

# SMOPS

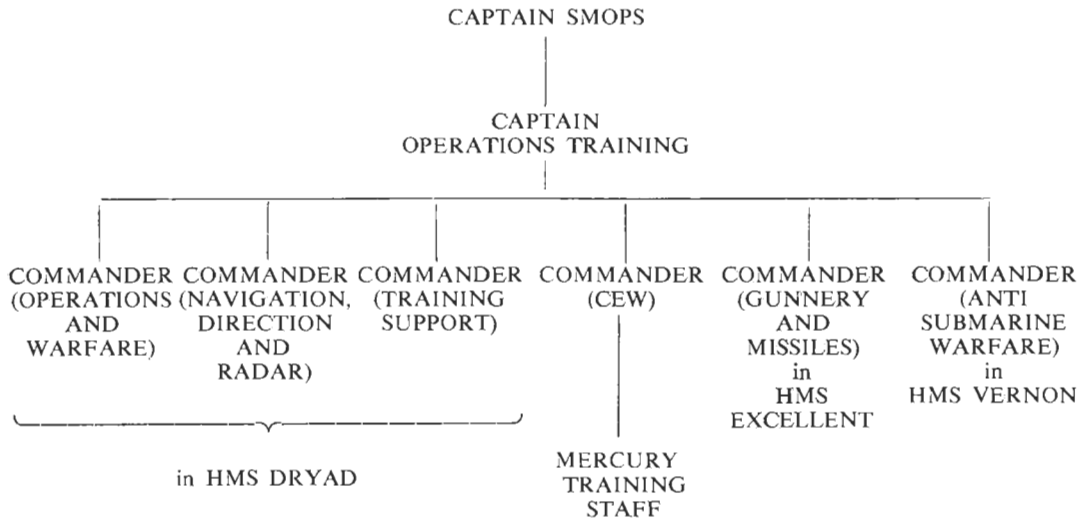
by Commander (CEW)

While the above is now my official title and while I have also been irreverently referred to as the Dean of the Communications and Electronic Warfare Faculty, I am still by habit referred to as the Training Commander within the Signal School.

On October 15, the School of Maritime Operations (SMOPS) was formed and Captain G. I. Pritchard not only took command of HMS *Dryad* but also assumed the duties of the Captain, SMOPS, and Captain A. R. Barnden became his deputy as Captain Operations Training.

So what is SMOPS all about? The skeleton is in DCI(RN) T612/74 and what follows is hoped to put some flesh on the bones of the DCI.

There have been great changes in the last few years in the way we fight our ships and the introduction of the PWO, the Operations Branch and now the SMOPS all follow from these changes. The vastly increased speed and complexity of modern warfare mean that the Captain no longer has time to send for the TAS Officer when a submarine is detected or for the Gunnery Officer when he wants to shoot down an aircraft; he wants an officer already on watch and 'in the picture' who can if necessary take instant action or give him all the immediate advice he needs to fight the ship, hence the PWO. The PWO has to conduct the full orchestra, all the sensors, all the weapons and all the communications, hence the Operations Branch. Similarly if we are to have one Operations Branch, it is logical that there should be one officer, the Captain SMOPS, who co-ordinates all the training of Seaman officers and the Operations Branch rather than the traditional four schools. *Mercury, Dryad, Excellent and Vernon.*



Ultimately it is planned that all Operations Branch training shall be concentrated in *Dryad* and *Mercury*, the latter continuing as the Signal School although all EW training, including the Seaman (EW) will be moved to *Dryad*.

Although the physical moves are still some years off, there was nothing to prevent organisational changes being made now and this is what has been done.

Thus I am now the Head of the Communications and EW Faculty of the SMOPS and responsible to the Captain SMOPS for all the training carried out in *Mercury*. Similarly the Training Commanders of the other schools are responsible to him for Operations Branch training as shown in the diagram.

The SMOPS is obviously still in the early stages of its life but there is already closer working between the four schools involved. So far most of the work has been concentrated on getting the organisation ticking and on officers' training, but I will not go into details.

Where does CSS fit into the picture, you may wonder? Although he no longer has formal responsibility for training in *Mercury*, he remains responsible for providing advice on the career structure and general well-being of officers sub-specialised in communications, that is to say the diminishing group of GL(C) officers, all SD(C) officers and the WRNS (Ce) officers; and of the Communications group of the Operations Branch. He also retains full responsibility for the training and conditions of service of the RO(S) Branch who do not, as you know, form part of the Operations Branch. He is also there whenever I may feel the need for advice or guidance on any Communications matter. He is of course still the Captain of HMS

*Mercury* with all that that entails.

You will notice that although I have referred throughout this short article to the Communications group of the Operations Branch I have not specifically mentioned the WRNS Communications ratings. Because it would be illogical and inefficient to split the responsibility for the training of the male and female of the species, the training of the WRNS Communicators is also a responsibility of Captain SMOPS.

So you can see that there have been no dramatic overnight changes and that any changes that may come along will be aimed at improved training efficiency in *Mercury* and therefore improved Fleet efficiency which is what the schools are there for.