



The Mariner's Mirror

The International Quarterly Journal of The Society for Nautical Research

ISSN: 0025-3359 (Print) 2049-680X (Online) Journal homepage: <http://www.tandfonline.com/loi/rmir20>

COUNTY NAVAL FREE SCHOOLS ON WASTE LANDS

Henry T. A. Bosanquet

To cite this article: Henry T. A. Bosanquet (1922) COUNTY NAVAL FREE SCHOOLS ON WASTE LANDS, *The Mariner's Mirror*, 8:4, 101-108, DOI: [10.1080/00253359.1922.10655099](https://doi.org/10.1080/00253359.1922.10655099)

To link to this article: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/00253359.1922.10655099>



Published online: 22 Mar 2013.



Submit your article to this journal [↗](#)



Article views: 4



View related articles [↗](#)

crown and anchor. Separate coil near the shackle. Probable date 1884-5.

V. White metal. Length $5\frac{3}{4}$ inches. "Buoy" spherical. No date. Its length and shape suggests an early specimen.

VI. White metal. Length $4\frac{5}{8}$ inches. "Buoy" spherical, stamped with broad arrow. Date uncertain.

VII. Silver. Length nearly 4 inches. "Buoy" spherical. No anchor. Date about 1839.

VIII. Silver. Length 4 inches. "Buoy" barrel shaped, with crown and anchor. Separate coil near the shackle. Date 1853.

1 September, 1919.

2 "To the botswayne of the Mary Talbot, a jaket" (1463. Roxburgh Club. "Manners and household expenses," p. 191).

3 For an article on various calls, see M.M. i. pp. 9-15.

4 M.M. vol. 5, p. 73.

5 M.M. vol. 4, p. 201.

6 Evidently an allusion to Dr. Busby, the famous headmaster of Westminster School.

7 Masefield. "Sea Life in Nelson's time," p. 98.

8 N.R.S. xxxi. pp. 70-71.

9 Teonge. "Diary," pp. 100-101.

COUNTY NAVAL FREE SCHOOLS ON WASTE LANDS.

BY CAPT. HENRY T. A. BOSANQUET, R.N. (RETD.)

IN an article in a previous number of this Magazine an endeavour was made to rescue from oblivion a useful educational project on behalf of embryo officers for the Royal Navy which had a short, but useful career. An account will now be given of a far more ambitious scheme, which, though it never came to fruition as originally proposed, undoubtedly led to the inauguration of the training ship system and the sea-training school on shore as we know them to-day. This was a proposal to establish schools on shore, one or more in each county, under the title of County Naval Free Schools, to be maintained out of the rates for the purpose of jointly training boys as mariners and husbandmen.

The idea again originated with Jonas Hanway, the philanthropist, and it may be remarked, in passing, that the labours of this very remarkable man on behalf of the naval service deserve

more recognition than they have so far received. It is regrettable that even his reputation as one of the outstanding philanthropists of his time has nowadays given place to the notoriety he unfortunately acquired in his later years as the pioneer in this country in the use of the umbrella. The manning of the Royal Navy was a matter to which he gave very great attention, and to him is due the credit for the inception of the Marine Society, which, during the naval wars of 1756—1815, was instrumental in fitting out no less than 39,360 landsmen volunteers for the fleet, besides supplying 30,759 boys, each with a complete sea kit, as servants in the King's ships.

In the middle of the eighteenth century the system of manning our ships of war was anything but satisfactory, there being no training ships or schools for boys and no reserve of men. For reasons of economy our naval personnel on a peace establishment was a very small one, which necessitated a sudden increase on the outbreak of war and an even more abrupt decrease when peace again ensued. For example, in 1763, the number of seamen employed was 49,673, and on peace being declared only 16,000 of these were retained in the King's service. Thus large numbers of unemployed men were let loose on the country with no means of support and many with no knowledge of any shore trade. The Merchant Service undoubtedly immediately absorbed some of the prime seamen, but there was a large proportion of landsmen temporarily employed in the Fleet amongst the numbers discharged, who when turned adrift could find nothing to do on shore.

The need of reform in this system was brought home to the Marine Society when it became necessary to find employment for a large number of boys whom it had sent to sea during the Seven Years War, and who were discharged on the declaration of peace in 1763. Though employment was found for every boy who applied to the Society, it was decided that, in order to avoid a repetition of this trouble on some future occasion, a remedy should be devised, and Mr. Hanway's fertile brain was requisitioned for the purpose. Nothing could be done for several years, an unfortunate law suit over a legacy handicapping the Society in its work, but some twenty years later a favourable opportunity arose and Mr. Hanway's long deferred scheme was put forward.

In support of his proposals he showed that boys were then (1783) a negligible quantity on board men-of-war; the Navy cared only for grown men, and made no effort to train boys to

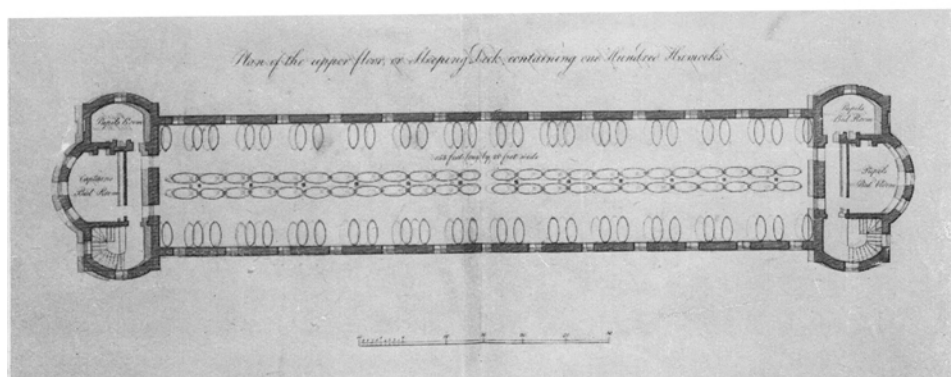
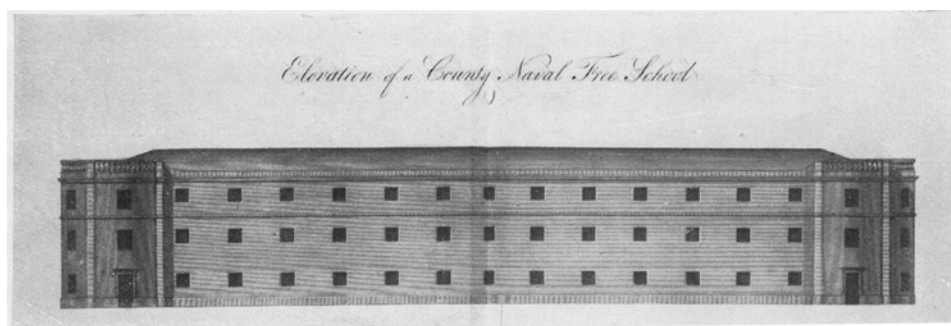
become seamen. The pay of boys when carried was only 40s. per annum, which was too little to keep them. They deserted at the first opportunity, those of superior ability preferring the Merchant Service, where they were readily received. There was scope for the employment of boys to advantage in ships of war, more especially in the lighter work aloft on the upper yards and masts, but the only way a boy could get employed in the Navy was as a servant. These were carried in the proportion of one to every fifteen men, or forty servants in a ship's company of 600, and assuming, therefore, that the Navy on a war footing would require 100,000 men there should be some 6,666 servants wanted. Of this number Mr. Hanway calculated that one-quarter were the sons of noblemen and gentlemen, only nominally carried as servants and actually intended to become officers, leaving about 5,000 servants, properly so called, who would be required. If these went to sea at fifteen, as sea lads, at sixteen to eighteen they were rated grummets (grown mates), and at eighteen ordinary seamen, with a rise of pay in each case, which at the lowest would be more than boys could earn by husbandry on shore, and were also given a bed and clothing with prospects of prize money, he calculated that they would remain at sea and would not want to leave the King's service. Thus reckoning that a boy would take three years to become an O.S., a supply of about 1,600 boys per annum would be required to keep up the 5,000.

For the purpose of collecting and training the boys, schools were to be erected on plots of waste land which were to be purchased partly as sites for the necessary buildings and partly for agricultural operations. The sites selected were to be healthy, and detached from cities or great towns. If possible to be near the sea, the idea being that as people living in seaport towns are more inclined to the sea than those inland, so would the boys be whose school was in sight of it. The scholars would also be sought for by masters of ships living in the neighbouring ports, and a quicker circulation through the schools thus ensue. Failing the sea, banks of rivers or large lakes to be chosen; it being always understood that where practicable it would be desirable to have a piece of water in the neighbourhood of the school. Mr. Hanway lays considerable stress on this point, and all sailors will agree with him as to its great importance, yet it is curious to note in passing that for some of the sea-training institutions on land of the twentieth century this is not considered to be of great account.

Each piece of ground was to be about 100 to 150 acres in extent for a school of 100 boys, it being calculated that if properly farmed one acre would produce £6 per annum, or 4d. per diem, which was sufficient to feed a boy. No difficulty was anticipated in securing such waste spaces of land, many would probably be presented by patriotic persons, and Mr. Hanway mentions that a personal friend had offered to give him 100 acres close to a dockyard, with the only proviso that the boys of the donor's parish should have a prior claim to admission. The land having been selected, a suitable house was to be built on a plan fully set forth, at a probable cost of £2,500 or £3,000. This sum to be provided out of the county rates, and all other first establishment charges and annual cost of upkeep to come from the same source. The upkeep was anticipated as being comparatively small, for the workhouses then, exclusive of the labour of the paupers, cost only £5 per head yearly, and the proposed schools once fairly started, and the land producing, would be almost self-supporting, and the whole upkeep charges less than £5 per annum per boy. It is interesting to note that Mr. Hanway first proposed that the schools should be supported by charitable contributions, but he considered the annual income would be so uncertain that they ought to be supported by State aid. The latest proposals for twentieth century schools are for State rather than charitable aid, though it is the educational funds and not the ordinary county rates which are to be tapped.

The school houses, when erected, were to resemble a three-decker, with many square windows like ports, the floors being called decks, and the general resemblance to a ship being carried out throughout the design wherever practicable. The boys to sleep in hammocks, to be slung not more than 3ft. from the deck, so as to avoid the sleepers being in the fouler air near the ceiling.

The scholars to be boys between the ages of twelve and thirteen on entry, to remain three years, and no boy to stay over the age of sixteen. To be stout, well grown and healthy. Minimum height standard 4ft. 3ins. for a boy of thirteen years, and it is worth while comparing this with the average height of a boy of this age nowadays, which is about 4ft. 9ins. The number of scholars admitted free to be 100, with the addition of six "artists" in each school, the sons of gentlemen, whose parents would pay £30 per annum for their training and maintenance, £20 of this to go to the school and £10 to the captain as a capitation grant. The artists to be in effect petty officers



PLATES FROM HANWAY'S "COUNTY NAVAL FREE SCHOOLS."

in training as future officers, to learn elementary navigation, and to go through a higher course than the free scholars.

Calculating 100 free scholars in each school, remaining three years under training, it would necessitate about fifty such schools being started throughout the country to keep up the required supply of 1,600 boys per annum for the Fleet.

The schools were to be presided over by a captain who was to be a naval officer and to receive his board, lodging, washing, uniform and £60 per annum, plus £10 per annum for each of the six artists. He was to be supported by a petty officer as boatswain, gunner, and master-at-arms; a husbandman; a ploughman; a manufacturer; a matron; two female servants and a cook. The management carried out by a committee consisting of a president, six vice-presidents, a divine, and a treasurer.

The subjects of instruction were to include industrial pursuits as a foundation, such as gardening, planting, agriculture and manufactory, the theory of common seamanship, and, where possible, its practice, to follow as a pastime. The gardens were not to be laid out in the most beautiful, but in the most profitable manner, since the students were intended to eat the fruits of the earth produced by their industry. The very planting was to be carried out on economical lines, and for purposes of utility, thus spruce firs were to be planted, these producing spruce beer which mixed with molasses, was then considered very beneficial to the health of seamen as an antiscorbutic. On wet days, when work out of doors was impracticable, the boys were to study under the manufacturer, who would teach them to spin, knit and weave in linen and wool, so that they could make their own kerseys and stockings. The great idea being to make the school as nearly self-supporting as possible. The only school subject taught was to be reading and as to seamanship, which was to be considered in the light of a "play game," this comprised instruction in a large fully rigged ship on a turnabout base, where the boys could learn to make and furl sail, the fitment and lead of standing and running rigging, etc. A capstan, with anchors and cables, and a movable mooring vessel was to be provided, and the use of the log and hand lead, knotting and splicing, etc., was to be taught. A cannon of wood or metal would give the gunnery training, and the scholars would be drilled and instructed in the use of small arms.

A dietary scale was given, and a list of uniform clothing to be issued. As showing the attention Mr. Hanway gave to every detail of his scheme, it is worthy of mention that he even showed

the best method of sewing on the uniform buttons, and in the dietary instructions he disclosed an interesting fact—he stated that “ the French, who in common life use leaven, have a method of making fresh bread on board their ships which I do not find we could ever arrive at. There can be no doubt of their benefiting much by it, in the preservation of their seamen.” It is somewhat humiliating to realise how slow we are in adopting new ideas in this country, for the baking of soft bread on board our men-of-war for the crew was not “ arrived at ” until about twenty years ago, whereas the French were supplying it to their men 120 years earlier. Amusements for the boys were well catered for. A drum and fife band was to be established, and songs, patriotic and jovial, were to make glad the hearts of the youthful scholars, who were encouraged to greet each other when aroused from slumber by the hoarse cries of the boatswain’s mates as thus :—

“ See, with rosy banners streaming,
 Young ey’d morn ascend the skies !
 Why, my mess mate, art thou dreaming ?
 Awake, my boy—my friend arise ! ”

Finally the proposals close with admonition of an ethical and religious nature to aid the scholars to keep to the paths of moral rectitude.

It will be seen that the scheme as a whole approximated very closely in its objects to the modern industrial school, and it is curious that anything so practical and well-thought-out should have remained dormant for so many years. Until the Elementary Education Act of 1866 enabled School Boards to establish and maintain industrial schools we had nothing of the kind in this country, though in its nautical proposals the scheme must undoubtedly have been of service to the Admiralty when they established the Royal Hospital School at Greenwich.

Mr. Hanway’s suggestions were published in 1783, in a book, of which two editions were issued, one of 750 in folio and the other of 500 in 12mo., in two volumes. It contained eleven copper plates, and five engravings, and forty-eight plates of music, costing about £200 to produce, and being sold at 1s. 6d. per copy.

The scheme was laid before the Marine Society in 1783, and was most carefully considered, but was deemed too ambitious and costly for a charitable institution to undertake, and there-

fore was not adopted. Modifications of it were under consideration when the author died in 1786, and these led to the purchase by the Society of a small merchant-vessel, named the *Beatty*, which was fitted up and established as a training ship off Deptford, thus becoming the pioneer of all training ships. One of her successors served as the model for the training ships of the Royal Navy, which were not first established until more than half-a-century later. The Marine Society's new acquisition for training purposes, H.M.S. *Hermione*, to be re-named *Warspite*, is a lineal descendant of the *Beatty*, and the system of training to be carried out in her will be on the nautical lines originally proposed by Mr. Hanway, but as modified from time to time in the Society's succeeding training ships which bring it thoroughly up-to-date.

Since this scheme was put forward our system of manning the Royal Navy has undergone many changes and to-day we find it so popular a Service that no private assistance in its recruiting department is necessary. The institution of a proper training system, based on that started by the Marine Society, good food, regular pay, liberal leave, the introduction of long service and pensions has made it a matter of no difficulty to get as many boys and men as the country requires. The Merchant Service is not quite so happily situated as to pensions, but it is a very popular service also, and even here there is no need whatsoever for such an extensive training system as Mr. Hanway proposed, for conditions have entirely altered since steam displaced sail. A far smaller number of hands is required, and it is not now necessary for fore-castle hands to be so highly trained as in former years. Shipowners can in most cases satisfy all legal requirements and supply their own needs by accepting the raw material, whether in the shape of boys or men. In any case we must be thankful that in these tax-burdened times neither the State nor the rates are saddled with the responsibility of training and recruiting for the Mercantile Marine. The less that service, as a business concern, has to endure from State interference, the better. The manning problem can well be left in the hands of the shipowners, with the additional assistance of the voluntary training establishments, most of which combine charity with policy. When these last cease to fulfil a useful purpose they will automatically lose support and come to an end. Once established as rate aided institutions they would persist for all time or certainly so long as there was a ratepayer.

It is interesting to note that whereas in Mr. Hanway's day

the majority of the men discharged from the Navy were unskilled labourers, and not equipped for any particular shore occupation, at a time when occupation was open to all suitable men, the situation is now reversed. The majority of the men now leaving the service are highly skilled, and of many trades, but the work which they would gladly take up is non-existent. No doubt things will come right later on, but, in the meantime, the problem of their suitable employment is a difficult one, and it is to be regretted that we no longer have the inventive genius of Mr. Hanway to fall back upon for its solution.

P R O P O S A L
 for
County Naval Free Schools,
to be built on Waste Lands.
giving such effectual Instructions to
P O O R B O Y S ,
as may nurse them for
(T H E S E A S E R V I C E .)
teaching them also to cultivate the Earth,
that in due time they may furnish their own food;
And to spin, knit, weave, make shoes &c.
with a view to provide their own Raiment,
while good Regulations and Discipline,
diffuse a moral & religious Economy
through the Land.

TITLE PAGE OF HANWAY'S "COUNTY NAVAL FREE SCHOOLS"—1783.