



A Career for men in

CUSTOMS & EXCISE

CIVIL SERVICE COMMISSION

1965

Customs duties are charges made on certain goods brought into the United Kingdom- tobacco, wine, spirits, perfume, to mention only a few. *Excise duties* are charges levied on some goods produced in the United Kingdom (e.g. whisky, beer and cigarette lighters) and on certain services and transactions (e.g. betting duty, purchase tax and the licence duties payable by dealers in intoxicating liquor).

A Revenue Department

The construction of new motorways . . . high atmospheric research by the Meteorological Office . . . the promotion of British trade overseas . . . aid to underdeveloped countries . . . the upkeep of the Armed Forces. The link between a career in Customs and Excise and such matters may not be immediately apparent. They have, however, to be paid for in total or in part, by money provided by the Government and, if you remember that the revenue collected each year by the Department of Customs and Excise accounts for almost half the national annual tax revenue, you will see that the just assessment of Customs and Excise duties and their fair and efficient collection are essential for the sound conduct of the nation's business.

The Past

Customs have been regularly levied at least from Norman times. In 1204 King John claimed one fifteenth of all merchandise imported, "together with such other Customs as might be laid according to his pleasure". In the Middle Ages, because of the difficulty of central control without swift communications, Customs were collected by a system of *farming*. A *farm*, or *firm* sum was paid to the King in advance for the right to collect Customs dues, under the supervision of a salaried official. The Civil War, and the Great Plague of 1665, brought about the collapse of the *farming* system. Thus in 1671 the Crown took the collection of duties into its own hands, and the Customs Department became a State service. Excise duties were first introduced in 1643, and were originally managed by a separate Board.

The Present

The work of the Department of Customs and Excise calls for a complete revenue network.

The network contains two separate Services. The first is the "Outdoor Service" whose basic grade is Officer of Customs and Excise. The Officers' main responsibility is the assessment of duties. The second is the "Waterguard Service" into which Assistant Preventive Officers are recruited for training as Preventive Officers; its main responsibility is the prevention of smuggling, for instance by passengers and crews of ships and aircraft.

Great Britain and Northern Ireland are divided into "Collections", in each of which the senior controlling official is called the Collector. The Collector's control extends over the work of both the local Outdoor Service and the Waterguard Service.

The Department takes pride in its active sporting and social life and its members are encouraged to join the many departmental societies which cover a wide range of sports and other activities. Nationally selected departmental teams compete with regular success in representative Civil Service competitions.

The Outdoor Service

What does an Officer of Customs and Excise do?

The Officer of Customs and Excise is a practical man in direct contact with importers and exporters, traders, and with goods. On the Customs side there are Officers at all ports where cargoes are landed and shipped. Incoming packages are opened by importers or their agents. The Officer takes account of the goods and examines them to make sure that their nature and quantity agree with documents supplied by the ship's captain and the importer. This may involve weighing casks of nearly half a ton of tobacco or measuring with special instruments the quantity and strength of French brandy. The Officer then works out the proper duty and makes sure that it is paid. At airports the duties are similar. Some Officers work in bonded warehouses where dutiable goods are stored without payment of duty until they are required either for use or for re-export.

On the Excise side Officers control breweries and distilleries to see that the traders' operations are conducted in accordance with the law and regulations. He may go to factories where dutiable articles are made, or call on traders and wholesalers whose goods are liable for purchase tax, and he will examine books and records to see that the proper tax has been charged and paid. This work entails a good deal of travelling, and the Officer has a considerable measure of freedom in arranging his day.

What qualities are needed in the Outdoor Service?

On whichever side an Officer of Customs and Excise specialises, he must become skilled in the use of a range of instruments used in assessing duty and he must get to know the technical processes of the traders with whom he deals. He must be tactful and able to get on well with all sorts of people. Most people are anxious to conform to the regulations and pay the proper duties; but not all, and for this reason, in addition to an enquiring mind and powers of observation, he needs the ability to be tenacious and firm when he suspects that duty is being dodged. He must, needless to say, be a man whom the Department can trust implicitly. The work is especially suitable for young men of ability and good education (preferably with some knowledge of general science) who are looking for a considerable variety of work, much of which is not at a desk. A high standard of physical fitness is essential.

places where crews are likely to hide contraband and must have their wits about them to detect new devices and methods of concealment. If necessary an Assistant Preventive Officer must seize a shovel and move coal if contraband is suspected in the ship's bunkers, but he must also be astute enough to detect the smuggler, posing as an innocent-looking seaman going ashore, who is wearing a waistcoat laden with watches. Waterguard Officers are always particularly on the alert to prevent the import of dangerous drugs.

When passengers come ashore the Waterguard Officers examine their baggage and collect any duty payable. The same basic principles govern the work at airports, but, in keeping with the speed of air transport, passengers are always in a hurry, and the Waterguard Officer must keep calm and preserve his judgment in an atmosphere of tension. On the Land Boundary, Waterguard Officers operate anti-smuggling patrols in fast cars, with radio and walkie-talkie sets.

A Preventive Officer may be stationed in a small port visited only by fishing smacks and colliers, or he may be at a large port like Southampton, or at London Airport.

What qualities are needed in the Waterguard Service?

Waterguard Officers need firmness and tact in dealing with all types of seamen and passengers, an ability to assess character, and a certain flair for detective work. A high standard of physical fitness is essential. A knowledge of foreign languages is useful, and special payments may be made for proficiency in them.

Is training also given to Assistant Preventive Officers?

Yes. A new entrant is first posted to a large port such as London or Liverpool to help, and learn from, experienced officers and to carry out simple duties. Later he goes on a course lasting two months at the Department's Training Centre at Southend-on-Sea, where he learns law and the regulations underlying the work, pays visits to docks and airports, studies the structure of ships and aircraft, learns something about the kind of men who form their crews, and is told about the devices of professional smugglers. Then he continues his training on the job, being given as much experience as possible in all phases of preventive work. Facilities for driving instruction are provided, if necessary, for any Assistant Preventive Officer required to drive official cars in the course of his duties.

What are the career prospects in the Waterguard Service?

The grade of Assistant Preventive Officer is largely a training grade for the more responsible post of Preventive Officer. To qualify for promotion to Preventive Officer when vacancies occur, Assistant Preventive Officers must pass a departmental examination followed by an interview. At the

Exemption from the written examination may be granted to candidates with G.C.E. passes, obtained in not more than two examinations, at O or A level in English language, mathematics and 3 other distinct subjects, accepted by the Commissioners, or the equivalent qualifications based on Scottish or Northern Ireland Certificates.

Number of attempts

You may not compete more than once in any one calendar year for each of these posts.

Examination centres

The written examination may be held at as many as 80-90 centres throughout the British Isles. Interviews are held in London and may also be held in Bristol, Cardiff, Edinburgh, Leeds, Liverpool, Newcastle upon Tyne, and perhaps one or two other centres.

Application forms and further information can be obtained from:

The Secretary,
Civil Service Commission,
23, Savile Row,
London, W.1.

