

REPORT BY H.M. INSPECTORS ON JUNIOR LEADERS REGIMENT,
ROYAL SIGNALS
INSPECTED ON 6th to 11th MAY, 1963

1. In 1955, one of the recommendations of the "Miller Report" on the organisation and administration of boys' units was that there should be regular and full inspections by the Ministry of Education. This is the first of such inspections to be undertaken by Her Majesty's Inspectors at the invitation of the War Office. It was requested that the inspection should be fully comprehensive, touching most aspects of the boys' lives, their military, trade and educational training and their general welfare. Indeed, with the close co-operation of the Commanding Officer, the Regiment was exposed to a very full inquiry, H.M. Inspectors would like to thank the Commanding Officer and his staff for their courtesy and co-operation, and Major Bradford of the RAEC who, working with the panel of inspectors, proved an invaluable colleague.
2. This Junior Leaders Regiment, whose purpose is to produce warrant officers and senior non-commissioned officers of the Royal Corps of Signals, is stationed at Denbury Camp in the heart of South Devon. It is three miles from Newton Abbot, some seven miles from Torquay and on the threshold of Dartmoor whose tors overlook it. There is much to commend in a location slightly removed from urban areas yet sufficiently near to enjoy their amenities. The moors, the river Dart and the sea board are all conveniently near for the adventurous pursuits so important in the training of the young soldier. The site is equally satisfactory and permits a convenient lay-out of the temporary buildings with which the Regiment must make do until rehoused within the next few years.

As the buildings are temporary it is not proposed to discuss them in much detail. It is sufficient to say that the hutted accommodation has long since outlived its usefulness, the condition of some floors and ceilings is poor, the floor in one gymnasium is almost dangerous and the general state of maintenance is low. On the other hand, the barrack-rooms are kept clean and tidy and the property is generally well respected by the boys. At the time of the inspection a new teaching block was being brought into use, only temporary buildings, but representing a vast improvement on those used hitherto. A science laboratory was also nearly ready for use and consideration was being given to providing two classrooms with limited services so that they could also be available for science teaching. Some of the teachers have been quick to take advantage of the improved facilities and their classrooms are already displaying material relevant to the boys' studies. While much of the accommodation is poor, a good deal has been done to make the NAAP and the social club bright and attractive. In this respect the boys are fortunate that there has been so much careful consideration for their welfare. It should be stated that the Regiment is extremely fire conscious and no effort is spared to achieve a high standard in fire prevention.

One of the most serious inconveniences is the lack of married quarters. This imposes a considerable burden on the permanent staff for both officers and NCOs give generously of their time but, living as most of them do at a distance, they find it difficult to meet their many commitments. Indeed, it is only just possible to provide the minimum night time supervision. It is equally difficult where wives are concerned. The Commanding Officer appears to have studied the Miller Report in some detail and agrees that "a mature and kindly feminine influence" is essential in¹ the upbringing of adolescent boys. It is a matter of some concern that the wives of the staff can play their part only with great difficulty. Fortunately, there is a permanent official of the WVS who is able to render valuable help in this direction.

Finally, although there is much in the environment that is not conducive to comfort or to good morale, much care has been lavished on the Church to make it an exception to the general drabness.

3. The 570 boys in the Regiment, normally between the ages of 15 and 18, are organised in Squadrons, troops and patrols. Most important is the extent to which training for leadership is recognised in these arrangements as being one of the first charges on the staff. It is so planned that boys shall be given real responsibility, some as junior NCOs. On first joining the Regiment (and the intake is three times a year) the newcomers form a junior squadron and for the first term they are introduced most successfully and by carefully graduated stages to military life.

The boys are kept busy and their training programme is split into three, academic studies, military and trade training. A good deal of thought has been given to providing a carefully balanced programme, which, with the competing claims of so many worth-while activities, is by no means easy to achieve. The Commanding Officer is to be commended for attaining such a balance and this has required him to make a number of important changes during the time he has served the Regiment. For example, at one time adventure training tended to monopolise the programme and even to disrupt other activities.

The academic studies, which take about one third of the time, include instruction up to the Army Certificate of Education, Senior Test, and boys achieving this end sufficiently early in their course are encouraged to develop and continue their studies to such a level as their abilities and inclinations allow. At present, some sixty boys hope to take ordinary level of the General Certificate of Education, some in one subject only, but fourteen of them in as many as five or six. This is a reflection of the improvement of the present intake and something that must be taken into account in future organisation. There is a need, for example, to expedite the preliminary studies and to provide sufficient time for some boys to prepare themselves for the more advanced work.

Military training includes foot and arms drill and the firing of weapons. Trade training, which has recently been reorganised to good effect, is directed to producing qualified tradesmen in two basic signal trades.

4. The proper reception of the newcomers and their smooth introduction to military life are one of the first concerns of the Regiment and something in which the Commanding Officer takes a special interest. The view is taken that the first term, and indeed for some boys, the first few days, are critical and that future success depends above all on the way the newcomers are received. Thus elaborate care is taken to ensure that the transition from home to military life shall be accomplished as smoothly as possible. It is here that the Regiment is conspicuously successful. It was possible to witness the arrival of some of the new boys, to see the arrangements made for them and the comparative ease with which they settled to their new life. Although this is necessarily a stern test for many, especially those away from home for the first time, homesickness was quickly dissipated and most of them seemed favourably impressed by their reception. For example, they expressed themselves as agreeably surprised at the good quality and quantity of the food. The officers and NCOs attached to this squadron are handpicked and they are well suited to duties which they generally discharge with both understanding and skill. Special attention is paid to education in the boys' first term, the teachers are selected most carefully and their pastoral care, which a system of class teaching permits, is most satisfactory. There is, under this system, plenty of opportunity to discover the suitability of the boys for their new life. In fact, very few of them are rejected (seldom more than five per cent) at this stage.

5. The academic studies are the responsibility of the Senior Education Officer who, since his appointment less than a year ago, has been responsible for a number of necessary changes and is contemplating others. That short time has seen changes in the teaching staff, the superseding of NCOs by officers and, in the interests of continuity, the introduction of civilian teachers. There have been difficulties and it is to the credit of the Senior Education Officer that with the full support of his Commanding Officer, he has been able to resolve so many of the problems. At the present time there are twenty teachers, all trained and half of them graduates. They are now showing great promise and include a number of talented schoolmasters who can offer the boys much, and in a wide field. It is only recently, however, that they have shown signs of working together and, with their differences largely resolved, their potential is considerable. With improved accommodation they have it in their power to do work of outstanding merit.

Reference has been made to recent changes which include allowing the boys to dispose of their elementary work more quickly and this is to be facilitated by trying to arrange still more continuity in the teaching. It is important that throughout the course the boys shall have as few teachers as possible in each subject so that they can proceed uninterruptedly with their work and, more especially, without new diagnosis and revision each time they change their teacher.

Reference has already been made to the three junior classes where class teaching is favoured and is very good indeed. The lessons are lively and interesting, the classrooms stimulating and there is every opportunity for the new entrant to make progress. There is amongst the senior boys, however, some disillusion with education. This is something they had hoped to have put behind them and at which many of them feel they have not been conspicuously successful. They are particularly critical of previous arrangements when there was undoubtedly a good, deal of repetition of work, often because of changing teachers. There is now emerging, however, a better organisation and a very co-operative attitude from the senior boys, whose work is seldom less than satisfactory. It was a sound decision to prefer MATHEMATICS to arithmetic. The majority of the boys appear well able to pursue with advantage this more exacting study - which is more appropriate for students who will be associated with technical work - and already much sound and careful work is done. At present no fewer than eight masters share in the teaching of this subject and this number could well be reduced with advantage. It is also a disadvantage that the boys cannot be allowed time for 'prep'. The inclusion of GENERAL SCIENCE and PHYSICS for boys whose work is related to these fields of study is most welcomed but the subjects will continue to lack real significance until the teaching can include practical work. This will soon be possible and reference has already been made to new facilities which will be available. In the meantime, the co-ordinator of the sciences is to be congratulated on his efforts to overcome the difficulties of accommodation; his physics lessons are well illustrated and he obtains considerable support from the masters who take general science. Much of the teaching of ENGLISH is satisfactory in a rather formal way while some is distinctly promising in its more considered approach. It is, however, suggested that all work could have more relevance to both military and civil life and that more might be done orally. It was agreed that one of the military necessities is to be articulate and ways and means towards this end were discussed with the English team; it was also agreed that there might be closer links between the English and current affairs. CURRENT AFFAIRS is well taught and the individual studies are most promising; the work in the junior classes is worthy of special mention. Similarly the teaching of MAP READING in the junior classes is first-rate and in all classes the theoretical side of this work is good. On the other hand there are shortcomings in the more practical aspects of map reading which might be repaired by associating it more closely with, for example, the adventure training.

To conclude, although the standard of work is generally satisfactory, the teachers are now in a position to make further advances, and some of them may well achieve work of distinction.

6. Since he assumed control, the Commanding Officer has made a number of changes and none more necessary than in trade training. Hitherto, the efforts of the boys tended to be dissipated over a wide field and the recent introduction of two basic trades only is a most necessary reform. As a result, boys will leave for their Colour Service with added confidence, and some without the need for further training. Although the primary objectives of ensuring that a satisfactory proportion of boys pass their trade tests will be achieved, the new arrangement is not without its teething troubles. The operating trades selected, morse and telegraphy, are the least academically exacting of the signal trades and the content is almost entirely concerned with clerical and organisational procedures in the handling of signals and the operating of equipment. There is no concern for the technicalities of the equipment or its servicing. Thus the syllabus is unduly dull, memory work is at a premium and teaching tends to be repetitive drill. Nevertheless, the boys are co-operative and the teaching ability of one or two sergeants and an officer is good. With others, it is not always so effective; and there is lacking both composure and a sense of purpose in the instruction. Means whereby the standard of instruction generally might be raised, to the level of the best were discussed with the Commanding Officer. The hope was also expressed that at hobby level, the boys' interest in their trade might be extended and their technical knowledge increased.
7. While there are boys reluctant to resume their academic studies, this is not so with military training. The latter appears to be widely accepted as an important part of their new life. They appreciate that the training has a purpose, for that which is pointless has been reduced to a minimum. Much of the training is disposed of in the Junior Squadron. The drill is very well done and the bearing, particularly of the senior boys, is excellent, their suppleness comparing most favourably with that of older men. The boy NCOs have the opportunity to give drill instruction and this they do most competently. The soundness of this work owes not a little to the quiet and effective influence of the RSM. There is efficient weapon training by a long serving NCO who gets on well with the boys.
8. In charge of physical training there is a warrant officer and a staff sergeant, both of the Army Physical Training Corps. The work is mainly in the hands of physical training instructors who have been drawn from the ranks and sent to Aldershot for a thirteen-weeks course. It is considered that the work has more application to the needs of the adult soldier and has little to offer the growing boy. It is very doubtful whether the instructors have sufficient knowledge and understanding to make any significant contribution to the development of the adolescent. This is in no way a criticism of the Army Corps of Physical Training but to the applicability of its training system to the young. The quality of the staff and the teaching are in marked contrast to that, for example, of the education section; and until such time as teachers of comparable educational attainment are appointed, the value of the work is likely to remain strictly limited.
9. When he assumed his present duties the Commanding Officer found a vigorous tradition of adventure training. He immediately saw, however, the need to rationalise the programme and reference has already been made to his efforts in this direction. The work is now most successfully directed; it promotes both challenge and excitement and is ideally suited to the needs of young people. With Dartmoor, the sea and good stretches of the river Dart close at hand it is difficult to envisage many locations in the country that can offer so much. The work on the Moor, the sailing and canoeing, camping and mountaineering are all excellently planned with the aim of developing self confidence, enterprise and initiative as well as the ability to work as a team.

Above all, opportunity is provided for the exercise of leadership. In a Regiment where the invention of pointless hardship is not encouraged, the adventure training provides real opportunity for boys to live rough, to become physically tough, to endure hardship and to take a controlled risk. As far as the latter is concerned, reasonable precautions are taken and activities so arranged that although severe, they are only achieved in graduated stages. There is little doubt that these activities make a vital contribution to the fitness of the boys, to their self-reliance and to their general bearing. And at their "passing out" they are as fit as they can be made. Should there be any suggestion that the boys are unduly cosseted, and the Commanding Officer has wondered about this, here is a corrective that does more than redress the balance.

The careful approach to demanding activities can be well illustrated by the assault course. In this, preparation entails much work in the gymnasium where increasingly severe training is introduced so that the final effort shall be well within the compass of any boy. There is no evidence of any one being called on to undertake a task for which he has not been adequately prepared.

10. There is plenty of opportunity for organised games and other forms of recreation, and the regimental teams have their fair share of success in open competitions. There are satisfactory facilities for cricket, tennis, football and hockey. Only for swimming, surely an accomplishment necessary for every soldier, are there no facilities. The need to transport the boys to Torquay for this purpose is both time-wasting and expensive and only some of them can be taught to swim. In an effort to extend the benefits of Dartmoor to other young people, the Regiment organises the Ten Tors Expedition annually. Since its inception in 1960, the venture has grown in popularity and it is now supported by groups all over the country. The Regiment also takes part in the 'Nijmegen March' and, through the generosity of the officers some of the boys have the opportunity to spend their holidays equally adventurously. At the time of the Inspection there was talk of an overland trek to the Sahara and plans were also being considered for a sail training holiday next year in the Baltic. There is, indeed, here no lack of challenging and interesting things for young people to do, and many of the boys are quick to appreciate the value of these broadening experiences.
11. Under the term "hobbies" there is included a wide selection of activities not all of them voluntary but available to the boys on at least two evenings a week. Latterly, it has been possible to introduce a greater element of choice but it is appreciated that completely free choice is not always easy to achieve. It is important, for example, to safeguard the interests of the Corps of Drums, as impressive as it is of great utility to the Regiment and something in which many of the members take pride. To sustain it, and other activities there is a certain amount of coercion but the Commanding Officer can be left to pursue his policy of increasing the amount of free choice whenever possible. He might also consider extending the opportunities so that each boy during his time at the Regiment may sample several activities.

Within the compass of this Report it is not possible to describe the many activities, so well planned and admirably supported by the officers. Mention has already been made of the Corps of Drums by means of whose public performances the Regiment is able to repay the neighbouring towns for their hospitality to the boys. There is also a pipe-band which, with the regimental choir and the Downbeats (a guitar group), insure that musical interests are well represented. Facilities for art and craft are most satisfactory and there is a well qualified teacher under whose guidance interesting painting and carving are being produced; pottery is being started and aeromodelling is also popular. The photographic society deserves special mention particularly for its recent co-operation with map reading, there is a library, a printing group which assists with the production of "Junior Mercury" (the regimental magazine)

and in the summer time a wider selection of physical activities. There is Scottish dancing and judo, canoeing and canoe building, sailing and camping. In all, this is an impressive list of activities, all of them carefully organised.

12. It must already be clear that the Regiment accepts as its first responsibility the welfare of the boys. Reference has already been made to the efforts of the wives and of the WVS; in addition local girls are invited each Wednesday to a social evening. These arrangements appear quite admirable and the general bearing of the boys and girls seemed, during the Inspection, vastly superior to that commonly found in many comparable situations in civilian life. The girls are encouraged to visit the Regiment at other times, when they join the dancing classes and assist with the dramatic productions. With the support of the wives and the WVS, they elect a ladies committee.

Proper attention is given to the spiritual welfare of the boys and although some resent compulsory church attendance, they are disposed to pay great attention to the padre's hour. The Regiment has its own Church of England Padre who has prepared a considerable number of boys for confirmation. It was possible to attend some of his talks and discussions with the boys, to appreciate the effectiveness of his work but to regret that he must work with such large groups. Arrangements are also made for other denominations, but it was not possible in the time available to become more closely acquainted with the work they do.

It is pleasing to record the good relations that exist between the Regiment and its near neighbours, for example, Newton Abbot. The boys are well received by local families, there appears to be no friction and the desire of the locals that the Regiment should not be transferred elsewhere is motivated, it is thought, not only by the economic advantage to be gained.

13. From what has been said it should be clear that the boys are fully occupied and that as a result they develop enormous appetites. It is fortunate, therefore, that every effort is made to give them adequate quantities of well-cooked and nourishing food to meet the special needs that arise when rapid physical growth coincides with strenuous activity. There was a discussion as to whether the boys needed more food; although the amount of protein appears to be satisfactory there may be a case for increasing the number of calories. A specialist catering officer supervises the drawing up of the menus. There is always a wide choice of courses and the range is only limited by the boys themselves whose tastes are often restricted. The general standard of the catering is good. With better premises consequent on rebuilding, it should then be possible to meet some of the minor criticisms that have been made and above all, to increase the social and educational value of the meal.
14. The boys impress in so many ways and if the quality of future intakes is maintained or even improved, the Corps can look forward to young-soldiers whose physical well being is likely to be very good, whose bearing is smart and whose morale and general self-confidence are most satisfactory. Already, junior NCOS play an important part in maintaining discipline, they are given real responsibility and come to understand its purpose. As members of the Junior Council they have certain privileges and it is at the luncheons with the Commanding Officer that they are able to represent their fellows. Needless to say, the discipline of the boys is very good, the crime rate is comparatively low and coercion is kept to a minimum. Indeed, there must, be many boys who enhance their self-respect and substantially increase their confidence. They are generally most frank in their opinions and not a few compare favourably their present lot with what it might have been in civil life. Although it is not always to their liking, most of them see the value of the additional education they are receiving, they are impressed with their physical well being and competence, particularly when they have accepted or

met squarely the challenges that have come their way. Most of them appear loyal to the Regiment and the successful ones, particularly, will no doubt look back with pride to this experience. It is also a healthy sign that most of them are only too impatient to begin colour service. In the meantime, there is every reason for the parents, (with whom the Commanding Officer maintains close contact and consults as required), to feel satisfied with the provision made for their sons.

15. To conclude, in spite of poor accommodation, the Regiment is in excellent shape. With the dynamic leadership provided by the Commanding Officer who has a wide understanding of the needs of boys and an appreciation of their life and times, it has been possible to provide both stimulating and purposeful training for young soldiers. Confronted by carefully chosen, capable and often talented officers, the boys have an example of leadership at its best and many of them appear anxious to take advantage of what is offered. During their service with the Regiment, there has been projected to them an image of a modern army to which they can feel proud to belong. And although there is a good deal of appreciation of what is being done for them, they are nevertheless looking forward to leaving the unit in order to achieve their full status as soldiers.