

R.N.S.S. CHATHAM

“Chathamites” and other Communicators’ who have passed through, and who still retain a lingering affection for Cookham, will be interested to know that the pangs of leaving our rural surroundings, and surrendering our proud independence are over.

In the tradition of Communicators who spend their Service careers encountering changing patterns and endeavouring to weave something better from the new, we have established ourselves once again as a cog of that mighty and complex machine, the Royal Naval Barracks, Chatham.

All the old barrack duties of the Signal School, and many new ones, seem to have descended upon the heads of the small contingent who at present constitute, what “Draftie” is pleased to call his “Pool” plus, of course, the current L./Sig. and L./Tel. courses.

The new era, or could a comparative old-timer be permitted to say: “The reversion to the old!” (harking back to pre-’42 days, of course) has proved to be not so bad after all. There are, naturally, many new pinpricks, but the honest ones amongst us also admit to compensations.

No doubt many COMMUNICATOR readers are wondering exactly where Chatham Signal School is now located? We might be considered as being in two parts. Our living quarters are in St. Mary’s Barracks, entrance off the Khyber Pass, just past

Collingwood Block. The S.S.R.O. and Divisional Office are also in St. Mary's and are haunted and presided over by our First Lieutenant, none other than Communication Lieut. Driver (is there any Chatham Communicator who does not know "Wally"?), energetic as ever, struggling valiantly to produce two hours' work "per man, per man hour" and still with the "weather eye" open for the "idle" dodger.

The Officer in Charge (Lieut. Comdr. Gray) and the First Lieutenant have between them (one pushing, t'other prodding) managed to conjure from the rather dilapidated huts which first met our gaze, tastefully decorated living quarters, painted in shades of pastel green, with a modern bathroom, television hut, and recreation hut, complete.

The arid waste surrounding the huts has been turned into attractive flower beds. Of course, self-help has been, and still is, the order of the day, with Lieut. Driver, C.Y.S. Smith in the S.S.R.O., and C.Y.S. Blackman as Chief Buffer of St. Mary's, ensuring that all available hands continue to help themselves, even when the mood is not upon them.

To reach the Signal School proper (Prince Arthur Camp), leave St. Mary's by the gate into the Khyber Pass, turn left, and walk for about three hundred yards to an enclosed compound, containing wooden huts which were originally occupied by the R.A.F. and latterly by the W.R.N.S. No Communicator will fail to locate "Prince Arthur" as he will recognise the trellis masts from Cookham long before he reaches the compound. Number 1 mast also from Cookham is in the process of erection and liable to be found towering above the camp any day now.

Entering the main gate and resolutely answering "Morse Typing Course" to C.Y.S. Rosenberg (Chief Buffer of P.A.) who will be keeping a vigilant watch on the entrance for "gash hands" the newcomer will observe that a new hedge of young privet bushes encircles the camp. Inside the barbed wire fence, flower beds and small lawns abound, many paths are made, and others are in the process of completion. Outside the D/F room window a site has been prepared for a "fish pond." "Who did all this? We did, of course." All organised by *the First Lieutenant* in his spare moments.

Time and space are too short to enumerate all the various offices in Prince Arthur, but we have retained our Morse and Copy Typing rooms, our Voice Trainer, two Practical Procedure rooms, Crypto room, C.R.R. Transmitter room, V.H./F. room, D./F. office and T./P. room. These are all in working order.

At the moment we have only two large and three small lecture rooms available for use, but there is room for more when we finally get rid of the Works Department.

Many illustrious Senior V/S ratings, still requiring a Copy Typing qualification for "Chief," may be seen poring over typewriters in a vain endeavour to persuade their "rheumaticy" fingers to keep time

with the music, and the baton wielded enthusiastically by C.Y.S. Young (Brigham).

Since V.I. discovered a stock of unused discs and decided to spend his spare moments on duty days recording the latest "jazz hits" from Radio Luxemburg, the Copy Typing room has increased in popularity, and a certain venerable C.C.O. who long ago decided that he was "too old to start now," has frequently been observed sneaking self-consciously from the C.T. room after a "jam" session.

The current L./Tels. course No. 16 started on 30th October, whilst No. 25 L./Sigs. course got under way on 6th November. Having now studied the results produced by No. 14 and 24 L./Tel. and L./Sigs. courses respectively, one can only reflect that it is not that the examinations are harder, nor are the candidates less intelligent, it is just that voluntary has become "unfashionable." The most valuable periods of a course, where much was learned, were always those evening hours, when with and without Instructor the course gathered together to "swot" and argue.

Do we provide too many distractions in the Rec. and T/V huts? Is it that despite the new pay scheme it just is not worth a little effort? It surely is not true that our future Leading Rates cannot be bothered to make any effort in their own time and expect to be passed through their examinations even if they do not attain the standard laid down in S.T.M.

Chatham still tries to keep their end of "Witex" going, despite the ever-recurring difficulty of finding a team, particularly in the evenings, and a power cut or two.

One feels that the experience provided by this type of exercise is invaluable.

The first batch of R.F.R.'s recalled to Service recently completed a two-week refresher, and the second batch are now engaged on a similar pursuit.

We now await the influx of R.F.R. V/S and Coder ratings for their annual one-week training, and expect to find some of these ratings with us each week until at least next March.

During the Christmas leave "quiet period" we look forward to renewing acquaintance with the long-haired O.D.'s of the Home Fleet during their between-cruise refresher courses.

In the world of sport the loss of S.S. classes, our present small numbers, and the machinations of "Draftie" combine to make the task of producing teams a constant headache for "Schoolie," who nevertheless contrives to conjure up the requisite number of players for our Wednesday fixtures, regardless of confusion caused to the Instructional programme. The only soccer win to the credit of Signal School, Chatham, so far this season was against R.A.F., West Malling, away, who succumbed to the tune of 3-0.

As last year's holders of the R.N.B. Knock-out Soccer Shield, it was a bitter blow to be knocked out selves in the first round this year, particularly as our victors, the C.P.O.'s team, numbered some Communicators among their players.

With the advent of the R.F.R's., some of whom profess themselves willing to "make one" if required, we hope our soccer results will now show a marked improvement.

So, looking forward to Christmas ourselves, our thoughts go out to our fellow-Communicators throughout the world, and we take our leave of them, until the next issue of the COMMUNICATOR, with the time-honoured and sincere wish of a "Happy Christmas and a Prosperous New Year."

COOKHAMITE'S LAMENT

We used to catch the early train
From Chatham to the "Smoke."
Now we join the milling hordes
From Depot, if not broke.

If we're blue with cold and rain
Has put our suits in soak,
We now retire, neath wind proof boards,
And give non-existent fires a poke.

We used to sing of "Cookham Fry,"
Of dripping trees and rain.
But now, it is with many a sigh
We wish we were back again.

For here, although we're all well housed,
And life appears much easier,
There's coughs and colds, and many a grouse,
That now our chests are wheezier.

For what with strikes and shortages,
(Of fuel—coke and coal),
Power cuts—those Nissen huts
Seem much "The Better 'Ole"???

ANON.

HEARD DURING THE L./TEL. "Q" PROCEDURE EXAM.
"Please, sir! In question 7, does A./T. mean alternatively?"

STOP PRESS

Vacancies for Ex-Communicators occur periodically at Garrison Point Signal Station, Sheerness. Details can be obtained from Officer in Charge, G.P.S.S.

ODD HAPPENINGS

The two Flag Lieutenants (both qualified Signal Officers) who had to rush up to Lascaris Signal Station to answer "Surprise." It was the same day that Lascaris closed down V/S watch before the first Summer Cruise. When they got there all they received was T Q INT. Never has so much talent run up those stairs so fast for so little . . .

* * * *

The signalman (who shall be nameless) who wanted to dip the ensign to another British man-of-war.