'Schoolies': Teachers of the Royal Navy and Royal Marines 1700-1914 – Part I

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These writings were spawned from the desire to assemble a roll of officially named medals to schoolies, representing actions and campaigns from 1793-1914. In due course, the conflicting and confusing information often encountered about the evolution of the ranks/rates and roles of maritime teachers challenged me to create an accompanying historical overview. Due to the dearth of knowledge, serious gaps still exist in respect of the Royal Marines and Royal Marine Artillery.

At this point, it is convenient to mention the Indian Navy, Bombay Marine and Bengal Marine. Since only the barest threads have come to light concerning schoolies in these organisations, the assumption is they evolved along the same lines as their Royal Navy counterparts. In 1841 the rank of 'schoolmaster' was in existence in the Indian Navy, with a per diem on a par with a lieutenant (three rupees). At the time of the service's abolition in 1863, the monthly pay of a naval instructor was equal to that of a lieutenant commanding a vessel entitled to a commander (500 rupees). Seamen's schoolmasters were 1st class petty officers and received 33 rupees per month (Low, Vol. 2, pp 589-92).

On a grammatical note, I took exception to the poor grammar concerning one particular schoolie found in some references, on medal rolls and medals – the seamen's schoolmaster. This rating's responsibilities encompassed *several* individuals on board ship, but the title often encountered is 'seaman's schoolmaster'. In spite of temptation, where this objectionable form has appeared on rolls and medals, I have transcribed it without correction while constructing the medal roll which will be printed as Part II of this article.

Beginnings

Dating back to the beginning of the 18th century, schoolies are found in the abundant pages of British naval history. 'There are numerous instances of schoolmasters serving over periods of more than ten years, and no fewer than ten individuals served over periods exceeding twenty years' (Sullivan, p 312). One schoolie, John Everest, was before the mast in 12 ships from 17 April 1797 until 1 July 1823, and survived to receive the Naval General Service Medal 1793-1840 (NGS) with clasp 'CAMPERDOWN'.

Their Lordships did not introduce education out of benevolence, but to a specific end: on-the-job training for future naval officers, with the aim of improving the standard of navigation in the service. These future officers came in two forms – captain's servant and volunteer per order. The progression of these two ratings became complex, and will be dealt with here in only a limited manner.

A captain's servant was appointed by the captain and was often the son of a relation or friend. The rate was abolished in 1794 and replaced with three specific 'boy' ratings (Rodger, p 21):

Boy 1st class, called 'volunteers' (future officers)
Boy 2nd class (future seamen, aged 15-17)
Boy 3rd class (future seamen, aged 13-15, also acting as domestics)

A volunteer per order (also known as King's Letter Boy) was introduced by regulations of 1676 and existed until 1729, the aim being to obtain suitable candidates for 'the art and practice of navigation in order to the fitting them for further employment in our service' (Clowes, Vol. 2, p 235). He was armed with a letter from the king, which ordered a ship's commander to take the young man aboard and train in him in the same manner as a captain's servant. The

Royal Navy midshipman 1812 by Bryan Fosten (after Dighton)

volunteer per order was to be not older than 16 years of age and be paid an annual salary of £24.

From 1729 to 1816, he was rated a college volunteer (a graduate of the Royal Naval Academy/ College, dealt with further in these writings). To fit the volunteer per order and college volunteer into the system, the rate of ordinary midshipman existed. The latter was a supernumerary, paid as an able seaman and occupying the position of the same within a ship's hierarchy, however, his time counted toward the qualifying time for lieutenant.

Examinations were the tools used to weed unqualified individuals from the promotional garden of lieutenants. Over time, as educational institutions of the Royal Navy were founded and evolved, one's birth and influence were tempered with the requirement to pass an examination in order to gain promotion and thus point the way to higher command. Admittedly, however, the latter was attained through a combination of practical skill and patronage, rather than knowledge gleaned from the page. Still, 'book learning' formed a base upon which to build a future.

Though the first reference to a naval educator (dubbed an 'ingenious person') appeared in the Order-in-Council of Queen Anne (14 March 1702), the official title of 'schoolmaster' was not present in this order. A decade later, Admiralty warrants included the term 'schoolmaster' for the first time, but alas, applied no official designation. In fact, the schoolmaster was an inferior warrant officer without an official title, who received the pay of an ordinary midshipman. Since he was appointed by the captain, his professional and social status on board amounted to that of a petty officer without a uniform. Indeed,

Midshipmen under instruction from the Master at the end of the 18th century by N. Pocock (courtesy National Maritime Museum)

ships' captains would influence the overall provision of education for decades to come.

In terms of crossing palms with silver, Queen Anne's Order-in-Council did sweeten the pockets of would-be seagoing teachers by eventually offering a bounty of £20 per annum for service in ships of the first through sixth rates, in addition to an ordinary midshipman's pay. However, before any British captain could consider taking on a schoolmaster, that individual must have shown proof of qualification from the Corporation of Trinity House at Deptford, in addition to producing a certificate 'under the hands of Good Substantial People that he is of Sober Life and Conversation' (Sullivan, p 315).

The Trinity House certificate spoke of competency in navigation but did nothing to address the holder's ability to *teach*. Actual teacher training did not begin in the Royal Navy until well into the 19th century.

The schoolmaster cometh!

With the first edition of *Regulations and Instructions relating to His Majesty's Service at Sea* (1731), the schoolmaster was no longer just a vocational instructor for he now taught writing and arithmetic to the volunteers and other youths of the ship. This foreshadowed the creation of government-sponsored public education in the 19th century. Just how much benefit the schoolmaster would be to up-and-coming Jack Tars and Sea Soldiers was at the captain's discretion about how the schoolmaster's time should be used.

An unusual instance of a 'disguised' schoolmaster is provided by Kilgour Davison. His Naval General Service Medal with clasps 'MARTINIQUE' (Midshipman/ *Neptune*) and 'GUADALOUPE' (Acting Lieutenant/*Vimiera*), is known, named KILGOUR DAVISON, ACTG. LIEUT. RN. Davison was educated at Aberdeen University and entered the Navy in April 1803 as a schoolmaster in *Ethalion* (38), aged about 26 years. He participated in the capture of the Dutch West Indies islands of St Thomas and St Croix in December 1807 and served in *Ethalion* until December 1808. Message and Douglas-Morris both show Davison as a midshipman in *Neptune* for the 'MARTINIQUE' clasp. Although Douglas-Morris also has him as a midshipman in that ship on the 'GUADALOUPE' clasp roll, he incorrectly lists the ship as *Intrepid*.

Another example of a schoolmaster attaining his lieutenancy is illustrated by John McKerlie's NGS. He was a quarter gunner (petty officer) for the 'INDEFATIGABLE 20 APRIL 1796' clasp, then schoolmaster for 'INDEFATIGABLE 13 JAN. 1797' and,

finally, lieutenant in *Spartiate* at Trafalgar.

Although the schoolmaster enjoyed autonomy on board in terms of his course structure and teaching, the pay and status of the naval teacher did not, as previously noted, always attract the best of people. One long-serving naval officer recalled his teacher (Boteler, p 51):

> We youngsters had a schoolmaster, a clever seedy-looking creature, whose besetting sin was love of grog; with very little trouble it floored him and then, I don't like to record it, we used to grease his head and flour it.

Still, it would be nothing short of a crime to paint all schoolmasters as corrupt and idiotic. With pay equal to that of the lowest class of midshipmen, status of a petty officer and no career structure to point the way to higher rank, the whole presented a discouraging picture for even the most virtuous of individuals. The schoolmaster did not even possess a cabin on board so he often had to bunk with his students – hence the ease with which Boteler and his companions carried out their practical jokes.

Winds of (apparent) change

Since their appearance at the beginning of the 18th century, schoolmasters were not present in every ship, and the ones that had them were reliant on the abilities and morals of those individuals, so access to and quality of education was variable under the schoolmaster system.

Early on it was realised that a better approach was needed, and the Portsmouth Naval Academy opened in 1733, establishing the foundation of education, training and standards for young naval officers, and which the Admiralty hoped would eventually replace the schoolmaster system, though it never came close to doing this. The curriculum included navigation, geometry, arithmetic, English writing, French, drawing, fencing and (strangely) dancing. Practical learning was a key part of the routine, and 'students in their second year[s] worked twice a week in the dockyard, under the direction of the master attendant, master shipwright and boatswain' (Dickinson, 2007, p 34). The academy was originally intended for 40 students, but for many years had accommodation for only around 30. Its capacity was eventually increased and by 1803 it could take 56 students.

But why did the naval academy never replace the schoolmaster system? For one thing, many senior officers resisted surrendering to the Admiralty their very long and deeply-entrenched powers and influence regarding who would be taken to sea. However, the academy's failure to fulfil its primary goal was due to more than a desire to retain power and a casual sneer. There was a sincere belief that the skills of a sailor could only truly be learned at sea. In fact, prejudice against academy students (and later those from the college) was so strong that some captains did not promote them to midshipmen, or even refused them altogether.

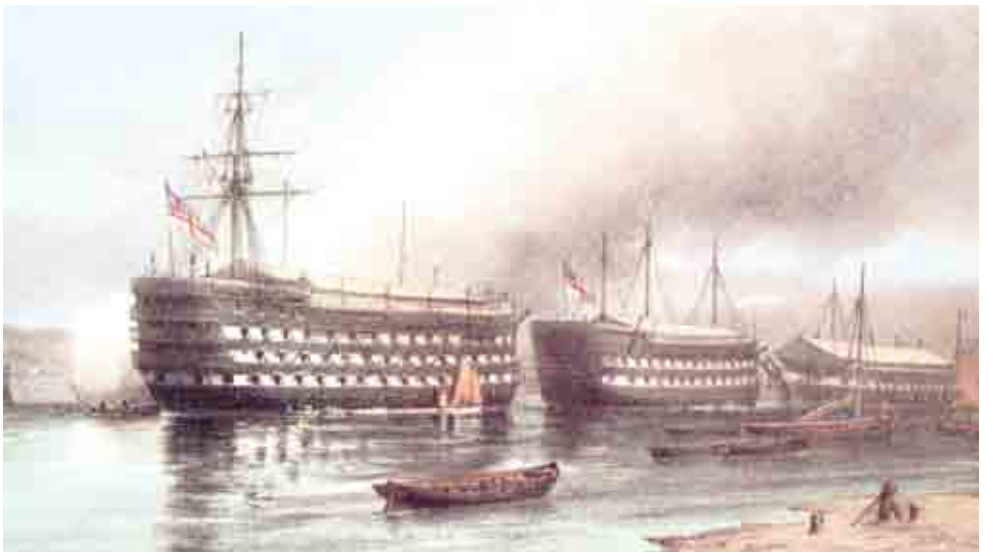
Despite ardent support for a seagoing education, the Admiralty continued to promote teaching ashore. In 1806 it was decided that the academy would be enlarged and altered to accommodate 70 students and be renamed the Royal Naval College. When the work was finished, the institution reopened in February 1808.

New rules and a new player

By 1806, after many decades of no change in the schoolie's official duties or conditions of service and pay, the *Regulations and Instructions of 1806* rewrote the schoolmaster's role, adding more responsibility in the process:

1. The Admiralty now had complete control over appointments.
2. Students were 'young gentlemen who may be put in his care', thus virtually discarding all other youths on board, except those who (with the captain's permission) were found to be qualified to receive instruction.
3. Teaching was confined only to the branches of mathematics needed for instruction in navigation.
4. The conduct and morals of the young gentlemen were an added responsibility, although this was in a disciplinary sense and not intended to intrude on the duties of the chaplain.
5. In a move that began to meld the schoolmaster into the navy's combatant role, he was now tasked with assisting any required astronomical observations and calculations (as long as it did not interfere with regular instruction time).

Despite improvements in the schoolmaster's pay, though not his social status, the influx of qualified applicants in the first four decades of the 19th century can be equated to the flow of molasses in wintertime. In 1812 their Lordships, approaching the problem from a different angle, authorised naval chaplains who passed the exam to do double-duty as schoolmasters. Those who took up both offices were entitled to the yearly £20 payment of Queen Anne's Bounty, plus an annual £5 from every midshipman and first class volunteer under their tutelage. Still without sufficient



***Excellent*, *Calcutta* and *Vernon* in Fountain Lake, between Portsmouth Dockyard and Whale Island. Theory and practice of gunnery were taught aboard the two hulks, while *Vernon* was a torpedo school (courtesy Society of Nautical Research)**

candidates forthcoming, an Order in Council in 1816 (ADM 1/5228) finally boosted the schoolmaster's pay from being the same as received by the lowest midshipman to a clerk's pay.

But the Admiralty's plan to have naval chaplains double as schoolmasters also fell foul of the recruitment peril, as there were not enough chaplains for shrunken post-Napoleonic War requirements. Finally, this seemingly convenient arrangement spawned problems regarding the chaplains' lack of specific training. On the face of it, recruiting double-duty chaplains *seemed* fine, since all were university trained, but some had never seen a chart, lacked the experience of taking 'sights' with a sextant, or simply did not know how to teach.

The increased difficulty of the lieutenants' exam for promotion before the Order in Council of 1816 meant that there was an even greater need for schoolmasters. Three years later, the schoolmasters' exam was transferred from Trinity House to the Royal Naval College, so suddenly schoolmasters were expected to become well-versed in the classics under a professor. The result was better quality men, but a meagre number of university graduates.

The Admiralty took further action by recommending that double-duty chaplains receive pay for both offices, and in 1819 Queen Anne's Bounty was increased to £30. Thirteen years later, the schoolmaster was also authorised to receive £5 a year from not only the midshipmen and first class volunteers, but all other quarterdeck petty officers under his instruction. However, all the additional academic training and monetary inducements were to no avail, and the numbers told a disappointing tale. Only three schoolmasters were appointed to the fleet in 1832, one in 1833, and in the years leading up to 1837, the number never climbed above eight (Admiralty Circular 288, 23 February 1857; ADM 7/890). The reforms had not gone far enough, but in spite of the disappointing situation thus far, the long-suffering naval educator would receive his due.

Bringing in the new

Justice was finally ushered on to the schoolmaster's stage in the form of the Order in Council of 22 December 1836, when the full warrant rank of naval instructor and schoolmaster made its debut (Clowes, Vol. 6, p 210). Now a wardroom warrant officer, he was given a uniform (unless in Holy Orders) and once again assumed the responsibility for 'other youths of the ship'. Finally, the pay for *all*, regardless of a ship's rating, was put on a par with a schoolmaster in a first rate warship.

Two years later the new warrant officer appeared in the *Navy List* for the first time. Age restrictions accompanied the schoolie's enhanced profile: 'No person will be considered eligible for a Warrant as Naval Instructor who is under 20 years of age or more than 35' (*Navy List*, December 1843).

The Admiralty sought candidates who were highly-qualified, university-trained teachers, but before a candidate was received for a warrant appointment aboard the *Excellent* at Portsmouth (the gunnery training school, permanently established in

1832), he was required to produce a certificate of age and testimonials of good character. In addition, both laymen and clergymen had to pass qualifying and final exams, the latter including the application of the theory of projectiles to gunnery.

Among all the changes, their Lordships made no attempt to absorb the old schoolmasters into the developing permanent career structure. Consequently, for a time, the old type of schoolmasters continued to serve under Queen Anne's Bounty scheme of 1702, alongside their higher status brethren. The enlarged title and role of the new naval instructor and schoolmaster would survive only a handful of years, as there was a further delineation of the title:

> Admiralty 10th Sept., 1842
>
> Naval Instructors and Schoolmasters are hereafter to be designated "Naval Instructors" and Chaplains on being appointed to act as Naval Instructors are to be designated "Chaplains and Naval Instructors."
>
> No person will be considered eligible for a Warrant as Naval Instructor who is under 20 years of age or more than 35.

The latter regulation was at times relaxed, as in the case of Robert Mills Inskip, who entered the navy as a naval instructor in December 1836, 'although over the prescribed age' and was appointed a chaplain in June 1853 (and afterwards received the Baltic Medal 1854-55).

The professional and social rise of the schoolmaster came at a time of falling enrolment at the Royal Naval College and this, along with government economies, led to the college closing in April 1837.

Meanwhile, the navy's technological transformation was well under way; sail began giving way to steam (by 1840, over 70 steamships appeared on the *Navy List*), closely followed by wood to iron, and shot to shell the following decade. The return to the schoolmaster system meant the navy's chance to enlighten its young officers during a time of tremendous change was frittered away.

The Admiralty's decision to hold class only at sea for training young gentlemen (a philosophy surviving into the late 1850s), was the subject of a lively debate in the House of Lords on 12 February 1839. The exchange was between the Earl of Hardwicke and Earl of Minto: the former hammered at the government's policy of shipboard education, while the latter pointed out the deficiencies of shore-based learning once youths joined the fleet. Extolling the virtues of the Royal Naval College, the Earl of Hardwicke (a former student of the institution) pointed out 'that youths between the tender age of twelve and fifteen were educated on shore, almost under the parental eye . . . and they could not go outside the gates of the college without seeing something instructive to them for their profession'. By contrast, the earl continued, the 'changes of situation the making and shortening of sail . . . the visiting of new ports . . . all would distract attention from study' (Hansard's Parliamentary Debates). Finally, the earl could not resist noting that in the two years since the college's closure, a mere six gentlemen entered the navy as schoolmasters (two of whom, Alfred W. Lane and Michael T.S. Raimbach, went on to earn the China Medal 1840-42).

Jack Tars and Leathernecks not forgotten

Fortunately, sailors and marines were not forgotten. In 1837 the Admiralty extended basic education to all petty officers, seamen, marines and boys by authorising the 1st class petty officer rate of seamen's schoolmaster in every ship of the navy (Admiralty Memorandum, 15 May 1837). Competency was required in teaching 'Reading, Writing, and Arithmetic, viz., the first four rules, the 'Rule of Three', Vulgar and Decimal Fractions, Logarithmic Arithmetic, Plane Trigonometry, and to keep a ship's reckoning at sea'. The age range was a bit wider than that allotted for a naval instructor – not younger than 21 or older than 40.

Although one seamen's schoolmaster was designated for every vessel, there was the usual disparity between what was authorised and what materialised in the fleet. All ships having schools did at least receive an allowance for books, slates, and the like.

Ships' captains selected seamen's schoolmasters and the above memorandum directed that 'vacancies occurring on board may be filled from the ship's company, if a person properly qualified be found on board, if not one may be taken from another ship'. Notably, even though proposed seamen's schoolmasters were supposed to be examined and certified by a naval instructor or 'some other competent person', they were *not* trained teachers, as no doubt their pupils were at times keenly aware. Initially there were no specific efforts to attract men for this rating.

The character of the schoolmaster employed was of particular importance to a school's success, along with the level of interest shown by the captain and his first lieutenant, but as noted by Barnard on p 535:

> . . . [the] situation is too often filled by an old

> quartermaster, or sergeant of marines, who obtains the berth as kind of a retirement, or by some person who has a fancy for sea life, but who is fit for nothing on shore, much less for teaching under the difficulties of a ship at sea.

Eventually the seamen's schoolmaster would in effect become an assistant to the naval instructor, and the former was elevated to a chief petty officer in 1853 (Admiralty Circular No 121, 14 June 1853). But major reforms of this rating were slow in coming, and it was not until the late 1860s that entrants were placed on a professional footing. While all boys were required to be instructed by the seamen's schoolmaster, education for petty officers, sailors and marines was strictly voluntary. It was up to ships' commanders to allow men and boys to attend school, 'consistently with the proper discharge of the duties of the ship'.

Obverse of the NGS, clasp '1 JUNE 1794', to Lt Lawrence Gwynne, RN (courtesy Sim Comfort)

Medallic anomalies and curiosities

Not surprisingly, the subject of schoolie titles on medals is a murky one, requiring clarification with the aid of the medal rolls.

The inscription 'NAVAL INSTRUCTOR' appears on the retrospective NGS. However, as far as is known, if a recipient was a chaplain *and* naval instructor, only 'CHAPLAIN' graces the medal's edge (such as in the cases of the Syria awards to the Rev Jenkins and the Rev Wilson).

Since the old title of schoolmaster coexisted with the new warrant ranks, this evidently caused confusion when naming the NGS. The location of what appears to be a partially remaining impressed full stop on the 1 June 1794 award to Gwynne implies 'SCHOOLMASTER' may have featured on the edge before renaming. In the cases of Schoolmasters William Hamilton (Algiers) and Edward Mallard (Navarino), the title is absent from the naming.

Edge naming of Lt Gwynne's NGS (courtesy Sim Comfort)

Conversely, Naval Instructor Joseph L. Hodgson (Syria) does not have his rank on the medal, but Edgar B. Barnes's Syria award features it spelled out in full. Why? It is probable that the schoolie's attainment of full warrant status in 1836, then becoming 'naval instructor and schoolmaster', and then 'naval instructor'/ 'chaplain and naval instructor' in 1842, caused a bit of confusion when the medal was issued at the end of the decade. The retention of some men at the old schoolmaster rate only added to the problem. After all, during the Syrian operations in 1840, Hodgson and Barnes were both officially titled 'naval instructor and schoolmaster', but when Barnes's medal was named up, the Mint worker must have referenced a list that simply stated


The
ELEMENTS
belonging to
Lieutenant Lawrence Gwynne R.N.
Royal
Christ's Hospital
Charles Boddam Stockdale

Title page of Lt Lawrence Gwynne's copy of *The Elements of Navigation* (courtesy Sim Comfort)

'naval instructor'. Or was the longer title viewed as redundant, and shortened for ease of placement on the medal's edge? We shall probably never know. Somewhat furthering the confusion is the fact that occasionally one finds the inexplicable absence of officer ranks on the NGS.

NGS for Syria to Naval Instructor Joseph L. Hodgson, RN

According to O'Byrne, schoolie Thomas Eastman entered the service as a naval instructor on 22 December 1836, the very day the title of 'naval instructor and schoolmaster' officially came into existence. Evidently, the old title of schoolmaster found its way by his name on the Syria roll, so he was deprived of having his rank impressed on the medal.

It was during the same period when these campaign awards were issued that the seamen's schoolmaster first saw his rating appear on medals: one was a Long Service & Good Conduct (LS&GC) 'anchor' type, the other a wide suspender type (dated 1848). In fact, it was the silver debut of the grammatically dysfunctional 'seaman's schoolmaster', which remained as such for some three decades of this title's existence (with one exception, which will be dealt with later). The two schoolie ratings entitled to the China Medal 1840-42 cannot be given consideration here, since higher powers determined that only the petty officer rank would appear on this medal, not the rating.

The existence of a *silver* issue St Jean D'Acre Medal 1840, privately engraved to the *Rodney*'s seamen's schoolmaster, begs some theorising. As a petty officer 1st class, he should have received a copper award, but one wonders if a silver medal was issued due to an understandable error. Considering that the short-lived title of 'naval instructor and schoolmaster'– carrying with it full warrant status – was introduced just four years earlier, and the *rating* of seamen's schoolmaster followed a mere five months afterwards, confusion once again reigned for schoolies and their medals. Curiously, on the recipient's part, the final two characters of the naming, R.F.E. MORISON. R.N. (*Morrison* on roll), hint at a higher rank, so perhaps Morison harboured loftier notions about himself. And with a ring attached to a watch fob and straight silver bar suspension, ribbon buckle and pin brooch, his award certainly takes on the air of an officer's medal.

The '350 Rule'

Alhough a seamen's schoolmaster was authorised in every ship, as a *general rule* I found that schoolies of any type occupied berths only on vessels carrying a complement of 350 or more. However, the *Pique* (36) and *Talbot* (26), which were present off Syria in 1840, both carried far fewer than 350 officers and men, but each had a naval instructor.

Likewise, it is worth noting that at Navarino many years previously, the *Talbot* carried *Acting* Schoolmaster John Dellamore. During the same time period, Acting Schoolmaster H.J. Strutt was serving

aboard the frigate *Boadicea* in the First Burma War (Army of India 1799-1826, with clasp 'AVA'), though his vessel had only 284 on board. In these cases, the complements permitted only 'acting' schoolies.

The '350 Rule' was in force in respect of the four ships selected to receive officially impressed Crimea Medals 1854-56: *London* (743 men), *Rodney* (851), *Niger* (187) and *Wasp* (180), the last two not having any seagoing teachers (or chaplains) on board. *Rodney* carried *three* chaplains, but as far as can be ascertained, none of these gentlemen qualified as naval instructors.

Captain Douglas-Morris's research strongly suggests the Admiralty contracted with Hunt & Roskell officially to engrave the medals to *Albion*, and he further wrote: 'The scarcity of these officially engraved medals to the personnel of *Albion* [800 officers and men] suggests that only a few of the medals delivered to that ship were actually 'named'' (Douglas-Morris, 1987, p 332). Several medals to this ship sighted over the years all seem to have their naming details in the same order and engraved in large serifed capitals: first name, last name, rate/rank, H.M.S. ALBION. The *Albion* carried a naval instructor and seamen's schoolmaster.

More elusive are the men who floated in and out of a schoolie rating during their careers, thus their teaching duties are not evident from their medallic awards. A good example is the wide suspender LS&GC to William Ellis, Ship's Steward, *Edinburgh*, 21 years. (DNW, Jack Deacon Collection, 27 June 2002). Having joined the navy as an able seaman aboard the transport *Belleisle* in May 1839, Ellis participated in the Opium War in the same ship (his China Medal is not known). Serving in several ships between 1841 and 1853, Ellis was variously employed as a sick berth attendant, seamen's schoolmaster and purser's steward. His last rating in the latter year was ship's steward (*Poictiers*), finally being discharged to shore in November 1869.

Others, like James May, rose from a humble boy 2nd class in 1868 to become a warranted head schoolmaster with more than 36 years of service, earning the Egypt and Sudan 1882-89, Naval LS&GC and Khedive's Star along the way.

Sea-soldiers onshore

Returning to warmer climes, each Royal Marines division (Chatham, Plymouth, Portsmouth and Woolwich) had schools attended by marines and their children. The schoolmaster in the Royal Marines existed from at least the 1840s, being a senior NCO (sergeant schoolmaster) who taught in the barracks, rather than on board ship.

In 1889, RN schoolie ratings appointed as RM schoolmasters were allowed to count their naval service for RM pay, promotion, pension, etc. And at least some naval schoolies did ply their trade in the Royal Marines, as evidenced by naval schoolmaster George Stainer's appointment to the marines' depot at Walmer in the early 1890s. Stainer's narrow suspender LS&GC (Type E/1875-77) is known to exist. The RMA possessed the rank of schoolmaster, and its school at Portsmouth eventually moved to the new Eastney barracks, completed in 1867. The RMA also featured the ranks of superintending schoolmaster and sub-inspector of schools, but it is unclear when they came into existence.

By and large, a marine's participation in education was voluntary, although NCOs were required to attend school until passing a specified exam. However, the RMA made class attendance mandatory for those who could not read and write, at least until their capabilities reached satisfactory levels.

Putting the overall supervision of RM schools on an academic plane in 1856, the inspection of schools was placed in the hands of inspectors of the Board of Education. By the early 1860s, recommendations from the Council of Military Education called for specially trained and employed RM and RMA schoolmasters to be accompanied by better rank and pay. Going one step further, the commissioners recommended that trained mistresses act as assistants in the boys' schools and have full charge of the girls' schools – in the latter the skill of sewing was to be taught and practised daily.

Captain Douglas-Morris's RM wide suspender LS&GC roll (shore awards) for personnel recommended from RM port divisions is about 95 per cent complete, and not a single medal to a RM or RMA teacher is to be found in it. There appears to be an explanation for this. Sergeant Schoolmaster William Maxwell received his RM Meritorious Service Medal (dated 1848 type) in 1849, but 'Schoolmaster' does not accompany its edge details. If this was the usual practice, the presence of the educator cannot readily be seen on any marine MSMs or naval LS&GCs. Some, of course, may have become schoolmasters *after* receiving their LS&GC.

There is no indication of schoolmasters in four sample *Navy Lists* (1835, 1844, 1861 and 1879) among RM and RMA pay details, so the assumption is they were 'invisible' among the sergeants. This is borne out in the *Navy List* for 20 December 1880, which notes a gratuity of £20 to accompany the LS&GC Medal to marines' schoolmasters; this same amount applied to staff-sergeants and sergeants who

had served no fewer than 10 years. At the time, £20 was the highest monetary grant on the gratuity scale.

Additional confusion is caused by the Navy Estimates for educational services for 1900-01 which detail the annual regular pay (£52) and extra pay (£27) for one RMLI sergeant *to act as* schoolmaster on Ascension Island (an increase of £3 over 1899-1900). This small isolated volcanic island in the South Atlantic was garrisoned by the Royal Marines from 1815 until 1923 (Smith & Oakley, p 108).

During the late 1880s, the number of RM schoolmasters was reduced owing to abolition of compulsory school after leaving the depot. It is believed that future marines' schoolmasters who were qualified teachers were classed as warrant officers by around 1910-1911 (Curtis, p 298).

More training, more rank, more pay – more respect

The introduction of continuous service agreements in 1853 brought about standardisation for all new boy seamen entering the RN; a boy's 10-year agreement began at age 18. The year 1854 saw the appearance of the first stationary training ships for boy entrants. Before being sent to the fleet, boys were instructed and trained on board these harbour ships for a year, and a seamen's schoolmaster ran a school aboard each of these vessels.

This training concept was extended to would-be officers on the harbour ship *Britannia* in 1857. Senior Naval Instructor Inskip, who later held the title of Chief Naval Instructor, taught in *Britannia*; he added a civil CB to his Baltic Medal in 1869. The rank of junior naval instructor also existed in *Britannia*.

In 1861 naval instructors became commissioned officers, with better pay coming in 1864, and their ranks were divided by seniority. At some point, a chaplain and naval instructor also became the Inspector of Naval Schools. Even though the prevailing arrangement up to this time had been for chaplains also to act as schoolies, the rapidly advancing naval world was leaving clerics technologically further and further behind.

The above, plus the old complaint of a difficult learning and teaching environment aboard a ship in commission, led to the instructor branch nearly being abolished. As ever, the educator's role was a balancing act between academic requirements and the demands put upon youngsters by commanding officers of warships:

> A Naval Instructor, when appointed to one of Her Majesty's Ships, is to be careful to execute punctually and zealously all directions he may receive from the Captain or other superior Officer, relative to the education of the subordinate Officers, or others placed under his tuition.
> (*The Queen's Regulations and Admiralty Instructions*, 1861)

Naval Instructor John Knox Laughton (1830-1915) eventually became an eminent British naval historian and wrote that such a person must be someone of 'tact, skill and good humour'. His sea days ended in 1866, with Laughton having gained the Baltic Medal 1854-55 (*Royal George*) and China Medal 1856-60 with clasps 'FATSHAN', 'CANTON 1858' and 'TAKU FORTS 1858' (*Calcutta*), being MiD for the second pinnace at Fatshan Creek (*London Gazette*, 1 August 1857).

The title of 'seamen's schoolmaster' was replaced by 'naval schoolmaster' in 1862, but more importantly, professionalism was finally at hand due to a recommendation by the Council of Military Education, which called for specially trained and employed teachers.

During the 1860s, the Greenwich Hospital Schools began training naval schoolmasters. At this time, Greenwich was divided into the Nautical Division and Lower Division (Rodger, p 44), and contained the sons of warrant officers, petty officers and seamen of the RN and newly created Royal Naval Reserve, NCOs and privates of the RM, and other seafaring individuals. The following paragraph summarises the council's recommended progression of Greenwich training in a report to the Queen, which is believed to be close to the actual system employed (Barnard, pp 638-39).

Boys begin as pupil-teachers under naval schoolmasters in harbour training ships. At the end of three years, they are either sent to the Normal School for the navy (at Greenwich) or enter for continuous service as assistant schoolmasters (with rank, pay and pension of 1st class petty officers). After two years, the latter serve apprenticeships at the practising school at Greenwich for at least six months, during which time they concentrate on learning the art of teaching and study navigation, physical geography and natural history.

The RN schoolmasters were divided into three classes in 1867:

> **3rd Class**: Naval schoolmaster (CPO), with the same pay and pension. All future entrants were for continuous service.
>
> **2nd Class**: Head schoolmaster, ranked above a master-at-arms (CPO), this rating served only on

training, gunnery, and school ships, and later at the torpedo school, drawing the same pay as a naval schoolmaster, with an additional £20 a year (plus allowance for training pupil teachers). If appointed to harbour training ships, Normal School graduates could immediately be rated second class.

1st Class: Headmaster, believed to have been present only in shore-based naval schools, and ranked as a 3rd class warrant officer, with the same pay and pension. Apparently, after long and approved service, headmasters became eligible for further promotion through merit to second and first class warrant officers.

More medallic confusion

In spite of the title change of seamen's schoolmaster to naval schoolmaster in 1862, 'schoolmaster' appears on the roll for the sole schoolie entitled to the Abyssinia Medal 1867-68. The same applies for the roll entries of 'Actg. Schoolmaster' (*Pylades*) and 'Schoolmaster' (*Aurora*), when the Canada General Service 1866-70 was retrospectively approved in 1899.

In 1866, John Fowell was awarded a wide suspender LS&GC as a 'Seaman's Schoolmaster' in *Trafalgar* (with 20 years of adult service). It would *appear* the use of the old title on Fowell's medal was an anomaly, however his award is doubly confounding. The Order in Council dated 26 February 1867 states that naval schoolmasters were *not* entitled to good conduct pay or badges, yet several other examples of LS&GC Medals are known to have been issued well after this time.

As previously shown with Acting Schoolmasters Strutt and Dellamore ('Ava' and 'Navarino' respectively), the acting status for *Pylades*'s schoolie is explained by the fact that the 21-gun screw frigate carried only 274 officers and men, well below the '350 Rule'. The same is true for the Khedive's Sudan to Ernest Wilton, Third Writer and Acting Schoolmaster, *Melita*, as this vessel contained a mere 126 officers and men.

Since some official records used the titles 'naval schoolmaster' and 'schoolmaster' interchangeably, this evidently caused confusion when inscribing rates on the edges of medals. In addition, since naval schoolmasters were not present in all vessels, the Admiralty made a provision for these circumstances, and men were granted 'acting' status:

> In ships where no Naval Schoolmaster is borne, and where the number of Men and Boys to be instructed is not on an average less than ten, the person performing that duty is entitled to the Pay of the Rating, but not to the Annual Gratuity; or, if a Petty Officer, to £5 a year, in addition to the pay of his proper Rating, at his option; provided the Commanding Officer shall certify that he has performed the duty by his authority, and to his satisfaction, without neglecting any other duty appertaining to his Rating in the Ship.
> (*Navy List*, 1870)

Heading into port

From 1 July 1889, all RN schoolmasters were officially withdrawn from all but training ships for boys, other harbour ships and naval establishments, and their numbers were considerably reduced. Head schoolmasters selected for the new establishment received improved pay and pension, and warrant rank. They also became the successors to the chaplain and naval instructors on training ships (Orders in Council, 5 July 1889).

Naval schoolmasters remained CPOs, but were eligible for appointments as headmasters or marine schoolmasters. Those not selected for the new establishment in 1889, or subsequently advanced to the same, lost any opportunity of the improved pay or promotion.

Boys no longer acted as pupil-teachers on training ships and instead, assistants to schoolmasters were selected from first and second class petty officers (seaman gunners or seaman gunner torpedo men). By this date the Admiralty possibly felt that nearly all ratings had passed through training ships on entry into the navy, consequently there was no need for naval schoolmasters afloat. At the same time, advancement in the service still required experience *and* educational qualification.

Even though naval schoolmasters were officially withdrawn from all seagoing ships in 1889, it does not appear this was entirely the case, as the reader will see. In addition, their Lordships had not entirely closed the book on teaching at sea in respect of captains' discretionary powers. A pay allowance existed for a 'competent person' to perform teaching duties on vessels not authorised for a schoolie rate, provided the conditions were met under Article 1333: (1) the number of men and boys instructed must not average fewer than ten, (2) it must be performed by the authority and to the satisfaction of the captain, and (3) the person so tasked must not neglect other duties required by his rating. A record of the names and ratings of the individuals under instruction, and their days and hours of attendance, was required to be kept aboard ship (Queen's Regulations, 1879 and Orders in Council, 1888-92).

Boys being taught the box compass, 1902 (courtesy John Fabb)

A new century

British journalist and historian William Laird Clowes (1856-1905), who often wrote under the pseudonym Nauticus, unashamedly made known his views regarding the very existence of the naval instructor in the *New Review* (February 1894):

> Raise the age of admission to the Britannia to 18, and accept no boys of less than 16 1/2 years.
>
> Abolish the office of naval-instructor and direct his work to be done by sea-going officers of the executive branch. The increased age of the young gentlemen first going to sea would render the further supervision of their professional education a much less onerous business than it now is.

One might surmise that Clowes foreshadowed the end of the long and uneasy marriage of the chaplain and naval instructor, and the closure of the naval instructor branch in 1903 (Rodger, p 30), the same year sail training brigs went out of service. Rodger further refers to the branch's revival in 1915 with the assertion that this time naval instructors were a separate entity, distinct from men of the cloth.

Rodger's statements of the branch's demise and resurrection are confusing against official records: 'An executive officer will be detailed in every ship for supervising the instruction of the Midshipmen, whether a Naval Instructor is borne or not.' (*The Parliamentary Debates,* Fourth Series, Vol. 152, Appendix 1 (Personnel), 13 February-2 March 1906). Also *King's Regulations & Admiralty Instructions* of 1913 specifically list the naval instructor's general duties.

At this time, the *Regulations* also directed the chaplain to be an educational overseer, so religious men were hardly divorced from academics:

> Supervision of School. When school is held [the Chaplain] is to visit it daily and see that the Naval Schoolmaster, or the person acting in his place, is attentive to his duty and diligent in teaching the boys placed under him and those who may choose to seek instruction from him. He is frequently to examine the progress made by them in secular education, and, at the end of each quarter, he is to report the result in writing to the Captain; noting such as deserve commendation or otherwise. He is to examine the school register to see that it is kept in accordance with the provisions of Article 390, and initial it weekly.

Also 'When no Chaplain is borne, [the Naval Instructor] is to carry out the Chaplain's duty as regards ship's school and library'.

Even casualty records bear evidence contradicting Rodger: Chaplain and Naval Instructor the Rev George S. Kewney, *Queen Mary* (Jutland, 31 May 1916) and Chaplain and Naval Instructor the Rev. William Hall, *Venerable* (illness, 4 November 1916) (CWGC).

In spite of the somewhat intrusive clerics, the growth in schoolie commissioned and warrant

Teaching boys the rigging and sails, 1910 (courtesy John Fabb)

ranks in the early 20th century signalled increased professionalism and respectability for the once outcast shipboard civilians of so long ago.

After the general lieutenancies for warrant officers in 1903, the commissioned warrant rank of chief schoolmaster (sub-lieutenant) came into being the next year. Chief and head schoolmasters were appointed by the Admiralty on the recommendation of the Director of Naval Education. The maximum number of chief schoolmasters was fixed at three, warrant head schoolmasters were increased by ten, and there was a corresponding reduction in the number of naval schoolmaster ratings. It would be another 16 years (Rodger, p 8) before the ratings branch was abolished and entries were made directly to the warrant ranks.

Glancing into the future

In the autumn of 1914, Naval Schoolmaster Stanley Bertram Collins lost his life when the old cruiser *Hawke* was torpedoed in the North Sea. Collins was the first schoolie to be engulfed by the inferno that became the First World War. A total of 18 schoolie officers and ratings lost their lives during the war. At the conflict's end, another schoolie, Instructor Commander Guy V. Rayment, CBE, had found his way to naval intelligence posts in far-off lands, with the resulting decorations including the Japanese Order of the Sacred Treasure (3rd Class). Rayment went on to translate and publish the writings of an imperial Japanese Navy officer in 1936: *Why Japan Must Fight Britain*.

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