

LONDON SCHOOL ADOPTS DUTCH SHIP

The crew of the Dutch Motor Minesweeper AMELAND do not receive many letters from home, but the number of letters they do get each month equals that of most ships of the AMELAND's size. This is because the ship has been unofficially "adopted" by the Ravensworth Central School, Mottingham, London, S.E.

The scholars, aged between 10 and 14, particularly wanted to adopt an Allied ship because of the interest it would add to their lessons. Through the Kent Education Committee and the Netherlands naval authorities in London they were put in touch with the AMELAND, a minesweeper built in Britain, which was bought by the Dutch Government and is manned entirely by a Dutch crew.

As a result of the exchange of an average of forty letters a month, the scholars have become London's juvenile experts in Netherlands affairs.

"The children inundate us with all sorts of questions about our national traditions, customs, royal family, industries, modes of living and colonies," said the AMELAND's Commanding Officer, Lieutenant Jan Roelof Jonker, Royal Netherlands Navy. "One of the young scholars even wanted to know our annual rainfall - just one of the few questions we couldn't answer.

"Most of my crew exchange letters with the scholars and they like to tell them as much as they can about the Netherlands. In this way, we feel that between us, we are making a really useful contribution to international understanding."

Sometimes, the letters are accompanied by gift parcels and the contact between the ship and the school has been strengthened by the visits which members of the crew make to the school when on leave.

The school regards these visits as "Red Letter" days because the Dutch sailors tour the classrooms and tell the children as much as they can about their dangerous job minesweeping and all they can about their homeland.

In a letter to the Commanding Officer, the school's geography mistress, Mrs. M.M.A. Kent, describes "the excitement of the scholars on being able to make personal contact with a brave and respected ally, and on being able to learn first hand the character of your country."

Thanks to this novel form of tutelage, the Ravensworth scholars avoid at least one mistake common in the teaching of Dutch history. They know that a certain famous Dutch admiral was not named Van Tromp, but that his correct name was Maarten Harpertzoon Tromp!

+++++

NAVAL AFFAIRS