

"WATERGUARD"- OBSERVATIONS ON THE TITLE

It would be convenient to take 1671 as the starting point for this note, being the year in which the first Board of Customs was appointed by the Sovereign. It is apparent that in the latter part of the 17th century, although there were preventive measures at sea and on the coast the Board did not make a distinction between the various arms of the Service.

On the coast was the "Waiting" staff. Tide-waiters, (under Tide Surveyors), who met vessels on the tide, boarded them and secured goods for discharge into the custody of the Land-waiters, (under Land Surveyors), who assessed and collected duties. Coast-waiters controlled the coastal trade. Tide-waiters are sometimes regarded as the predecessors of the Waterguard and Land-waiters of the Outdoor Service. (these "Waiting" designation were of some antiquity, even at that time).

Inland from the coast was a corps known as the Landguard, manned by Riding Officers. As the name suggests, they covered their territory on horseback; they were armed and were to counter the carriage of contraband to inland centres.

At sea were the Revenue Cruisers (sometimes known as Custom House sloops, and smacks) and also Naval Cruisers on preventive duties. The Navy was employed from time to time on such duties throughout the 18th century as an auxiliary force. Conversely, the Revenue Cruisers were mobilised at times for coastal defence.

Except for the Landguard the Board did not make separate organisations for these parts of the Service, and a Collector would be in control of the Waiting staff and the Cruisers, if any. The Landguard was first appointed to Kent and Sussex under the supervision of a Surveyor General (this office was abolished in 1787). It seems that after the establishment of the Landguard the expression "Waterguard" came into use during the middle of the 18th century simply to distinguish from the Landguard such people as Boatmen employed afloat. Although there was no set organisation called the Waterguard the Board referred in 1788 to Waterguard Instructions concerning Watermen. In 1792 Boatmen were to be tried as to their skill at rowing by "a Tide-Surveyor or other Principal Officer of the Waterguard".

As there are apparent anomalies today with officials styled Waterguard being employed at places distant from the coast, perhaps it would be as well to interject here that the problem also arose during the 18th century. Accordingly, in 1784 a new category of official was introduced, called the Land Carriage Officer.

/These

These Officers were employed in London under the Collector to attend inns in London, Westminster and Southwark to inspect carriage for uncustomed goods. They had powers to search and seize.

By the end of the 18th century in correspondence to Collectors the Board were referring to "the Land - and Water-guard at your port". It is interesting to note that in 1801 an Officer refers to "Waterside Staff" when referring to Tidemen, Tide Surveyors etc.

In 1809 the Board introduced the "New Preventive Water-guard System", dividing the whole coast into three districts. This system, which took effect from 28th June, 1810, provided for Inspecting Commanders of Districts, Acting Mates of Tenders, Commanders of Cruizers, Sitters and Crews of Boats, all under the "Superintendence" of the appropriate Collector.

In 1816 the Revenue Cruizers were placed under the control of the Admiralty and in the same year a Coastal Blockade was proposed. Although this was for the prevention of smuggling it was never under the control of Customs, being a plan for Naval crews to be set ashore each night and return to their ships before sunrise. Meanwhile, the Preventive Waterguard was under the control of the Treasury.

In 1821 Customs resumed control of the Cruizers and in 1822 a further big re-organisation took place. A new force to be called the Coastguard was to replace the Preventive Waterguard. The force consisted of the Preventive Waterguard, the Cruizers and the Riding Officers who were now known as the Mounted Guard. By 1829 the organisation ashore included Chief Officers, Chief Boatmen, the Mounted Guard, Commissioned Boatmen and Boatmen. The Cruizers were manned Naval fashion. In 1831 it was decided that all Officers and men were to be appointed by the Admiralty but Customs retained control of the Service. In 1832 the designation "Riding Officers" disappeared and it was decided that the Mounted Guard would be recruited from cavalry regiments.

The Coast-guard Service Act, 1856, transferred the Coastguard to the Admiralty including the Cruizers. The Coastguard were to control all the coast except for ports and harbours where the Customs staff would be in charge. In effecting this the Coastguard underwent important changes in character. Protection of the Revenue too second place to the defence of the Realm and the force was regarded as Naval Reserve.

/By 1860

By 1860, what was left of the Customs preventive organisation came to be divided into two distinct classes - "Waterside" and "Waterguard" Officers. In 1861 the ranks of "Examining Officer" and "Outdoor Officer" were created, the latter being an amalgam of Lockers, Weighers, Tide-waiters and Boatmen.

In 1885, another new grade was introduced the "Assistant Examining Officer" whose duties included quarantine work and rummaging. This grade was apparently a dead-end and caused much dissatisfaction. It was abolished by the Chancellor in 1891 (the famous Goschen minute) and a new organisation provided for Landing and Waterguard staffs. The latter included Boatmen (to do rummaging) supervised by a new grade called "Preventive Officers" (former A.E.O's). The expression "Land Guard" was still in use. We read that in 1902 the preventive duty was shared by the Coast Guard Force and the Customs Waterguard or Preventive Staff.

A proposal was made in 1921 to give the Coast Guard back to the Customs. The force had so far changed in its functions that part of it was for naval signalling, part for G.P.O. communications, part B.O.T. safety organisation and part Revenue protection. Although the Coastguard Act did not receive the Royal assent until 1925 (transferring the body known as "H.M. Coastguard to the Board of Trade,) the break up took place before then. In 1922 the Inter-Departmental Committee on the Civil Duties of the Coastguard recommended the transfer of preventive work to the Customs and the setting up of a new "Coast Preventive Force" to consist of one grade, the "Coast Preventive Man" and to be a supplementary force to the Waterguard. Treasury authority was given in 1923 for the appointment of C.P.M. and it was found necessary to change the title of Preventive Man to Assistant Preventive Officer to mark a distinction. Coincidentally, the establishment of the Irish Free State led to the establishment of Land Preventive Men at that time. So the Waterguard continues

#### Conclusion

The name "Waterguard" grew as a general term in the 18th century to mark a distinction from "Land-guard". The name came to be the official one of a recognised arm of the Service by 1810 and in the nature of things was always associated with traffic by water. When an early distinction was necessary for inland traffic the officials were not Waterguard but Land Carriage Officers.

The name Coastguard was once appropriate to describe the whole of the preventive force but that name officially belongs to the Board of Trade. In any case, it is no more appropriate that Waterguard as a description of the modern functions of the force. The only appropriate name which survives and can be used without anomaly is that of Preventive Force or Preventive Service.