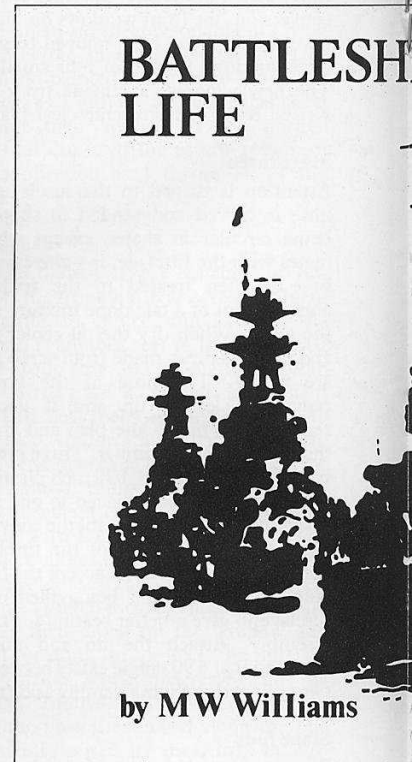
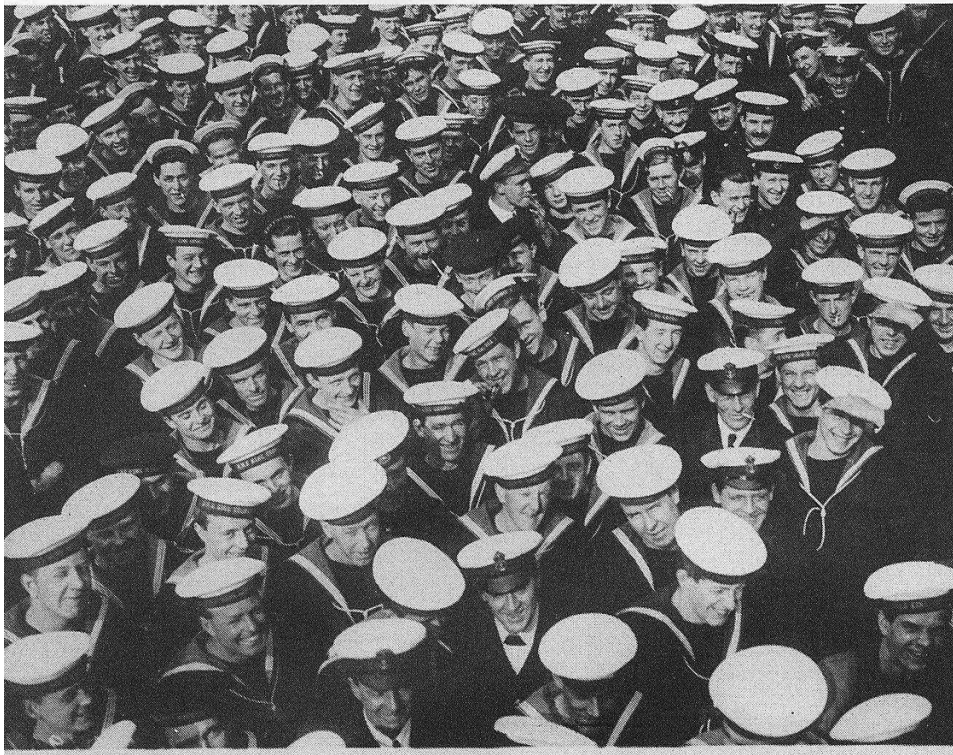
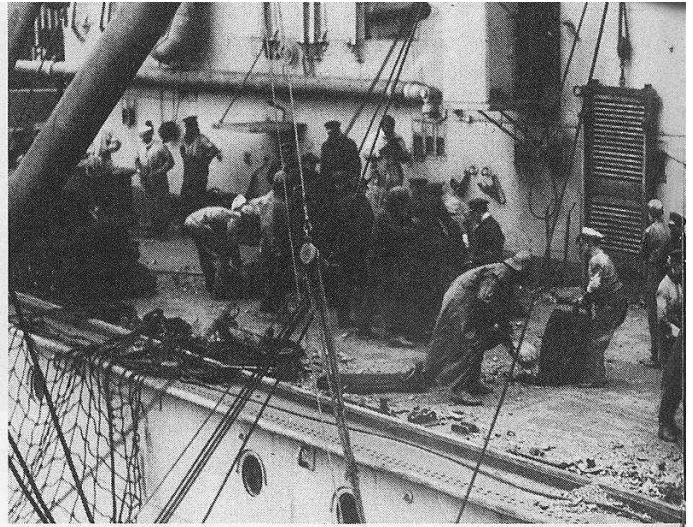


Airfix Magazine has in the past published a number of naval items covering numerous types of warships ranging from MTBs to nuclear super carriers, these articles either concentrating in describing in detail their operational histories or involving their conversion. As some readers might know from my contribution to *Airfix Magazine* in recent years, my particular naval interest is in battleships and battlecruisers, and my articles have followed this usual format. Now I would like to investigate a rather unusual aspect of the lives of these great ships which has, as far as I can tell, never before been described to the general reader, and that is simply how the day-to-day running of their large complements actually operated. After all it was this routine which was designed to enable these complex machines to perform efficiently 24 hours a day, and every day while in commission, which, besides the expected duties of maintenance and cleaning, also demanded the training of its hundreds of men into a fully worked up professional body capable of controlling and operating these mighty leviathans.

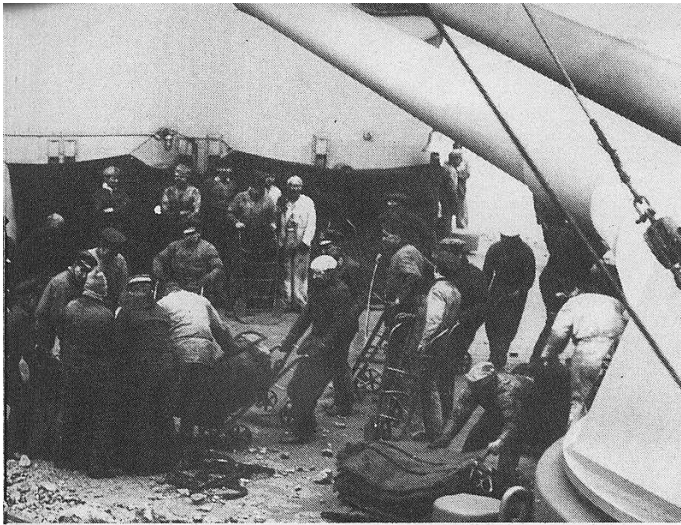
To the generations of seamen who served in the Royal Navy,



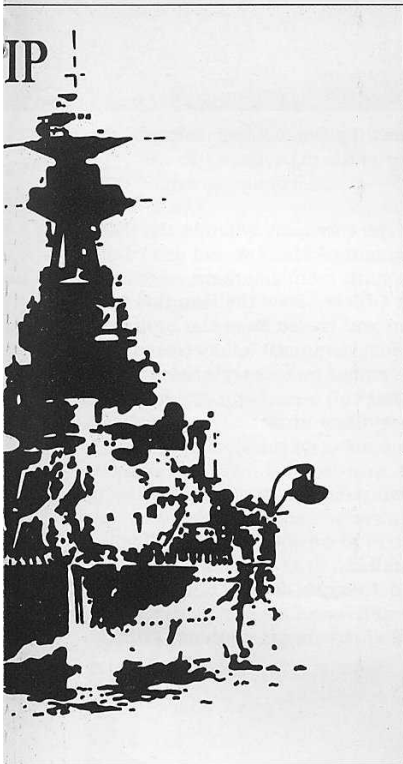
Top: Coaling ship was carried out as an evolution, entailing much hustle and bustle and not a little grime. Note the canvas draped across the screens for protection (IWM:Q18754). **Centre:** Liberty men coming Off HMS *King George V* (IWM:Q19515). **Left:** Pay day for the British sailor, the wages being accepted in his cap to create an almost timeless scene (IWM:Q18083).

this daily sea routine will be indelibly etched on their memory forever and its repetition in an article will be quite unnecessary. But to someone like myself who has never experienced it, to come across a vivid description of the daily life at sea onboard an inter-war battleship, somehow now adds 'life' and flesh to the usual skeletal history of these ships and certainly provides a new-found degree of understanding about this aspect of how a battleship actually lived and functioned at sea.

The revealing description which inspired this short article, was found in the 1932 publication *HMS Rodney at Sea* by C. R. Benstead, in which he goes into great detail about her second commission, describing cruises, events and personalities. I found it a fascinating insight into life afloat in the 1930s. Coupled with this book I also had the recollections of my father who served onboard her, from 1932 until 1934 during her third commission, as an able seaman. With his account of everyday events on the mess deck level combined with C. R. Benstead's officer's story, I



- 0555 'G'. (This symbol refers to a bugle note, a sort of time signal, which is theoretically pitched on the middle 'G'. Actually, in the *Rodney*, a vibration in the neighbourhood of 'E' flat was used instead of the note indicated, though in deference to tradition it was still known as a 'G'.)
- 0630 Call Middle Watchmen. Up Guard and Steerage. 'Cooks'.
- 0700 Seaboat's Crew of Morning Watch fall in. Breakfast and clean.
- 0745 'G'.
- 0750 Out pipes. Clean guns. Seaboat's Crew of Forenoon and Morning Watches fall in to breakfast when relieved.
- 0815 'G'.
- 0820 Disperse. Both Watches for exercises. Clean mess-decks, flats and brightwork.
- 0900 'G'.
- 0905 'Divisions'. Prayers and PT. Both Watches, after disperse, tell off for work, etc. Which means that after the hands assembled in their respective divisions, there was a short religious service followed by physical exercise on the



Above: Admiral de Roebuck inspecting the Ship's Company on board HMS *Canopus*. These men may well be Patrol Service Reservists as they are wearing moustaches rather than full sets (IWM:Q13719). Right: A new member of crew from HMS *Pembroke* buys soap and tobacco on HMS *Benbow* in Gibraltar. There was usually a weekly issue of these 'personal necessities' (IWM:Q13974).

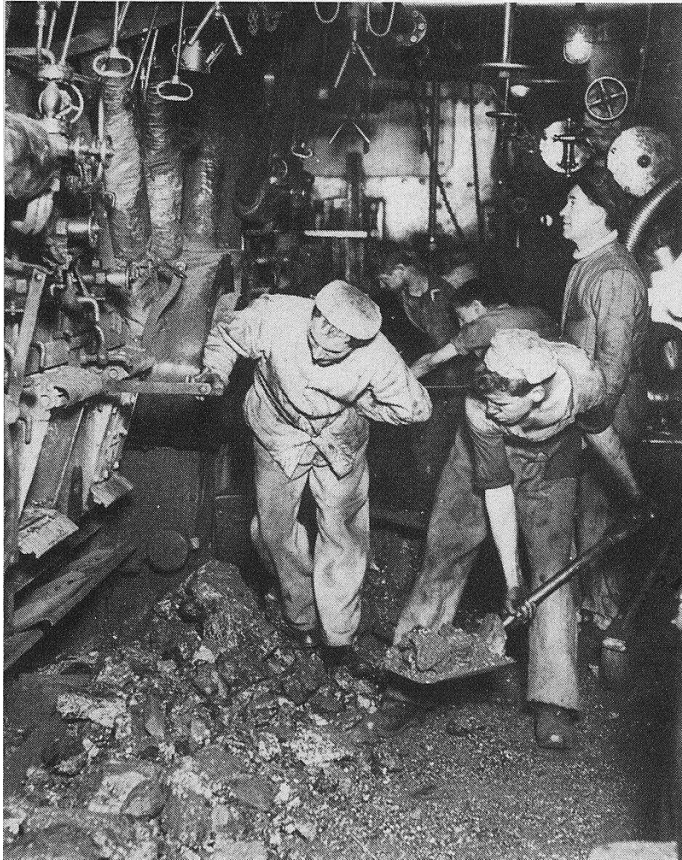
gained not only an overall insight into the existence experienced by the 1176 men of the *Rodney's* complement during this period, but also of the other great capital ships of the Royal Navy of this era, and it is a part of this 'life' at sea that I would now like to relate.

The Daily Sea Routine, as described below is based on the above book, with suitable explanatory comments added to clarify certain points.

- 0000 Duty Part and Seaboat's Crew of Middle Watch to muster.
- 0445 Call Duty Part and Seaboat's Crew of Morning Watch.
- 0515 Duty Part fall in, sweep decks, place wash-deck gear and start scrubbing.
- 0520 Boys lash up and stow.
- 0530 Call the hands. Stand fast Middle Watchmen. Men under punishment fall in.
- 0540 'Cooks'. Duty Part fall in.
- 0545 Cocoa.

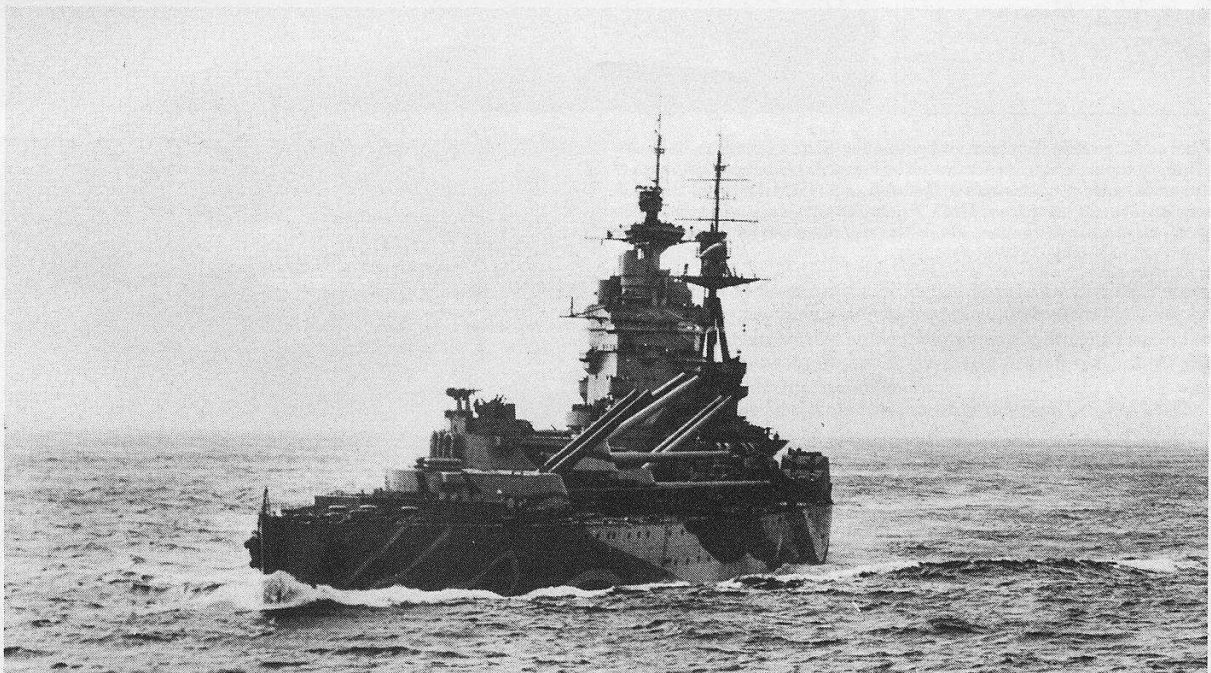


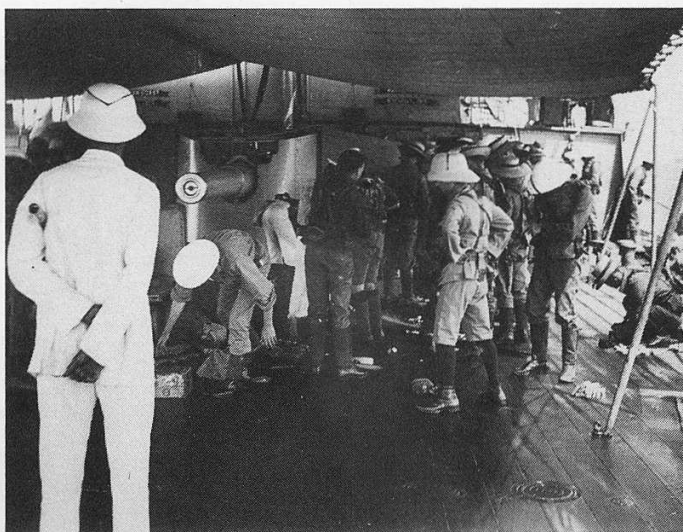
Clockwise from top: After coaling ship the forecastle party appear to be using the main capstan to move clear one of the lighters (IWM:Q18750). Every ship had a landing party comprised of marines and sailors. Here they get together their kit prior to going ashore to capture Ulenge lighthouse in 1916. The marines are in pith helmets and the sailors in straw hats (IWM:Q46324). The Officers' boat of HMAS *Australia*. Junior officers proceed on shore leave in the ship's steam pinnace. Note the coxswain behind the canvas dodger (IWM:Q18741). Hands to dinner! Meal on the boys' mess deck (IWM:Q18768). HMS *Rodney* a few days before the 1944 Normandy landings (NMM:216). Working in the stokehold (IWM:Q18593).



Swedish system. This done, the Commander 'tells off' the hands to their work.

- 1030 Stand easy.
- 1040 Out pipes. Carry on.
- 1100 Up spirits. (This denoted the ceremony wherein the Petty Officer of the Day, a Sergeant of Marines and one of the ship's police, went to the spirit room and there, under the supervision of a Warrant Officer, drew the rum that was afterwards watered down and issued from the grog tub. They drew the exact amount, and until it was issued, the breaker containing it was placed in a sentry's charge).
- 1140 Secure. Training classes fall in.
- 1145 Both Watches for exercise. Clear up decks.
- 1150 'Cooks'.
- 1200 Dinner.
- 1315 Both Watches for exercise.
- 1430 Stand easy.
- 1440 Put pipes. Carry on.
- 1540 Secure. Training classes fall in.
- 1545 Both Watches for exercise. Clear up decks.
- 1555 'G'. Clear off mess-decks and flats.
- 1600 Evening Quarters. Tea. Shift into night clothing. (This is





- another way of saying that domestic work, as distinct from the sort involved in military exercise, was over for the day).
- 1900 Stand by hammocks.
 - 1915 'Cooks'.
 - 1920 Supper.
 - 2030 Duty Part fall in. Clear up mess-decks.
 - 2045 Boys turn in.
 - 2100 Rounds.
 - 2200 Pipe down.
 - 2345 Call Middle Watchmen.

On Saturdays, which were days of preparation for Sunday's inspection, the forenoon of this routine was adjusted to include the cleaning of lockers, the scrubbing of ditty boxes, and the cleansing of the spitkidds (ashtrays). Sunday, embracing the inspection, called for still further adjustment, for then at Divisions the hands appeared in their most immaculate raiment, and rooted to the deck they submitted themselves to the Captain's scrutiny.

Finally, all that I hope for from this rather unusual naval article is that it has proved to be of some interest to those readers of *Airfix Magazine* who have followed the histories of these mighty ships, providing as it does what I consider to be an invaluable insight into the 'life' onboard a British battleship of the thirties.

