

'The Royal Institute of What?'

Tales of the Unexpected

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The latest definition in the September 1993 issue of the *Journal*,¹ that 'Navigation is the purposeful control of motion', casts a very wide net and overlaps the subject of, amongst others, logistics. In the following, even soldiers' boots, joggle shackles, field guns crossing rivers and midshipmen's sextant sights come within its orbit.

In the 1950s, it was discovered by the Parliamentary Audit Committee that the Army was getting low in the stock of soldiers' boots. The requirement was put out for tender and the least expensive was accepted. The manufacturer then requested a sample boot, which was supplied. In due course, the supply neatly boxed was warehoused and, when the old stock ran out, it was then discovered that they had 93 000 left boots only, as per sample.

As related in Admiralty Fleet Orders, the skipper of a frigate wanting to use a joggle shackle (a piece of iron about a foot long which is probably used only 2–3 times in the life of a ship) found that there was none on board. Telling his First Lieutenant to order one, the latter naturally ordered three, to be on the safe side. The ship's store keeper, seeing in his ledger other smaller shackles in quantities of dozens, indented for ten. Rosyth Dockyard, feeling responsible for a dozen frigates and destroyers, upped the ante to 200 in its demand on Chatham Dockyard, who increased it again to Admiralty Bath. The latter, on behalf of all the Fleet's usage for the next ten years, plus the reduction in cost for large quantities, contracted for 20 000. A year later, the Midlands manufacturer sent them by train to Chatham, who chartered a 10 000-ton merchant ship to convey them to Rosyth. The Admiralty Fleet Order ended with a plea 'to be careful'.

There came a time after World War II, when the Managing Director of ICI persuaded the Army that they should adopt 'time and motion' study. Reluctantly, they agreed and, feeling they might put the boffins to shame, sent them down to the Gunnery School at Larkhill, to study the taking of a field gun to bits and racing it across a river – an exercise which had been honed to perfection by a century of drills. The civilian study team becoming aware of the challenge, decided to film the whole operational sequence so that they could time and study every member and action of the gun's crew.

A fortnight later, they returned to show the officers the film, and asked: 'Why is number 6 in the background, standing at ease throughout, while the rest of the gun's crew are sweating their guts out, hell for leather?' Weeks of research and thumbing old editions of the manual revealed no clue, until the Sergeant Major, as hall porter of the Officers' Mess, said: 'Sir, I hear you are having a little difficulty about number 6 in the field gun drill. He was the chap who held the horses in the Boer War'.

As an impecunious midshipman, my mother a World War I widow, I would do extra duty for the other mids at five bob a time. And, as a dab hand at navigational sextant sights, I would take and work out several extra sights to sell them for the monthly inspection by the Instructor Officer.

On the way out to China, approaching Colombo, George asked for a set of sights just before the monthly deadline but, having sold all my spares, I said: 'Not to worry, I'll work something out'. So, adding 60 miles to one of my Mediterranean Sun-Run-Suns,

I worked it out backwards and then forward – a splendid check on the calculations. We even cheated his rough observing notebook in case it was sent for, as it was.

Poor old Schoolie, knowing that George was weak on sights, spent nights on it and never did find out what was wrong with it because, unlike me, he had plotted it on the chart, slap in the middle of Malta.

So do we need to think again about Norman Dahl's definition of navigation? Is it intended to include logistics? And what about the 'purposefully controlled motion' of the boots when they are on the feet of a marching column of soldiers?

REFERENCES

- ¹ Dahl, N. (1993). The Royal Institute of What? This *Journal*, 46, 295.

KEY WORDS

1. General. 2. Logistics.

Record

Unpublished Short-Method Astro-Navigational Tables

A set of unpublished tables for ascertaining altitude and azimuth by inspection has been donated to the Institute's Library by Dr P. A. G. Monro. Dr Monro is the son of the author of the tables, the late Captain A. E. Monro RN. A number of explanatory and supporting documents are included in the donation.

The tables were completed in 1939 and represent a final stage in the development of short methods for the reduction of astro observations. They were not accepted by the Admiralty at the time because of the imminence of World War II and a decision to introduce inspection methods in the, then, near future. A feature of the tables was that both altitude and azimuth could be ascertained from a single opening.

The Institute's Library has recently been refurbished and is available to all members.