

SECTION III

Section III Chapter 1

THE OFFICERS' MESS

FUNCTIONS, MEMBERSHIP AND ORGANISATION

Reference: AP3223 Administration and Accounting for Messes

FUNCTIONS OF THE OFFICERS' MESS

1. The Officers' Mess has three functions. Firstly it is the home of the living in officers, secondly it is a club for serving, affiliated and honorary members of the mess and thirdly it is the centre of all social and recreational activities for the officers of that station.

MESS MEMBERSHIP

2. Members of a station mess are to be either full, affiliated, or honorary members as detailed below:-

a. Full Members.

(1) All officers of the Royal Air Force serving, or on temporary duty, at the station.

(2) All naval and military officers serving or on temporary duty at the station.

(3) All officers of the Commonwealth forces attached as individuals to the Royal Air Force and subject to the Air Force Act.

b. Affiliated Members. Eligible for affiliated membership are civilians of officer status, all officers of the RAF Reserves and Officers of Commonwealth countries or foreign powers, serving or on temporary duty at the station.

c. Honorary Members. Eligible for honorary membership are all officers of the RAF and RAF Reserves visiting a station mess off duty. The mess committee may, with the station commanders approval, or if such persons do not hold the Queen's Commission the AOC's permission, invite important residents in the neighbourhood to become honorary members of the station mess with the consent of a general mess meeting. Ladies may not become honorary members.

DINING AND NON-DINING MEMBERS

3. Every officer, whether married or single, serving, or on temporary duty at a station, is normally to be a dining member of the mess. Married officers, or widowers wishing to become non-dining members may do so with the approval of the station commander. Non-dining members also must obtain permission from the station commander to become dining members. Dining members may be referred to as living-in members.

PRIVILEGES

4. Affiliated or honorary membership carries with it the privileges of membership subject to regulations and other rules issued by the station commander.

However, only full members of the mess are eligible to be elected or appointed to the mess committee, to attend mess meetings, or serve the mess in any capacity.

#### ORGANISATION

5. Responsibilities of the Station Commander. The station commander is ultimately responsible for the general discipline, tone, and management of the mess and that all the rules as laid down are observed.
6. Mess Committee. The committee appointed for the management of the mess is normally to consist of not less than four members. With the exception of the president of the mess committee who is appointed by the station commander, members of the committee are to be nominated and elected, subject to the station commander's approval, in a free vote at a general mess meeting. In practice the PMC (in consultation with the station commander) usually nominate a well fitting and aspiring young officer for an important post and, with the agreement of the selected officer, his name is put forward to a general mess meeting for the formal approval of the meeting. Tenure of office is normally for a twelve month period ie two accounting periods.
7. The mess committee is to be constituted as follows:-
  - a. The President of the Mess Committee. The PMC is appointed by, and directly responsible to the station commander for the management, accounts and discipline of the mess, and for the work of the committee and mess staff. The PMC is the senior member of the committee and acts as chairman at all mess committee meetings and general mess meetings. Whenever possible a senior unmarried officer is appointed to the position.
  - b. The Secretary and Treasurer. The holder of this office, normally called the mess secretary, is responsible to the PMC for the correctness of the accounts of the mess and for the safe custody, receipt, and proper disbursement of any monies entrusted to and administered by him on behalf of the mess. He is normally also responsible for the correspondence of the mess of a general nature.
  - c. Bar Officer. The bar officer is responsible to the PMC for the efficient working of the bar and for the provisioning and safe custody of cash takings and bar and cellar stocks.
  - d. Officer in Charge of Messing. The messing officer is responsible to the PMC for the efficiency of the mess stewards and kitchen staff, and in particular for a standard of messing. He is also responsible for a daily record of messing income and expenditure.
  - e. Additional Members. A mess will normally have the following additional members as members of the committee: house member, library member, gardens member, and entertainments member.
8. Mess Manager. At a station where there are a great number of members a mess manager may be appointed to reduce the amount of routine work that include supervision of the mess staff, the general day to day running of the mess, and implementing the decisions of the mess committee.

9. Mess Meetings. Mess meetings, at which every available officer is to attend, are to be called at specific intervals, or at any time when important matters require early debate. Categories of mess meetings are:-

a. The General Mess Meeting. A general mess meeting is to be held once every six months after the accounts have been audited and the balance sheet published. Business to be discussed would include the passing of the minutes of previous meetings, the adoption of the balance sheet, election of mess committee members and any other mess business. Any member who wishes to bring a proposition before the meeting is required to submit it in writing to the PMC at least five days before the notified day of the meeting. The propositions, and those issued by the mess committee are to be posted in the mess at least 48 hours before the time of the meeting and after the approval of the station commander has been given.

b. The Extraordinary General Mess Meeting. An extraordinary general mess meeting to discuss important matters may be called either by the station commander or by the wish of one-fifth of the members duly notified to the PMC. The rules regarding propositions described in sub-para a. apply equally to meetings of this nature.

c. Conduct of Mess Meetings. The accounts of the mess are to be brought before the general mess meeting, in addition to other items which may be on the agenda. At all meetings, officers are allowed to propose and discuss matters in relation to the finances, management, and welfare of the mess. A vote is to be taken on any proposition on which a difference of opinion exists, and the point is to be decided by a majority of votes, subject to the veto of the station commander. Accurate and full minutes of the discussions are to be entered in a minute book.

Section III Chapter 2

THE OFFICERS' MESS

ACCOUNTING, EQUIPMENT, MESS BILLS

Reference: AP3223 Administration and Accounting for Messes

MESS FUNDS

1. A mess starts its life with a grant and possibly a loan from the RAF Central Fund. From then onwards the mess must balance its accounts. The grant and loan is placed in the general mess fund (GMF) account, which is the main account of the mess.
2. There are various other accounts, such as messing, bar, entertainments, maintenance, gardens, sports, mess guests, property, investments. Each account runs for a six month period, is audited at the end of this period and each account is balanced. A surplus or debit in a particular account is adjusted by placing the surplus into GMF or paying out of GMF an amount to take care of the debit balance.
3. Only one of these accounts, messing, receives money from public funds in the shape of living-in officers daily messing rate. The bar and the investment account should always show a good return but the remainder may require a vote of money from the GMF.
4. The maintenance account, for instance, records all expenses incurred in the normal upkeep of the mess and also the income from which expenditure is met. This account is debited with such things as postage, newspapers and magazines, laundry, cleaning materials, the value of losses or breakages and depreciation charges on mess property. The account is credited with members mess subscriptions and mess contributions. Credit or debit balances at the end of the sixth month period would be transferred to the general mess fund account.
5. The gardens account receives normally an annual amount of money which is voted out of general mess funds. The mess guest account is balanced by charges on members mess bills monthly and is strictly divisible between all members.

EQUIPMENT SUPPLIED BY THE RAF

6. Furniture, carpets, table linen, crockery, cutlery and kitchen and mess utensils to an authorised scale are issued from barrack stores. The equipment is held on inventory and is replaced at varying intervals. However, the mess is liable for all loss of, or damage to equipment that cannot be attributed to fair wear and tear.
7. Articles of mess furniture, property or equipment are not to be taken from the mess or removed from one room to another without permission from the PMC. It is the duty of the member of report to the PMC, in writing, any breakages he may occasion or notice.

MESS PROPERTY

8. Various items purchased out of mess funds such as wireless or television sets, paintings or plate, are termed mess property, and their value and date of purchase are recorded in the mess property book. These items are accountable and subject to audit.

## SUBSCRIPTIONS AND CONTRIBUTIONS

9. To defray the ordinary expenses of the mess certain charges are levied against each mess member on mess bills at the end of each month:-

- a. A mess subscription of up to half a days basic pay per month.
- b. A maintenance contribution which should normally not exceed £1.00 a month by regulation, and in practice is usually significantly less.
- c. A mess guest charge.
- d. Charges for extra messing - usually about 20p per day.
- e. Charges for entertainment.
- f. Charges for mess contributions to PSI sports fund.

10. The rate of subscriptions and contributions is fixed by the mess committee and approved by the station commander. Other charges are agreed and voted for at a general mess meeting subject to the station commander's approval.

## ADDITIONAL CHARGES

11. In addition to the charges authorised above officers' private accounts such as laundry, telephone, and mess bills incurred at other messes, will also be charged on mess bills. Garage rent and liquor and sundries purchased in the bar will also be charged.

## PAYMENT OF MESS BILLS

12. Every officer is to pay his previous month's mess bill on or before the 10th day of each month. The PMC is required to report to the station commander the name of any officer who fails to do so. If the account is not settled by the 20th of the month, the matter is to be referred to higher authority.

13. Members leaving the station, must either settle their accounts before departure or arrange for them to be paid on the date they are due for payment.

14. Payment of mess bills is normally to be made by cheque, for the exact amount of the account rendered. Mess rules normally state that if an officer raises a query in connection with his mess bill, he is nevertheless to pay the bill in full and any adjustment is to be made at a later date.

15. It is normal for officers visiting or attached to stations to settle their mess bills before departure unless the visit is for a period in excess of three days, in which case the account may, if necessary, be sent to the parent station for recovery.

## MEMBERS ACCOUNTS

16. A daily charges book is maintained to record the daily charges incurred by members of the mess. The book is made available for scrutiny by members during certain times of the day from Monday to Friday.

#### WARNING-IN AND WARNING-OUT

17. The warning-in and warning-out book normally resides on a table in the foyer of the mess. Officers posted to the station are to sign the warning-in book immediately on arrival. If a member intends to be absent from the station for one day or more he must notify the probable period of absence in the warning-out book, stating whether it is on account of duty or leave. On his return he must make an entry in the warning-in book.

#### VISITORS BOOK

18. Members entertaining private guests are to ensure that they sign the visitors' book. Additionally, officers visiting other messes should normally sign the visitors book.

#### SUGGESTIONS BOOK

19. Two further books which normally reside also in the foyer of the mess are the suggestion's book, in which suggestions regarding the management of the mess may be made, and the messing suggestion's book in which suggestions regarding messing may be entered.

20. These books require constructive suggestions (not complaints) which should be written simply and objectively. Complaints should be addressed, in writing, to the PMC, or if they are very minor brought to the notice of the correct mess committee member.

#### MESS RULES

21. Mess Rules should be read carefully by officers' on arrival at a new mess. They are issued by the station commander and are to be obeyed.

OFFICERS' MESS ETIQUETTE

INTRODUCTION

1. Etiquette is, by definition, the unwritten or conventional laws of courtesy observed between members of the same profession. These unwritten or conventional laws are invariably based on the common-sense application of discipline, good manners and consideration for others.
2. Day to day behaviour in the officers' mess is governed to a great extent by a certain etiquette and code of conduct which we have inherited from past generations of serving officers. You will find, however, that outmoded or unwarranted rules have been graciously abandoned. Those remaining are quite necessary for the good running of an officers' mess, as they would be for many forms of communal living, and, in general, are designed to uphold the dignity of the Queen's commission, our way of life, and the Service in particular.
3. This precis has been written to guide you into the way of mess life. Small variations between messes are covered by local mess rules but the following may be taken as reasonably common to all.

GENERAL FACILITIES AND CONDUCT

4. As may be expected in a building designed to house a hundred or more officers, most of the facilities of a home are provided but on a larger scale. Implicit in the scale of these facilities is the fact that they must be shared; nearly all mess rules are directed toward the establishment of a code of behaviour among officers that enables this sharing to be equably and graciously achieved. Mess servants are established but their job is cleaning and looking after the mess, not cleaning up after untidy or inconsiderate mess members.
5. Ante Room. The ante room is the equivalent of a lounge or sitting room. Magazines and newspapers are provided and must on no account be removed from the ante room to be read, for example, in an individual's own room. They are usually laid out on a table in the ante room and should preferably be returned to this table when you have finished with them; do not leave them littered around the room. A radio is also provided; do not have the volume so high as to inconvenience other people who may not like the programme concerned. Do not whistle or otherwise accompany the music. If you are the last to leave the room when the radio is on, turn it off before leaving.
6. Dining Room. Whilst the pace and appetite generated by student life makes the incentive for punctuality at meals irresistible, try to keep this a virtue and not a vocation. Do not be late either. Arriving for breakfast on a Sunday two minutes before serving is due to stop is not fair on the staff; they have other work to do. If dinner finishes at 2000 hours, try to be there at 1950 hours at the latest. Smoking is only allowed in the dining room on dining in nights and guest nights. If you wish to address the dining room staff do so by surname (prefixed by Mr, Mrs, or Miss for civilian staff.) If you do not know their names you may address all male staff, both service and civilian, as "steward". WRAF personnel are addressed by rank and name. NCOs are given the courtesy of their rank.



a. Breakfast. Cereals, tea and coffee are usually on a sideboard for self-service; a steward will take your breakfast order and wait on you after you have sat down. Newspapers are normally available in the dining room for reading during breakfast; if you take one, be reasonable about how far you unfold it and always return it to the table from which it was taken. (This is not allowed in College Hall Mess). Say 'Good morning' on arrival at the breakfast table; most officers, at breakfast, are happy to let conversation be minimal thereafter.

b. Lunch. Some messes have soup on a self-service basis but most have steward service throughout lunch. Cheese and the cold buffet (if there is one) is usually laid out for self-service. Coffee is normally set out in the ante room, and if it is served in the dining room most officers take it to the ante room to drink.

c. Tea. Nearly all messes serve afternoon tea in the ante room. It is laid out on a table and officers help themselves. Do not crowd round the table trying to serve yourself if there are three or four officers already doing so.

d. Dinner. Dinner is usually served from 1900 - 2000 hours; the service is normally the same as at lunch. At either of these meals it is permissible to bring drinks from the bar to embellish your meal.

7. Bar. Major points are outlined below:

a. Bar opening and closing times are laid down in mess rules. Generally the bar is closed at 2300 hours by the SDO, but it may be later on Saturday evenings in some messes. On occasions, with the consent of the PMC or a senior officer present, the bar may be kept open after closing hours. To keep the bar open after the designated time for closing normally requires an explanation to the Station Commander.

b. Never drink alcoholic drinks less than 10 hours before flying. Even if not flying do not let lunch time drinking affect your afternoon efficiency in any way.

c. The sight of anyone in the bar holding half-eaten confectionery in one hand and a drink in the other is offensive to those who use the bar for its primary purpose; Crisps, perhaps, but never chocolate.

d. Remember that the elderly gentleman you meet in the bar one night may well turn out the next day to be a visiting high ranking officer.

e. The Royal Air Force has an excellent tradition of informality out of working hours. Do not abuse it by pouring out your troubles and complaints to senior officers in the bar. Beware of over-familiarity and do not misuse the congenial atmosphere of the bar to ask for favours concerning service matters; such requests should be made during working hours.

f. No matter how big the party was, make it a point of honour to be absolutely punctual for work the next morning.

8. Living Accommodation. One of the most annoying features of living in

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Mess is noise. Your radio should be audible enough in your room without the volume being fully up. Remember your neighbour may not share your particular taste in music. Many messes forbid the playing of radios after certain hours. Other points worthy of note are:-

- a. Keep quiet when returning late from a party.
  - b. Do not keep or consume liquor in your quarters until you are so entitled.
  - c. Batmen are provided to make your bed, clean your room, look after your clothes and clean your buttons and shoes. Be reasonable about the jobs you give them; keep your room tidy yourself. You should tip an average batman £1 a month - or more if he does extra jobs for you. However, it is acceptable to ask other members for guidance.
  - d. Always clean the bath after you have used it; scouring powder and a cloth are usually provided. The batman can only clean it once a day, yet it may be used three or four times in an evening.
9. Ladies' Room. Under no circumstances are ladies permitted in living accommodation or public rooms; a ladies' room is provided for officers who wish to entertain ladies in the mess. It may also be used for private dinners or parties with the PMC's prior permission. In most messes it is permissible to take ladies into the bar on certain days of the week.
10. Commanding Officer. Always rise from your seat if the Station Commander or any officer of equal or superior rank to him enters a public room of the mess; this does not apply to the dining room. It is not necessary to call the room to attention.

#### DRESS

11. Uniform. No 2 Home Dress may be worn in the mess until 1900 hours though its use is permitted after this time if you are night flying. Normally, however, if you have to wear uniform after 1900 hours it must be No 1 Home Dress (eg if you are Orderly Officer) or Mess Kit (eg attending a dining in night). Do not work on your car or do menial jobs in uniform.
12. Civilian Clothes. Unless you are on duty, do not appear after 1900 hours in uniform. Change completely into civilian clothes (do not keep your uniform shirt or socks on). In public rooms a lounge suit is normally mandatory evening wear on Mondays, Tuesdays, Thursdays and Fridays; on Wednesdays and week ends sports coat (or blazer) and flannels may be worn. Note however, that a jacket must always be worn and so must a tie; tie-less shirts, jerkins, cardigans or pullovers are not acceptable. During weekdays (eg if you are on leave or stand-down) sports jacket and flannels may be worn, but only until 1900 hours - Wednesdays, of course, excepted.
13. Sports Kit and Working Clothes. Never appear in the public rooms of the mess in sports kit or working clothes. It is quite in order to go to and from your room but do not wander round the mess unnecessarily when untidily clad. If you want to work on your car in old clothes or overalls then use the side or back entrance.
14. Hats and Coats. Never take hat, coat or gloves, uniform or civilian, worn or carried, into a public room of the mess.

15. Visitors. You are responsible for the dress and behaviour of any guests you bring into the mess: tactfully ensure that they conform to mess standard. Normally, Ladies may be entertained in the Ladies' Room within certain hours. Instructions on this and on Ladies use of the bar will be found in Mess rules.

16. When you achieve the enviable position of being an established member of the staff of a station, you will know many if not all the other officers on the staff. In any event you should be able to recognise an unfamiliar face in the mess and it is the duty of every member to ensure that he is made to feel at home. Do not be afraid to introduce yourself and to offer your services and help, and be prepared to introduce him to your friends and to buy him a drink.

#### GENERAL

17. Many messes experience difficulty in finding mess staff and you should be aware that they perform arduous duties with rather meagre financial reward. If they serve you well, say so and thank them personally. If you have a complaint, do not make it to them personally particularly in the heat of the moment. Instead, seek out the appropriate member of the mess committee, or if it is particularly serious put the complaint in writing to the PMC. (vide AP 3223).

#### CONCLUSION

18. The main purpose of the customs and rules of a mess is to ensure the comfort of all members and maintain the traditional way of life within the Royal Air Force. The common-sense application of discipline, good manners and consideration for others is the basis on which your actions should be governed in the mess and the basis on which you should interpret mess rules.

DINING IN NIGHT AND GUEST NIGHT

PROCEDURE

INTRODUCTION

1. You will find in every profession that certain rules and regulations have been introduced but at the same time there will exist certain unwritten 'rules' and a certain code of conduct. The Services are no exception in this respect and, indeed, much of our way of life is additionally enhanced by traditions and customs which you, in your turn, will jealously guard.

2. Much of the procedure was formulated for the proper conduct of the evening in Army messes and for the wardroom of ships, long before the formation of the Air Force.

GENERAL

3. A dining-in night or guest night is regarded as a parade. Absence is only permitted with the PMC's prior approval or Station Commander's authority and lateness in attending requires a personal apology to the president.

4. A dining-in night is normally restricted to officers of the station while, as the name suggests, civilian or Service guests will be present at a guest night. With the PMC's permission you may invite male guests to certain dining-in nights.

NOTICE OF A DINING-IN OR GUEST NIGHT

5. A notice, to the effect that a dining-in night or guest night is to take place, is usually placed on the notice board some days before the event. It will detail the dress for the evening, names of officers being dined-in or dined-out, the names of invited guests and the president and vice-president.

6. Normally time for assembly is '7.30 for 8' ie assemble at 1930 hours for dinner at 2000 hours.

DRESS

7. The dress for a dining-in night or guest night is mess kit. Mess kit with a blue cummerbund is the equivalent of a dinner jacket for civilians, while mess kit with a white waistcoat is equivalent to tails.

8. When a blue cummerbund is worn with No 5 (Home) Dress, a soft white shirt with turned down collar and Marcella front is to be worn. The approved patterns are Gieves Pall Mall 222 or Rocolo M69, but any Marcella (or golf Ball) type of shirt from a reputable outfitter which conforms to the approved pattern is acceptable.

9. With white waistcoats a stiff shirt with wing collar remains mandantory. White waistcoats are only worn when ordered by the PMC and this will only be on occasions of the more important mess functions such as the annual ball.

10. Mess kit trousers have a distinctive cut and have no back pocket. Normal service pattern shoes may be worn but most officers prefer to wear black patent leather shoes. Because of the shortness of the jacket braces have to be worn.

11. It is the prerogative of lady guests in Officers' Messes to wear the fashion of the day, but within the bounds of propriety appropriate to an officers mess. Unless specified, it is quite correct for ladies to wear short or long dresses when officers are to wear lounge suits or dinner jackets (the latter frequently abbreviated to 'black tie'). When 'white waistcoats' are to be worn, ladies should wear long dresses. Officers remain responsible for ensuring that their lady guests are dressed appropriately for the occasion. If a junior officer receives an invitation from a senior officer and is not clear what should be worn, he should approach the staff of the senior officer.

12. Dining-in and Guest Night Procedure. The procedure followed at a Dining-in or Guest night is listed below:-

a. The President. At the RAF College special arrangements apply, but normally the president of a dinner or guest night is the PMC. There is usually a 'U' or 'E' shaped table layout. The president sits at the centre of the top table and the vice-president sits at the end of one of the 'limbs'.

b. Assembly. Officers assemble in the ante room 30 minutes before the time arranged for the dinner and on entering the room seek the president and say 'Good evening', Sir' or, if the president has not yet arrived 'Good evening, Sir' to the most senior officer present. It is normal courtesy to say good evening to your station commander if you meet him. If the station commander and the president are together you should address the president first and the station commander second. Do not click your heels or bow: merely stop and stand upright. During this time before dinner, sitting down is prohibited. Smoking of cigarettes (not pipes) may be allowed; mess rules should be your guide.

c. Dinner. In some small messes, when dinner is announced, the president moves into dinner followed by the assembled gathering in approximate order of seniority. In this case, the president would normally ask the senior officer present if he is ready to dine and escort him to dinner. At large messes including the messes at the RAF College, officers move into the Dining Room in ascending order of rank. Mess rules should clarify the procedure adopted in the particular Mess.

d. Grace. Having arrived in the dining room officers should stand behind their chairs. When all members have arrived, Grace will be said by the Padre or in his absence the president: all will then be seated.

e. The Meal. Do not start any course until after the president has started. There is normally at least a four course meal and the mess staff will wait until every officer has signified that he has finished a particular dish before clearing away and returning with another. Obviously it is not in good taste to quickly devour food but conversely do ensure that the proceedings are not slowed down.

f. Wine. In some messes it is customary to order wine before the meal and a wine bottle is delivered at table by the wine waiter. The bottle must not be put on the table - it is custom for one of the officers sharing the wine to keep the bottle on the floor by his chair. Many messes including College Hall Mess serve glasses of wine with the meal, the wines being selected by the PMC. In this case a collective

charge for wine is made but because you pay for it does not mean you should try to drink as much as you can.

g. The Port. Towards the end of dinner the port and madeira decanters are passed round by the president (and also by the vice president if there are a large number at dinner) in a clockwise direction. Each officer helps himself and then passes the decanter to his left; the president and vice president help themselves last. Stoppers are retained by the president and vice president before circulating the decanters. The decanters are always taken and given with the right hand. There must be no delay in their travel.

h. Water. Officers who do not wish to take port should leave their glasses unfilled and pass the decanter on to their left. Their glasses will be filled with water by one of the mess staff. The Queen's health should not be drunk in spirits.

j. The Loyal Toast. Her Majesty's health is to be drunk on guest nights, and on other occasions at the discretion of the president. In practice the Loyal toast is drunk without exception at RAF messes at both dining in and guest nights. When the glasses are filled the stoppers are replaced in the decanters as a signal to the mess staff to withdraw. When the staff have withdrawn the president calls for silence by striking the table, and then rising, says: 'Mr Vice, The Queen'. The vice-president then rises and when he is standing, says 'Gentlemen, The Queen', or, 'Ladies and Gentlemen, The Queen', according to the company assembled at dinner. When all have risen the toast is drunk. If a band is in attendance, the first six bars of the National Anthem are played immediately after the vice-president has called the toast and all are standing. In this case, the toast is not to be drunk nor are glasses to be raised until the National Anthem has been played. If foreign officers are guests of the mess it is customary for the President to call Mr Vice to toast the head of the state (or states) represented. This is shortly followed by the senior foreign representative toasting "HM the Queen".

k. Dessert and Smoking. Coffee, and occasionally dessert, follow the toasts; permission to smoke will be given by the president either by lighting a cigar or cigarette himself or by signifying to someone near him that he has given permission to smoke. If a band is present, it is usual for the bandmaster to be invited to sit beside the president, and drink a glass of port just prior to leaving the dining room.

l. Speeches. Should an officer be called upon to make a speech he should begin "Mr President, Group Captain Smith (or the Commanding Officer's rank and name) and Gentlemen", (or if ladies are present 'Ladies and Gentlemen'). Should a number of diners be called upon to toast the remainder, they alone will stand; those being toasted remain seated.

m. Emergency Procedure. If for any reason (eg a call for the SDO, an urgent phone call, or feeling suddenly unwell) you are obliged to leave the dining room before dinner is over, you must walk round to the president and ask his permission to leave. On your return you must also walk round to the president and ask his permission to rejoin the table.

n. The End of Dinner. To indicate that the dinner is over and that those who wish to leave the table may do so, the president will stand (he may not knock the table on this occasion) and after a second or two, without speaking, he will sit down again. However, it is more usual for the president to escort the senior guest out of the room at this time. When the president has left, the vice-president must then take his place at the top of the table. The vice-president must remain until all the diners have left.

o. Levity at Dinner. Although dinner need not be an unduly solemn occasion, save your levity until after the Loyal Toast.

p. Mess Silver. It is not permitted to touch the mess silver during the meal.

q. Ladies Names. Ladies names are not to be mentioned until after the port has been passed. Ladies are never to form a subject of general discussion.

13. The Aftermath. Normally the ante room in which you assembled before dinner will act as a bar and after the meal it is customary to return there for a few drinks.

a. In general do not leave the company until after the station commander has left. If you wish to retire early ask permission of the PMC.

b. A rather robust form of entertainment known as 'mess games' may develop after dinner. This is both enjoyable and in the best service tradition but do not take it to excess. Do not force senior officers to join in games once they have declined. Do not damage mess furniture.

c. It is difficult for a newly commissioned officer to judge where joie de vivre stops and boorishness begins. However, a quick recount of the drinks you have consumed could well indicate to you that all is not well.

d. It is an RAF custom, dearly bought, that the later the dining-in night ends the more demanding an officer is of his dress, appearance and punctuality at first parade.

#### CONCLUSION

14. There is a rare intermixture in the procedures to be followed for dining-in and guest nights and the keen observer will notice how history protocol, customs, traditions and etiquette have been carefully intertwined.

15. The accent on these evenings is formal only in the procedures to be followed. These are traditional, and their continued observance throughout the years has transformed what were once rules into present day customs.



CONVENTIONS OF EATING AND DINING

INTRODUCTION

1. Table manners have evolved over the years mainly by traditions and customs. Our table manners are not international, not even European. What is considered normal and usual in England is often considered bad manners or unusual in other countries. However, table manners are international in that they have in common two principal aims: the first is uniformity so that waiters or servants may not be at a loss and the second is just plain consideration for others.

2. The following paragraphs will outline in the main the accepted table manners of our own country. Naturally as a commissioned officer you will be expected to know and conform.

PRIOR TO THE MEAL

3. Ladies will be seated first, and if you have a senior or elderly neighbour allow him freedom to sit down before you yourself are seated. A host will normally seat himself last. The table napkins should be unfolded and laid on your lap in time for the first course.

4. Before the arrival of the food do not re-arrange the cutlery or touch the table silver. Sit up straight but be relaxed. Ensure that your elbows do not prod your neighbour and, of course, they do not stray on to the table.

DURING THE MEAL

5. Hors d'oeuvre is an extra dish served as a relish normally at the beginning of a meal. If you are offered a selection do not aim at sampling them all: choose a selection of three or four. They are eaten with either a fish knife and fork or with a teaspoon depending on the delicacy. For melon, a dessert-spoon and knife or fruit fork and knife are used.

6. Soup is taken normally with a round-backed soup spoon. The custom that one drinks from the edge of the spoon and that it should be moved away from one's person to pick up the soup, and the soup plate is similarly tilted away, is rather strange for other dishes are never eaten in this manner.

7. Fish, of course, is eaten with a fish knife and fork: in the case of fish on the bone remember that the fish must not be turned over. A fish bone in the mouth should be removed unobtrusively with fingers yet bone or gristle from meat should be deposited on the plate from the fork.

8. An entree is the dish served between the fish and the main course. When eating with a knife and fork, the knife should not be held like a dagger or like a pen, it should be steadied with the index finger along the back of the blade, the handle of the knife being hidden in the palm of the hand. The fork is used point downwards and should not normally be used like a spoon for dealing with peas or vegetables of a similar nature. The American custom of using the knife and fork for cutting up the food and then dropping the knife is rather frowned upon in this country. Similarly the Dutch custom of hanging on like grim death to a knife and fork, without placing them on the plate from time to time, is also taboo.

9. Curry should be eaten with a spoon and fork, and some dishes, spaghetti and ravioli for instance, are eaten with a fork alone with occasional provision of a spoon to assist in manipulating the strands of spaghetti.

10. During breaks in your eating, place your knife and fork on the plate at an angle to one another, don't rest the handles on the table. When you have finished, place them together on your plate with the fork points uppermost, and this will indicate to the servants that you have finished your course.

11. Some foods are eaten with the fingers. Into this category comes asparagus and prawns, apart from the more rare delicacies of frogs legs and snails. Finger bowls are usually provided.

12. The sweet is normally eaten with a spoon and fork. The fork may be used by itself but not the spoon, unless a special spoon is provided for such items as ice-cream served in a grape-fruit bowl.

13. The dessert or fruit course is eaten with a dessert knife and fork. A finger bowl may be provided: depends on the fruit to be eaten. Fruit is normally cut up before eating and the finger bowl used if fingers become sticky. Merely dip the tips of the fingers into the water (often flavoured with lemon) and dry them unobtrusively on your napkin. It is very pleasant to champ on an apple and throw away the core but it is not done at dinner, either with an apple or any other fruit. Avoid cherries, they are difficult to handle. The stones of stewed plums or prunes should be removed with the fork and spoon before eating.

#### IN GENERAL

14. Bread rolls are more properly eaten with the left hand. They are broken and not cut, and should be buttered only as they are ready to be eaten. The same applies to toast at all meals.

15. Salt is put on the side of the plate never scattered. It is normal to scatter pepper over all the food as required. When you require condiments it is usual to ask specifically for salt, mustard or pepper rather than the cruet or worse the band stand. A mustard or salt spoon is not tapped on to the plate to dislodge its contents.

16. If a dish is too hot to tackle wait awhile. Do make certain that you eat quietly, in small amounts, and with your mouth closed. Don't be tempted to reply to a question if you are still consuming a mouthful; this is of course an added reason for taking small amounts at a time.

17. If anything is spilt during the meal ask a servant to clear it up. Similarly if you drop a knife, fork or spoon, a disappearing act under the table is not required - ask a servant to bring you another.

18. Take your time in eating but watch the other guests at table and ensure that the proceedings are not slowed down. Hands should rest in the lap when not eating and one shouldn't prepare a charged fork, as it were, between mouthfulls.

19. If any item you require during the meal is not within comfortable reach (or rather without stretching) ask for it to be passed to you, but avoid breaking into someone else's conversation. You should not lean across in front of another diner to talk with a person beyond him. With his co-operation, however, it is quite usual to talk to a person once removed, providing you do not overdo it.

20. At the end of the meal the servants will clear the tables before the port, and all glasses, except for the one for the toast, will be removed whether finished or not. You should fold your napkin and place it on the table and the servant will remove it, unless a dessert will be served in which case you should retain it: the menu is your guide.

21. Remember that your table was laid by an experienced servant, who was acquainted with the menu. If you are not certain as to which cutlery to use, it is safest to work from the outside to the inside. However, if still in doubt wait until others have safely started and follow their example.

#### CONCLUSION

22. The foregoing paragraphs were written primarily as a guide for a dining-in night or guest night but, of course, they apply equally well for all other occasions. A little thought will show that although you knew perhaps the content of this annex, that in practice you may have let things slip a little.

23. If you have trained yourself to dine correctly and naturally you may well expect to be invited again - conversely a hostess once embarrassed is unlikely to repeat the performance.