## SAINT BARBARA

The Patron Saint of Artillerists and of HMS EXCELLENT enacted by the Portsmouth Naval Theatre Group under the direction of Captain D A Oakley RM.

## A GUNNERY AND MISSILE DISPLAY

By Fraser Gunnery Range, from the School of Maritime Operations, HMS DRYAD, under the direction of Lieutenant Commander G E Price Royal Navy.

## THE MARK IV TANK

A display by a replica of the Mark IV Tank.

## BRAGANZA

A musical display by the Band and Corps of Drums from the 1st Battalion and the Band from the 2nd Battalion Queen's Regiment, under the direction of WO1 P E Hills, 1st Battalion Queen's Regiment.

## CENTENARY

Illumination of the gates presented to HMS EXCELLENT on its Centenary.

## WINDOW LADDER DISPLAY

By the Royal Naval Display Team under the direction of Lieutenant Commander B R Nicolle Royal Navy.

## A FIREFIGHTING DISPLAY

By the Royal Naval Nuclear, Biological, Chemical  
Defence Damage Control and Firefighting School  
under the direction of Lieutenant Commander  
A R Jackson Royal Navy.

## THE REGULATING BRANCH

A display by the Royal Naval Regulating School  
under the direction of Lieutenant Commander  
P E Doust Royal Navy.

## THE FINALE

Beating Retreat	The Band of HM Royal Marines, Commander-in-Chief Naval Home Command. The Band and Corps of Drums from the 1st Battalion and the Band from the 2nd Battalion Queen's Regiment. Director of Music, Captain G A C Hoskins IRAM RM. The Royal Naval Display Team under the command of Lieutenant Commander B R Nicolle Royal Navy.
Manning the Mast	The Guard formed from the 1st Battalion, Queen's Regiment under the command of Major P R Hitchcock. The Women's Royal Naval Service under the command of Second Officer R Wilson WRNS.
Firework Display	
Demast	
Sunset Ceremony	

National Anthem

\* \* \* \* \*

DEPARTURE OF VIP

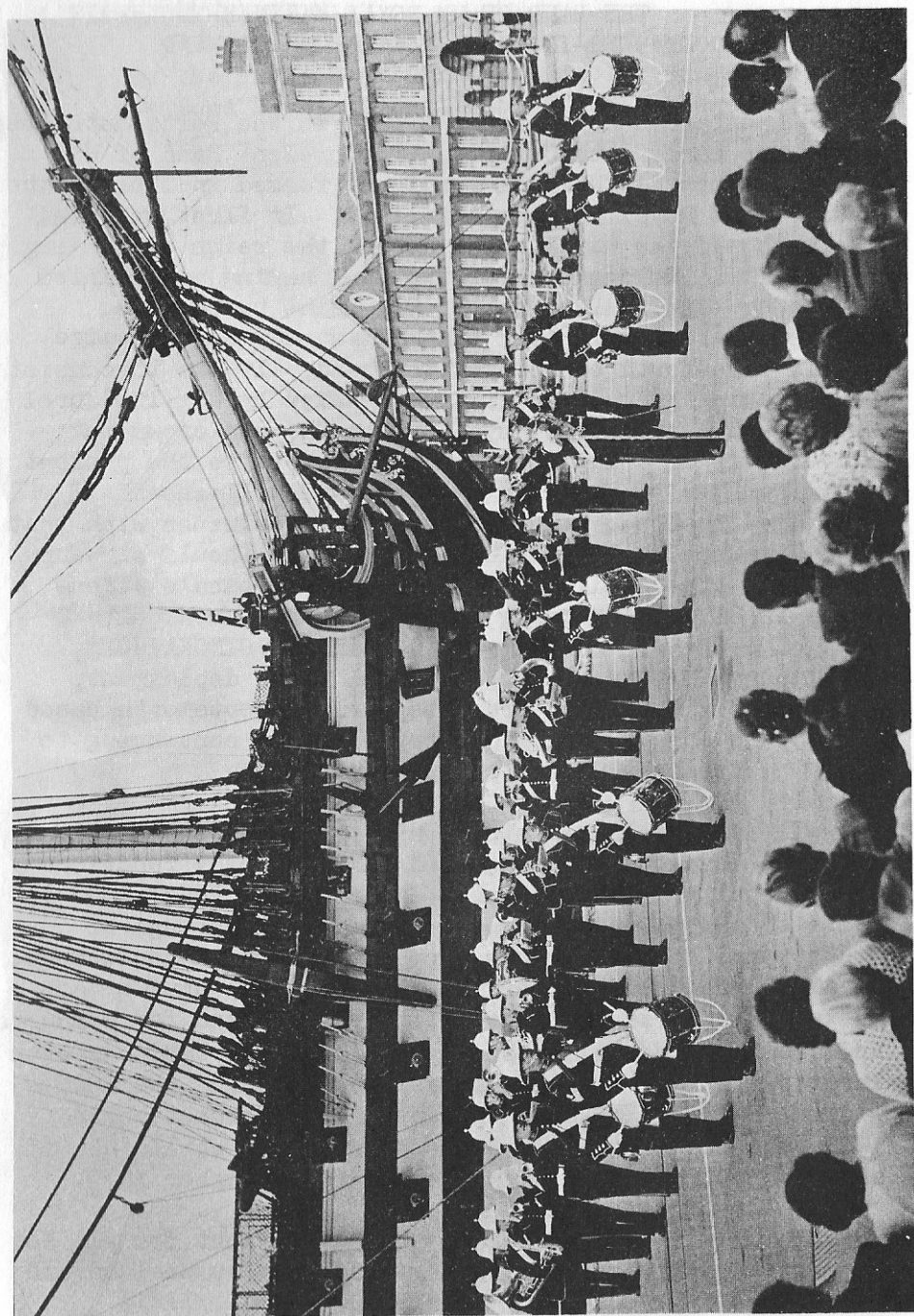
VIP departs by car via Domviles Approach.

THE BAND OF HM ROYAL MARINES  
COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF NAVAL HOME COMMAND

There has been a Royal Marines Band in the Portsmouth area since the early 18th Century. The present Band of HM Royal Marines CINCNAVHOME was first formed in 1861 as the Band of the Royal Marines Artillery. It first provided music aboard the Royal Yacht during the reign of HM King Edward VII. To commemorate the Band having accompanied His Majesty to India for the 1911 Delhi Durbar King George V directed in 1912 that a distinctive cap badge should henceforth be worn by the band. It was to consist of a flaming grenade in gilt surrounded by a gilt laurel wreath and bearing the Royal Cypher GRV and crown in silver. It is a unique badge and is worn to the present day. Further to this, in 1955, HM Queen Elizabeth II commanded that her personal cypher, intertwined with that of HRH Prince Philip, Duke of Edinburgh, should be worn above the other badge to commemorate the band's attendance in SS GOTHIC during Her Majesty's Commonwealth Tour of 1953-54. The current RM Band of CINCNAVHOME, still providing musicians for Royal Yacht deployment, and directly descended from the earlier Portsmouth based band, thus enjoys the unique privilege of continuing to wear the personal Cypher of two Sovereigns.

As well as providing music of all types for the Royal Navy and Royal Marines the band plays at many functions of national and international importance. These include State occasions, sporting events and a wide range of traditional British events such as the Lord Mayor's Show, Royal Tournaments and Service Tattoos. The band broadcasts and records and is constantly in demand for concerts and displays from a discerning public. The band has been involved in many historic occasions including the 1946 Victory Parade, HM Queen Elizabeth II's Coronation in 1953, the State Funeral of Sir Winston Churchill in 1965 and that of Lord Louis Mountbatten in September 1979.

The band has been embarked in the Royal Yacht for all Her Majesty's Royal Tours including those to New Zealand and





Australia in 1963 and 1966, Canada in 1967, South America in 1968, Australia and New Zealand again in 1970, South Pacific, British Columbia and Turkey in 1971. There have also been visits to Thailand, the Far East, Mexico, Indonesia and the Caribbean. In 1976 the band visited the USA for the Bi-Centennial Celebrations and Canada for the Olympic Games. Visits to the Caribbean, New Zealand and Australia as part of Her Majesty's Silver Jubilee Celebrations followed in 1977. Since then the band has accompanied HM The Queen and HRH The Duke of Edinburgh on State Visits to West Germany and the Channel Islands and has continued to provide music for annual cruises in the Royal Yacht to the Western Isles of Scotland. Commitments in 1979 included visits to Kuwait, Bahrain, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Abu Dhabi, Dubai and Oman.

Before joining the band all musicians are trained at the Royal Marines School of Music under the tutelage of civilian music professors. Each player is required to perform in Orchestral as well as Band combinations and, where appropriate, Dance Bands. Together with a vividly spectacular Corps of Drummers and Buglers the band is therefore able to undertake any form of musical commitment at home and abroad, on land or sea, maintaining the high standards demanded. The Royal Marines Band of the Commander-in-Chief Naval Home Command is proud of its position as a premier Staff Band in the most élite Corps in the world, The Royal Marines.

## PORTSMOUTH FIELD GUN DISPLAY

The object of the display is to depict the hazards and conditions which faced those involved at Ladysmith in 1899.

During that year guns like this one were taken from the warships, fitted with crude limbers and hauled by oxen and sailors across country for the relief of Ladysmith and other beleaguered centres.

The animals used in this display are probably the only trained pair of cattle in the country, ordinarily they are used at the Butser Ancient Farm Research Project some twelve miles north of Portsmouth.

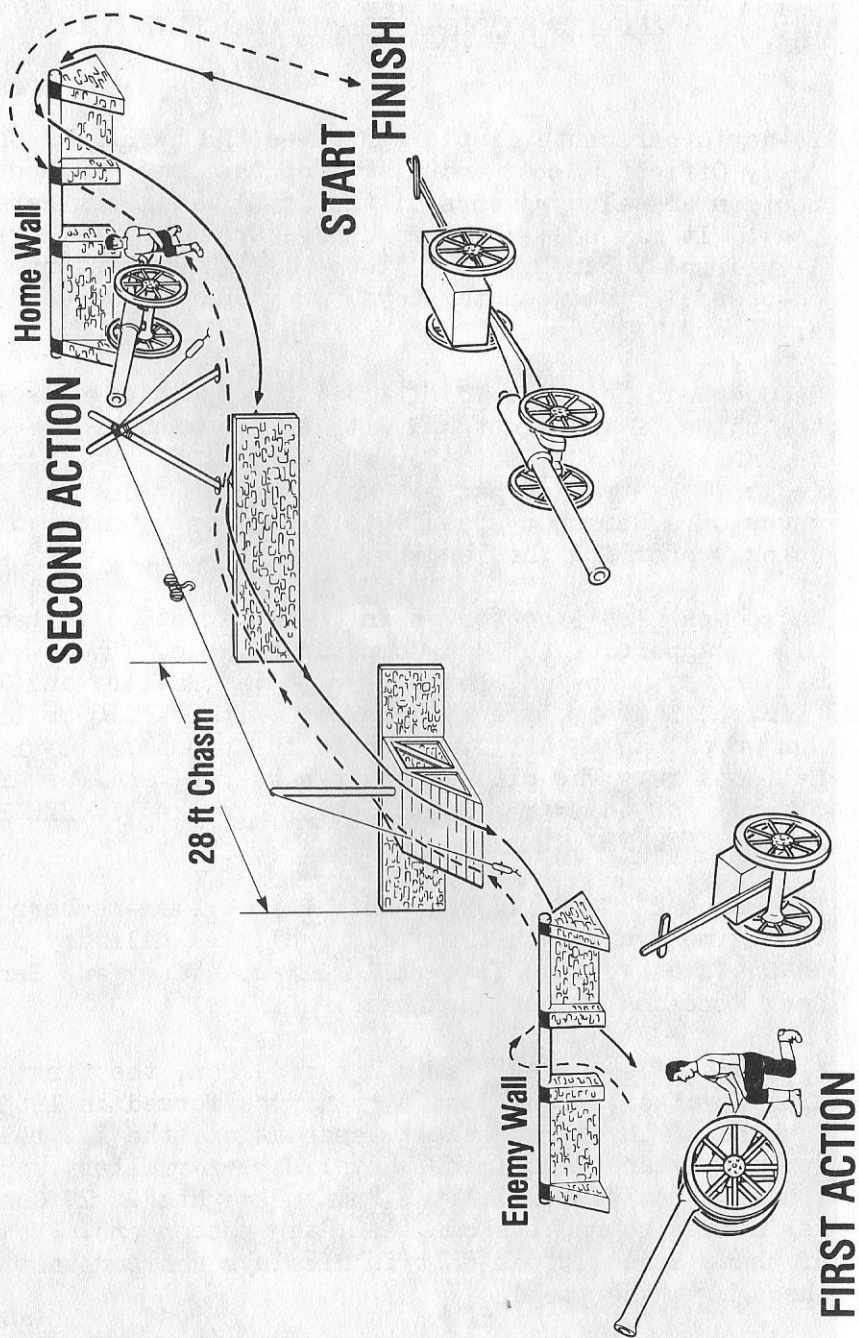
When cattle were unable to cope with the rough terrain guns had to be manhandled by sailors working in unison. These trials and tribulations endured in South Africa are encapsulated in modern competition where today's sailors not only mirror the feats of their predecessors but also demonstrate the enduring traditions of the Royal Navy.

The display is divided into three distinct phases:

1. The Run Out during which the gun, limber and men must negotiate the first (home) wall, cross the chasm, pass through the second (enemy) wall and finally the gun must be brought into action against the "enemy".
2. The Run Back started by the bugle call "Retire". The gun, limber and men retreat over the enemy wall, across the chasm and once again the gun is brought into action against the "pursuing enemy".
3. The Run Home started by the bugle call "Cease Fire". The gun and limber are forced through the hole in the home wall before being raced down the side of the track and across the finishing line.

See diagram of Run opposite.

# DIAGRAM OF COURSE



THE INTERNAL SECURITY SECTION, HMS EXCELLENT  
AND THE ROYAL ARTILLERY PARACHUTE TEAM

To-day's parachute display involves HMS EXCELLENT Chief Petty Officers Scott and Moffat of the Internal Security Section and also members of the Royal Artillery Parachute Team. It may seem strange to have Gunners in a Royal Navy display but, in fact, there is a long history of co-operation between the Royal Navy and the Royal Artillery.

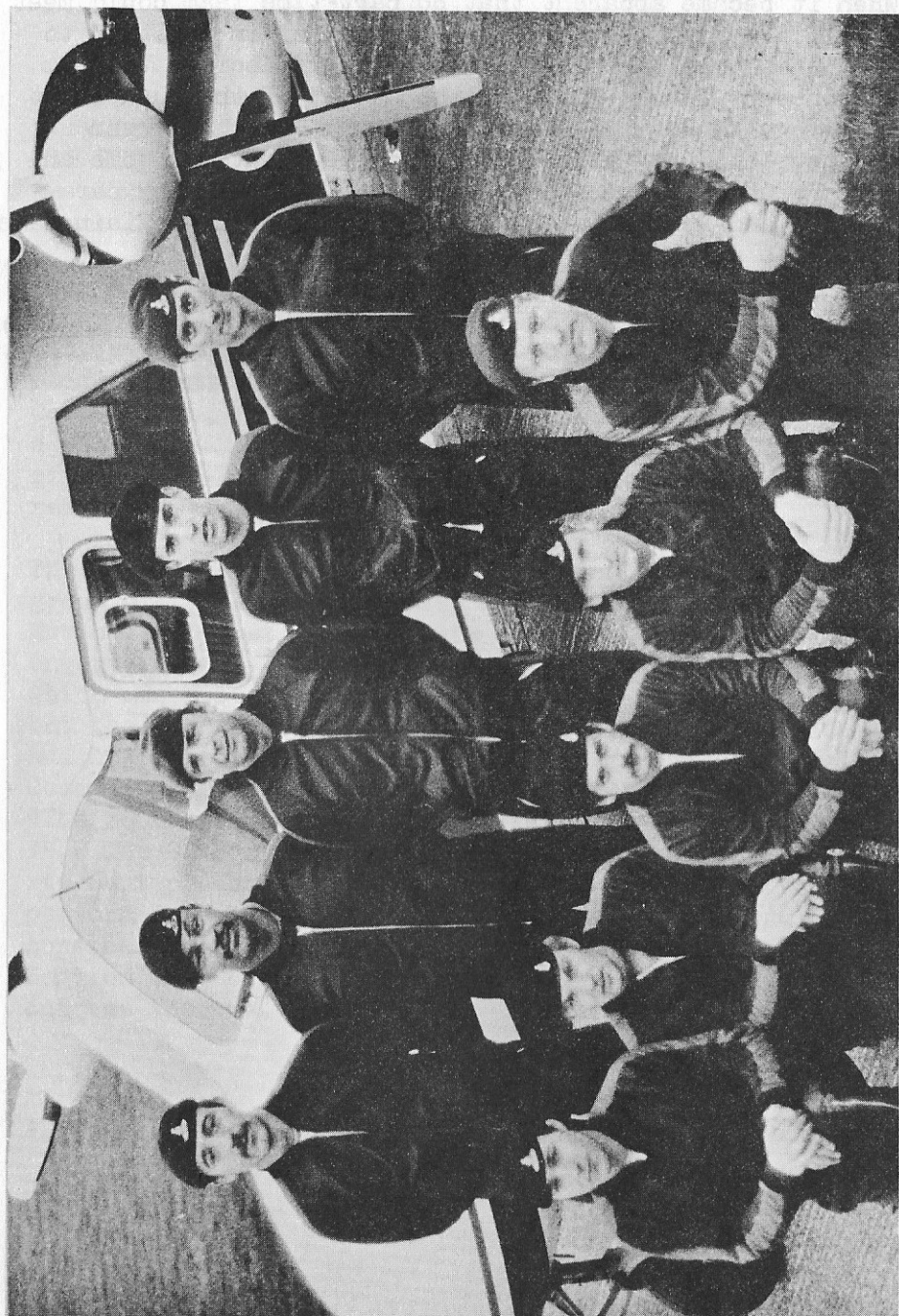
29 Commando Regiment Royal Artillery operates closely with the ships of the Fleet and with the Commando Brigade. The Regiment's 148 Commando Forward Observation Battery provides 7 observation parties which are landed in the first waves of a Commando assault to direct the gunfire of the ships supporting the landing.

There are also 3 batteries in the Regiment dedicated to close support of the 3rd Commando Brigade. These batteries 7 (Sphynx) Battery, 8 (Alma) Battery and 79 (Kirkee) Battery, are all equipped with the 105mm Light Gun which can be airlifted on to the beachhead by Naval helicopters. The close support batteries and forward observation teams are periodically embarked in HMS BULWARK and HMS HERMES.

Two members of the RA Parachute Team are ex-members of 29 Regiment and both are fully qualified military parachutists as well as free-fall jumpers. They are Sergeant Tony Rose and Gunner Jock Reid.

Although this is the Team's first season, the first part-time Royal Artillery display team was formed in 1963 by members of the RA Parachute Association, the Kestrel Club. For many years 7 Regiment, Royal Horse Artillery, operated a part-time team called the "Black Knights". 29 Commando Regiment also had its own team, the Buccaneers. Members of these 2 teams took part in displays and competitions throughout the world.





When it became apparent that no part-time team could meet a full programme of displays each summer in addition to its normal military commitments, it was decided to form the present Team. Based at the "home" of the Gunners at Woolwich, London, the Royal Artillery Parachute Team consists of 10 jumpers, drawn from regiments at home and abroad. Each member is a fully qualified display parachutist and their standards of experience and training are second to none.

The Team uses the very latest high performance parachutes, which have a high forward speed and great manoeuvrability, enabling the jumpers to make precision landings in the display arena.

## THE HOUSE THAT JACK BUILT

In 1864, the Ship's Company of HMS EXCELLENT, an accommodation and training ship berthed off Whale Island, were using the Island for training purposes and, in order to provide better facilities, constructed a rifle range. It is reasonable to assume that the Island had been used for training purposes before this date but because it was now being used on a more regular basis, it was considered that a building would be required to cater for the needs of the men. Subsequently, this building became known as 'The House that Jack Built'.

In the late summer of that year a senior gunner by the name of Edward Reeves, together with Chief Petty Officer William Tribe, the principal builder and architect and a party of seamen, took the task in hand and constructed the building on the south west corner of the Island. This was a multi-purpose building in three sections. The centre portion was used as accommodation for Mr Reeves and his family - which may have been an early married quarter - and the two wings were for accommodation and storage spaces for officers and seamen under instruction.

One of the first, if not the first, courses of Gunnery Lieutenants were under instruction on the Island at the time and took their final examinations shortly after the building was completed. In order to celebrate their graduation as Gunnery Specialists and, perhaps, the completion of the building, it was decided to mark the occasion by holding a dinner. This was a notable event because it was the first mess function held on Whale Island.

The matter of the preparation and serving of the meal was entrusted to Mrs Helen Tribe, who lived with her husband and family in nearby Stanley Road. The task must have been inconvenient because Mrs Tribe was in an advanced stage of pregnancy. During or after the celebrations the weather worsened and gale force winds blew for three days. Because there was no footbridge

at that time Mrs Tribe found herself marooned and on the third day she gave birth to a boy in 'The House that Jack Built' and appropriately named him Jack. The Tribe family maintained a close connection with Whale Island until after the Second World War but unfortunately this has now been lost.

This scene is performed by members of the Gunnery Instructors' Association.

#### THE RN AND RM GUNNERY AND MISSILE INSTRUCTORS' ASSOCIATION

The Gunnery Instructors have been key men in the history of Whale Island. They have trained officers and ratings in the use of all weapons from small arms to large calibre guns and in foot drill, arms drill and ceremonial. The high standards they have achieved have been noted and appreciated on many State and Royal Naval ceremonial occasions over many years.

The last Gunnery Instructors' course qualified in 1973. Today the Association is thriving, with many old and new members, and Gunnery Instructors today are men from the Seaman (Missile) Branch of the Operations Branch.



## WOMEN'S ROYAL NAVAL SERVICE

WRNS were first employed on Whale Island in 1917 as cooks and waitresses in the overflowing officers' mess (but they were not allowed to live on the Island!) Dame Katherine Furze had given her approval but the Captain and Commander took a gloomy view - the Women's Services in those days were still a startling innovation. The WRNS turned out to be a great success and were missed when they were demobbed at the end of the war.

Early in 1939 women were voluntarily training as WRNS for duties as Wardroom attendants, Cooks, Stewardesses and Writers. From August 1939 an increasing number were drafted to the Island to release men for the Fleet. The Wren Stewardesses ran the Wardroom even taking the place of the three Wardroom Hall Porters, who had been called up. The WRNS were very happy at Whale Island and were proud to be involved even in a small way.

At the end of hostilities there still remained a large number of WRNS - in September 1945 there were 15 WRNS Officers and 750 WRNS Ratings doing many operational jobs throughout their training sections.

In March 1964 a new WRNS Quarters called Mary Lloyd House was opened by the new Commandant, Dame Jean Davies. Dame Mary Lloyd started her career at Whale Island as a steward in the Wardroom and within 10 years she became Director WRNS. The Block accommodates 80 WRNS and is situated on the East side of the Island.

Today, as well as Writers, Stores and other 'back up' categories normally found in Naval Establishments, there is a large number of Weapon Analysts employed in assessing Fleet gunnery and air weapons, and a smaller number of Training Support Assistants working in the Command Instructional Film Library, at the RN Film Studios, Tipner, and in Training Sections. Wrens also work in Phoenix NBCD School but are accommodated in Whale Island. Basic and Advanced Training of all WRNS Photographers is carried out in HMS EXCELLENT.

Unlike most WRNS Units there are no watch keepers on the Island so the WRNS are free to take part in all sporting and social functions out of working hours.

Throughout the years the WRNS have been an integral part of Whale Island and today there are seven Officers and over seventy Ratings serving in HMS EXCELLENT.

## NAVAL WEAPONS TRIALS ORGANISATION

Whale Island to-day provides the base for those Naval officers and ratings who serve under the Captain, Weapons Trials (CWT). The important role of these men and women is fundamentally to act as Quality Assurance inspectors of the modern Navy's weapon and communications systems. These systems, installed in warships either by HM Dockyards or civilian contractors, are required to achieve high standards of effectiveness and safety. It is not until exhaustive tests have been satisfactorily completed by trials teams that ships take on the responsibility for using and maintaining their own weapons. The teams comprise technical and user officers and ratings, who travel throughout the United Kingdom and abroad to conduct trials on ship and submarine equipments. Many of these trials require comprehensive film and computer records to be taken before a weapon system's efficiency can be realistically determined. This data is interpreted back in HMS EXCELLENT by WRNS Analysts, whose findings provide a complete picture of the Fleet's effectiveness.

The need for the Service to ensure that its weapons were of the highest quality was first realised in 1883. Nineteen years later the organisation had grown and a Commander was appointed to Whale Island to head the Experimental Party (XP), whose terms of reference differed remarkably little from those of CWT to-day.

This evening's presentation briefly highlights some of the significant events which have taken place over the past 78 years as XP evolved to become CWT.

## THE CHURCH AND THE ISLAND

It seems that the first church party to come from the ship to worship in Whale Island was in 1890. From this date onwards it was customary to have services in lecture rooms, the drill shed and later in the gymnasium (which afterwards became the hydraulics lecture room).

At the Centenary Tattoo in 1930 it was decided to convert one of the buildings into a permanent Church. Admiralty approval was obtained to use the Ammunition Room, the southernmost room in the old lecture block facing the Quarterdeck, which had started life as a drill shed and had been the first place ever to be used as a Church when that church party had landed in 1890. Contributions for the work of furnishing the new church were collected from Gunnery Officers and ratings serving and retired. This plan could very easily have been a complete disaster; just as the appeal was being organised some financial crisis prompted the Admiralty to forbid the collecting of any contributions. However, one officer unwittingly told the Chaplain, the Reverend Thomas Crick, of Their Lordships' decision just before it was promulgated. The Chaplain immediately sent out the appeal, working all night addressing envelopes and posting them in the early hours. After prayers next morning when his Captain sent for him to inform him of the Admiralty order, it was too late and donations were soon flooding in!

On 21 June 1934 the Church of Saint Barbara was dedicated by the first Lord Bishop of Portsmouth, Doctor Neville LOVETT. This building has been in constant use for both Sunday and weekday worship ever since. The church contains the Jellicoe Memorial, which is also the setting for the three beautifully illustrated Books of Remembrance containing the names of so many associated with HMS EXCELLENT who have died in action. The book which contains the details of those lost in the last war, is used every Sunday at the 1030 Family Communion Service when a page is solemnly turned and the whole congregation joins in the Naval Prayer and the Naval Hymn:



"O Trinity of love and power,  
Our brethren shield in danger's hour;  
From rock and tempest, fire and foe,  
Protect them whereso'er they go:

And ever let there rise to thee  
Glad hymns of praise from land and sea."

The dominating feature of the church is the large arch built during the transformation from ammunition room to place of worship. The high altar stands under the arch and on either side are the statues of Saint Nicholas (Patron Saint of Sailors) and Saint Barbara.

The relevance of Saint Barbara to Whale Island was not realised until a member of the 1904 Long Gunnery Course discovered that she was venerated as the Patron Saint of Artillerists. Barbara, a young Greek maiden living in the third century, embraced the Faith much to the disgust of her father, a heathen nobleman named Dioscorus. He ordered her to be imprisoned in the basement of a tower until she should give up her faith in Christ. Scope for communicating her belief was somewhat limited in this dark room with its two little windows far out of reach, but Barbara managed to get the stonemasons to make a third window as a visible symbol of the Holy Trinity. So incensed was Dioscorus that he handed her over to the authorities. After prolonged torture she refused to abandon her faith and orders were given for her father to execute her himself. No sooner had he carried out these instructions than he was struck by a thunderbolt and killed on the spot. It was the deadly speed and accuracy of this mortal blow that brought Barbara the oversight of artillery and later of gunnery!

Saint Barbara's is always open to visitors. At present there is an exhibition in the church showing the work of the Church in the Navy, which demonstrates how fully the Christian Church is involved in the Royal Navy and Royal Marines. The 150th Anniversary of the Island is being marked by a new altar and also a large crucifix which is being fixed to the outside of the building on the Quarterdeck for Saint Barbara's Day.

## FRASER GUNNERY RANGE

During the First World War a range was established at Eastney in the south-east corner of Portsea Island for testing light anti-aircraft guns. This became known as Eastney AA Range and was administered by HMS EXCELLENT. As AA guns developed the range was used for testing many different types of guns.

In 1935 the Admiralty authorised the establishment of a firing range for gunnery training and the AA range was enlarged by the purchase of more land in the area of Fort Cumberland. The name was changed in 1939 to Fraser Battery after Admiral Fraser, the Controller of the Navy at the time and a distinguished Gunnery Officer, who was directly instrumental in establishing the new range.

Fraser Battery formed part of the anti-aircraft defences of Portsmouth in the Second World War and its guns were several times in action against enemy aircraft, shooting down at least one raider.

In 1948 a long range AA firing range was developed and the Battery was renamed Fraser Gunnery Range. Until 1976 Fraser Gunnery Range remained part of the Gunnery School, administered by HMS EXCELLENT, but in that year gunnery and missile training was transferred to the School of Maritime Operations in HMS DRYAD.

On 26 April 1977 the administration of Fraser Gunnery Range was formally taken over by HMS DRYAD, and so after more than 60 years the association of the range with HMS EXCELLENT came to an end.

Today, firing still takes place at Fraser Gunnery Range - as the residents of South Hayling well know - and general gunnery and missile training is still carried out there, though on a reduced scale.

## THE FOYLEBANK ACTION

The first ship of the Bank Line to be called FOYLEBANK was built by Harland and Wolff at Belfast and completed in 1930. This vessel had two eight-cylinder single-acting four-stroke engines, developing 4300 hp. It was because she was capable of a greater speed than 14 knots that she was taken over by the Admiralty at the beginning of the Second World War.

She returned to her builders' yard in 1939 to be converted from a general cargo merchant vessel to an AA Defence ship for the Royal Navy and sailed from Belfast to Portland in June 1940. In addition to reinforcing the AA defences of Portland Harbour, FOYLEBANK, which was fitted with an early type of radar, was also responsible for keeping track of German reconnaissance and minelaying aircraft.

On the morning of 3 July a German aircraft made a reconnaissance flight and took photographs of FOYLEBANK as she lay in the harbour. One of these photographs was found in a German war museum after the war and has since been transferred to the Imperial War Museum in London.

At 0840 on the following morning no less than 26 JU 87 dive bombers attacked the ship out of a cloudless sky in formations of three and five aircraft. For the next ten minutes FOYLEBANK fought back gallantly but with all electrical power disrupted and her guns being fired by hand after 22 direct hits, she was fighting a losing battle. With rapidly mounting casualties the crew strove to save the ship despite every handicap.

The cost of the action was grievously high; of the ship's company of 15 officers and 285 ratings, 176 were killed and only 40 of the remaining 124 were not injured. The ship herself suffered great damage and soon sank.

Among the ratings who commissioned FOYLEBANK in June 1940, many of whom were DEMS seamen, was a 22 year old Leading Seaman, Jack Mantle. He had joined the Royal

Navy as a Boy in 1933 and had already seen much service at sea when the war began. He had carried out gunnery courses in HMS EXCELLENT in 1937 and early in 1940 and was in charge of the starboard pom-pom when the ship was attacked.

Early in the action his left leg was shattered by a bomb but he stood fast at his gun and continued to fire by hand when the electrical power failed. Almost at once he was wounded again in many places, but his great courage bore him up until the end when he fell by the gun which he had so bravely served.

For his valour in this action Leading Seaman Jack Mantle was posthumously awarded the Victoria Cross.

FOYLEBANK was later salvaged in two sections, the forward of which was broken up at Falmouth in 1947 and the stern section at Grays, Essex, in 1952.



## HMS EXCELLENT's TANK

During the 1914-18 war HMS EXCELLENT was invited to train Army gunners for the newly-formed Tank Corps because the problems of loading and aiming the 6 pdr guns of a tank were similar to those which had to be solved in a war-ship. Nearly 2,000 Army officers and men were trained at Whale Island and many became instructors at the Tank Gunnery Camp at Lulworth. To commemorate HMS EXCELLENT's assistance, the War Office presented a Mark IV Male Tank (No 102) to the establishment in 1919. For 15 years the tank stood near the footbridge guardroom, where the model of HMS QUEEN CHARLOTTE now stands, and then occupied for a short time two other sites before being moved to the top of the bank overlooking the Parade Ground, where many people will remember it.

In 1940 No 102 began a second lease of life when it was reconditioned by a small party of soldiers who were stationed in HMS EXCELLENT after the Dunkirk evacuation. Under the command of Lieutenant Menhinick RASC they worked day and night to get the monster back into fighting fitness, using spare parts from wherever they could get them, including another old Mark IV tank on Southsea Common. Very soon, with EXCELLENT painted on its 'bows' and proudly wearing a White Ensign, the tank was to be seen lumbering through the streets of Portsmouth to help boost the morale of the citizens during the blitz and to reinforce the defences of the city against the threatened invasion. EXCELLENT's 'ironclad' and its crew had many adventures. Once it carried away the top of a car and compensation for the damage was paid from the Gunnery Improvement Fund and a contribution from the Lord Mayor. On another occasion the tank was parked in the car park of a pub in Copnor Road and to the surprise of the barmaid the crew rushed in and asked for 40 gallons of water and 8 pints of beer!

In 1945 No 102 was demobilised and returned to its position on the bank, from which it dominated the Parade Ground for the next 26 years until in

November 1971 18 Command Workshop REME took it away to restore it once more to its original state. By the Autumn of 1974 the tank was once again in running order, complete with two new 6 pdr guns, and on 29 May 1975 the Captain of HMS EXCELLENT officially handed it over to the Commandant of the Royal Armoured Corps Centre at Bovington to take its place in the RAC Tank Museum as the oldest working tank in the world. Thus ended after 56 years the link between the two 'landships' - HMS EXCELLENT and Tank No 102.

## THE ROYAL NAVY DISPLAY TEAM

The Royal Navy Display Team was first formed in 1972 and moved to HMS EXCELLENT in 1977. It consists of 60 junior ratings who join the team in March each year for two months' training prior to giving displays from May to November. The ratings are drawn from all branches of the Royal Navy and are not Physical Training Instructors.

The aim of the team is to show the Royal Navy in places that it does not generally visit, and by displays of skill and daring show the public the calibre of the young men of to-day's Fleet.

To this end the team visits Tattoos, Country Shows and resorts all over the United Kingdom, and although its primary task lies in the British Isles, it has also visited foreign countries.

This team's principal display is the well known and spectacular 'window ladder' display in which the men perform over 200 co-ordinated movements to music forty feet above the ground, without any word of command being given. A 'mast manning' display has now been added, where an 85 foot mast is erected in the arena demonstrating classic seamanship, and then manned in the traditional Naval style, with a 'button boy' standing on the very top.

Miscellaneous displays include 'Cutlass Swinging', 'Nelsonian Gun Drill' and the Hornpipe Dance.

On appropriate occasions the team parades a Ceremonial Guard, carrying the White Ensign.

### WINDOW LADDER DISPLAY - HISTORY

The Window Ladder Display is derived from the Swedish system of physical training which requires a high standard of respiratory fitness, abdominal strength,

co-ordination and courage. The Display commences with the rigging of three tons of equipment and this in itself is a striking example of seamanship, the art of keeping heavy and awkward weights in check by skilful use of ropes and tackles. The climbers in their contrasting uniforms then enter the frame by means of ropes before commencing a routine of over two hundred separate movements forty feet above the ground, during which no further orders are given.

### MAST MANNING

Mast manning is a traditional Navy display, dating from the days of sail, when the yards were manned as a salute to people of importance. When sails passed from the Navy, mast manning was retained as a display in the training establishments to develop courage, self-reliance and teamwork amongst the young recruits.

The most famous mast of all was in HMS GANGES at Shotley. Many hundreds of currently serving sailors have been up that mast, and when HMS GANGES closed the mast was designated a National Monument. It stands 172 feet high.

The position of 'button boy' at the very top was a keenly sought honour, and traditionally he received a silver shilling upon dismounting.

The mast in use here is 83 feet high and is manned by thirty-two members of the Royal Navy Display Team.



## HISTORY OF PHOENIX NBCD SCHOOL

As a result of the problems experienced during action damage and the high number of losses of RN ships during World War II, the Admiralty set up a Damage Control School at Barons Court, London, in 1942. In 1946 it was moved to its present site, then known as Stamshaw Camp, and was combined with the Anti-Gas School and the Fire-fighting School. With the new requirement for Atomic Defence the present establishment was born, and commissioned as HMS PHOENIX on 1 September 1949.

The School carries out its present task under the title Phoenix Nuclear Biological Chemical Defence, Damage Control and Firefighting School, a title that has changed since 1949 as re-organisation has taken place within the Command. Now part of HMS EXCELLENT, the present title brings back into use one of the oldest ship's names in the Royal Navy, fulfilling its motto "Resurgam" - "I rise again".

Approximately 10,000 officers and ratings are instructed per year at Phoenix on courses ranging from firefighting to first aid.

## TATTOO

The Phoenix contribution to the Tattoo will be a demonstration of the part played by the Armed Services and Phoenix in particular during the 1977 firemen's strike (Operation BURBERRY). Using a 'Green Goddess' fire appliance, the crews of which were trained at Phoenix, a team will put out a fire in a building (The House that Jack Built) and rescue those trapped inside. We hope to have a police motor cyclist preceding the fire tender, since it was he who provided the crews with local knowledge and led them to the fire by the quickest route.

## THE ROYAL NAVAL REGULATING SCHOOL

The Regulating Branch of the Royal Navy, which has as its main responsibility the maintenance of discipline, became associated with HMS EXCELLENT in 1949 when the Royal Naval Regulating School after many moves finally settled in HMS EXCELLENT. The period which followed enabled the School to consolidate itself and HMS EXCELLENT became the 'Alma Mater' of the Regulating Branch.

By 1974 the old School buildings had well outlived their usefulness. The merger of the Coxswains in the Regulating Branch resulted in Regulating ratings being drafted into frigates as well as the larger ships. Administration quickly became more complex and the need for accuracy absolute. The legal disciplinary changes, formation of Drugs Squads and Special Investigation teams strained to breaking point the facilities available in the narrow buildings in the North West corner of Whale Island.

A temporary move into De Jersey Building was made in October 1974, and plans were approved for the Armourers' School to be converted into a purpose built Regulating School. In January 1976 the present Regulating School Building was officially opened by Captain M C M Mansergh FBIM Royal Navy.

Facilities now exist to train members of the Branch, from the academic and practical point of view, in their duties ashore and afloat. The opening of this School is seen as a milestone in the long history of the Branch and reflects the importance attached to the maintenance of discipline, high personal standards and of those aspects of the Service which affect 'the Man and his Morale', so many of which the Regulating Branch are now directly responsible for.

The Royal Naval Regulating School is justifiably proud of its long association with HMS EXCELLENT, whose Captain is also Head of the Regulating Branch, and offers

its sincere congratulations on this 150th Anniversary.

The scenario attempts to take a light-hearted look at the development of the Regulating Branch over the centuries. From the time of the 'press gang' when helpless drunks were 'pressed' into service in the Fleet by the Master-at-Arms (happily no longer a recognised method of recruitment!) to the Regulating Branch of to-day, highly efficient, respected for its professionalism and its contribution to the welfare and discipline of the sailor. The Master-at-Arms, a title which evolved from the 17th century, is a senior rating of the Regulating Branch and is now much more beloved and respected than his infamous predecessor of the 'press gang' era. The Naval Provost Marshal, who is an officer of the Regulating Branch, can trace his origin back to the Provost Officer created by Charles I who decreed that 'The Provost' should have a horse to ride throughout the country to see that law and order was observed by all the soldiers so that the Service would not suffer. Similarly the Naval Provost Marshal of to-day whilst trading his horse for a more modern mode of transport must still travel throughout his port area to ensure that law and order are observed by all the sailors so that the Service shall not suffer. To assist him discharge his present day responsibilities he has Fleet Masters-at-Arms, Masters-at-Arms, Regulating Petty Officers, Leading Regulators and their female equivalents. Whilst the Naval Service is progressive and ever-changing there are no plans for our female Regulators to serve onboard seagoing ships, much to the regret of the seagoing sailor.

# WHALEY - THE STORY OF HMS EXCELLENT 1830-1980

By Captain John G WELLS CBE DSC Royal Navy

With a foreword by Admiral of the Fleet

Sir Varyl BEGG GCB DSO DSC

This book is about a ship, a mud bank which became an island and the building of a naval tradition. In 1830 the old three-decker HMS EXCELLENT was moored off Portsmouth Dockyard to become the first Gunnery School and firing ship of the Royal Navy.

Towards the end of the 19th Century the mud bank was developed as Whale Island on which the Gunnery School was constructed. For more than a hundred years it has played an important part in British Naval history.

But essentially this is the story of people who over the years have served the cause of naval gunnery and built its traditions. Their influence lay in the emergence of the gun as the principal naval weapon of its day in order to win battles at sea. Many of their achievements, and some of their failures, are recorded in the pages of this book.

Amongst the photographs is one of the recent funeral of the late Admiral of the Fleet Lord Mountbatten, and at the end of the book are the names of over 2,000 Officers who have qualified in the Long Gunnery Course or its equivalent since 1861.

As HMS EXCELLENT, now in its new role of General Training, celebrates the 150th anniversary of commissioning, the book will be of great interest to all naval gunnery men, particularly those who trained on Whale Island during and after the Second World War.

Copies of this book (Price £5.50) can be obtained at the Souvenir stand in the Drill Shed, or by writing to:

The Commander's Chief Writer, HMS EXCELLENT  
Whale Island Portsmouth PO2 8ER Hampshire



## THE ROYAL NAVY AND JOHN PLAYER AND SONS

In the minds of most people the link between the Royal Navy and the tobacco firm of John Player and Sons was an accepted fact for upwards of seven decades, but in truth, until 1956, there had never been any concrete association.

No doubt the supposed link was foreseen by two things - firstly, the use of the generic term "Navy Cut" from the first days of manufacture by John Player, a term which arises from the sailors' custom of slicing thin flakes of tobacco as required from a cord-bound, rum-soaked perique, prepared over many weeks to maturity.

Secondly, and by far the more likely factor, was the introduction of the famous sailor head trademark in 1885. In that year John Player chanced upon a canvas of a bearded sailor, painted by a man named Wright of Clapham many years before. It was being used by the small tobacco company of Parkins of Chester to advertise their "Jack's Glory" tobacco. Players bought and immediately registered the painting as a trademark adding the lifebelt in 1888 and the two ships "BRITANNIA" and "HERO" in 1891.

During these early years many variations of background and frame appeared, including one of a boy seaman in lieu of our bearded friend and one of the back of the sailor's head within the lifebelt.

In 1927, A D McCORMICK RA, was commissioned to produce the final version in use to-day, using "HERO" as the cap tally (the lack of HMS is an artist's error, irretrievable after registration) for use on packaging.

For advertising purposes "INVINCIBLE" was used up to 1916, when the name was dropped as likely to give offence to relatives of the dead of the cruiser of that name lost at the Battle of Jutland, and it was replaced by "EXCELLENT", equally splendid for the purpose.



In 1956, the John Player management for the first time forged an actual link with "The Service" by inviting a football team from the Gunnery School to play the firm on their Aspley Lane ground in Nottingham and since the November of that year football, cricket and ladies hockey teams have made annual visits to each other's grounds.

For many years Nottingham has proved to be a prime recruiting centre for the Royal Navy, with a long tradition of distinguished service. Although the association between John Player of Nottingham and the Royal Navy was for so long merely supposition, it is now established fact.

With the launch of the latest HMS NOTTINGHAM on 18 February last, the ties between the City, its industry and the Royal Navy can only be made stronger.

#### BUTSER ANCIENT FARM PROJECT TRUST

The Butser Ancient Farm Demonstration Area is situated twelve miles north of Portsmouth on the main Portsmouth-London Road within the Queen Elizabeth Country Park and is open to visitors daily from 2 pm-6 pm and Sunday from 10 am -6 pm. Entrance - Adults - 35p. - Children 25p.

Head Office  
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