THE full story of the Boatbuilding Course held at Auki is a fascinating one. Although it only got under way in the practical sense in 1960, the idea for the Course was first advanced in 1957.

Practical considerations animated the Commission. Lack of suitable vessels had been a limiting factor in the development of inter-island trade and local fishing industries. The Commission foresaw that a group trained in boatbuilding would provide skills that could be applied to help expand the number of craft needed, stimulate trade and fishing, and train others. The Commission at its seventeenth session in that year approved proposals to seek the assistance of international organizations towards the holding of the Course and for the production of a manual on boatbuilding written for islands conditions.

In the following year the Commission was able to approve final arrangements for the Course to open in the British Solomon Islands Protectorate in 1960. The site, at Auki on Malaita Island, some thirty miles from Honiara, the administrative capital—was chosen in consultation with the Protectorate Government, taking into account among other things the interest in, and aptitude for, boatbuilding shown by the people who dwell on artificial islands in the lagoon there.

The arrangements made were that the Protectorate Government would provide the buildings (including house and furnishings for the Director-Instructor) and services such as power and water. The South Pacific Commission would supply the machinery, tool kits, and full sustenance costs of the students for the duration of the Course, plus personal allowances for out-of-pocket expenses. The United Nations Technical Assistance Board would recruit the Director-Instructor and pay his fares as well as half of the return fares of participants (territorial governments themselves meeting the other half).

Meanwhile, it had been arranged that a well-known naval architect, Mr. Arthur N. Swinfield of Sydney, would prepare the boatbuilding manual, with appropriate plans and specifications for vessels to be constructed.

By P. L. RYAN
Trainees at work with chisel and mallet (left) and adze (right).

**Uncertain Start**

Eventually, in late June and early July, 1960, the twenty-four participants joined the Director-Instructor, Mr. Cecil R. Fisher, at Auki. Mr. Fisher had had many years of boatbuilding and instructional experience in Papua and New Guinea, where he had built or worked on vessels ranging from small harbour craft to 300-tonners.

The students came from Papua and New Guinea, West New Guinea, the Gilbert and Ellice Islands, the British Solomon Islands Protectorate, the New Hebrides and the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands. As their workshops and quarters were still incomplete when they arrived, they helped to finish them. In the evenings they attended lectures, discussions, and demonstrations organized by Mr. Fisher. Materials and equipment were assembled progressively.

The Course was officially inaugurated on August 31, 1960, by the former British High Commissioner for the Western Pacific, Sir John Gutch.

The original programme called for three 25' fishing vessels to be built to a design by Mr. Swinfield. Starting from "scratch", the students worked right through from start to finish. They even selected for their needs suitable hardwood trees standing in the forest, felled and trimmed them, floated the logs to the workshop slipway, hauled them up, cut them into planks with a pit-saw, and, lastly, kiln dried and air-seasoned them. As the Director-Instructor commented in one of his reports, they followed their job from "standing tree to finished size".

The Director-Instructor's monthly reports over the two years of the Course tell an inspiring story—free of "official-ese"—of unflagging enthusiasm, of disappointments, frustrations and triumphs, of character-building through self-discipline, good example and the wise devolution of responsibility, of the way that mutual respect and affection developed through determination and cooperation in a common task, and of how technical skills and "know-how" were grafted on to natural aptitudes.

**First Launching**

The first great milestone was the launching of the first craft on July 13, 1961. It was followed down the slipway by the remaining two, in quick succession. Appropriately, all three were destined to be used in the first place for an intensive fisheries training course for Pacific students organized by the South Pacific Commission and, once again, assisted financially by the United Nations through the Food and Agriculture Organization. As the High Commissioner said at the launching ceremony, the school itself provided training for one industry and the results were able to provide training for another.

The next exercise was the construction of four 25' touring vessels, with some different and more complex features than the original fishing craft. Two of these were launched before the Course closed on September 8, 1962. The re
Speaking at the closing ceremony, Mr. Fisher told students that they had learnt more in two years than most apprentices do in four.

Nawarisa Bauw, of West New Guinea, replying to speeches on behalf of the students.

Closing Ceremony

Certificates were presented to the students at the closing ceremony on September 8, 1962, by His Excellency Sir David Trench, K.C.M.G., M.C., High Commissioner for the Western Pacific. A large crowd of local people and visitors attended.

In his address Sir David referred to the joint efforts that had made the Course possible. He said that all who had participated in the setting-up and running of the School could congratulate themselves on the success of a bold and imaginative experiment.

Sir David especially thanked Mr. Fisher for all he had done to ensure the success of the School. He said that it was very much Mr. Fisher's creation and his spirit had animated it. He had gained the admiration of everyone for what he had achieved.

Sir David asked the dispersing students to remember the friendships they had made, the different points of view they had exchanged, and the similarities they had discovered between themselves. All of this was almost as valuable as the techniques they had learned at the Course which had been, as was intended, an essentially practical course of instruction and a very good demonstration of the virtues of learning by doing.

Dr. J. Barrau, Executive Officer for Economic Development, representing the South Pacific Commission, told the gathering that not only had the Course been a technical success but it had been also a demonstration of international cooperation. It had prompted efforts to extend training in boatbuilding, and it was planned in 1963 to open a second two-year course at Auki and a new course at Nouméa in New Caledonia.

Dr. Barrau said the Commission's hope was to expand in the future the number and range of its training centres, courses and study groups, not only to provide training in fields of interest for the whole South Pacific region, but also to promote closer contacts and cooperation between islanders of the various territories.

Dr. Barrau thanked the Government of the British Solomon Islands Protectorate and the people of Malaita, whose hospitality and interest had been a consistent and valuable encouragement. He joined His Excellency in paying tribute to the leadership and enthusiasm of Mr. Fisher.

In a brief final address directed to the students, Mr. Fisher referred to the uncertainties and anxieties they had all felt at the beginning. These had been overcome through practical hard work, and in the two years of the Course the students had learned more than most apprentices would in four years. He urged them to continue to learn, and always to apply themselves cheerfully and patiently, however hard the task.

Mr. Nawarisa Bauw, of Fakfak, West New Guinea, replied to the speeches on behalf of the students. He thanked the High Commissioner and his officers in the British Solomon Islands Protectorate.

(Continued on page 27)
jected an anti-histamine. This was followed by an injection of adrenalin into the other arm. The constriction in the chest, which had grown steadily worse, vanished immediately and, after a period of observation, Ronik was allowed to proceed on his way. The hand and arm were still paralysed, but two days later he was able to move the third and little finger slightly. After a fortnight, feeling began slowly to return to the arm and hand, but it was three months before he finally recovered full use of them. Even today—nearly six months after the incident—there is still a feeling of tightness in the muscles.

Main Symptoms Of Cone Shell Poisoning

The main symptoms of poisoning a victim experiences after being stung by a cone shell are acute burning pains and swelling, a local numbness which in severe cases rapidly develops into paralysis, loss of muscular control and of speech, and dimness of eyesight. Virulent symptoms may wear off after about twenty-four hours, but for days after victims still feel the effects, some weeks or months elapsing in some cases before the patient feels fully recovered.

Cones live mostly in holes and fissures in the rocks and coral boulders, where they prey on other molluscs and fish. Although the animals are normally timid, moving slowly and shrinking into their shells at the approach of danger, they nevertheless have this very effective means of defence.

The shells should never be placed in their living state on the hand with the shell aperture facing downwards, but if they must be handled, it is best to hold the broad part of the shell, pointing the narrow end away from the hand or body. To ensure complete safety, tongs should be used to handle the shells, which should be carried in a tin or similar receptacle with tight-fitting lid.

The Six Most Lethal Cones

The killer cones are limited in number, but the entire cone family includes more than five hundred species, most of which make their homes in the warm waters of the Pacific. The smaller cones are relatively harmless.

The shells of these molluscs are all conical in shape and have the narrower end directed towards the front of the animal. The shells themselves are usually heavy and porcelainous in make-up, with the aperture extending the full length of the shell.

Following are the names and descriptions of six of the most lethal cones:

- **Marble Cone (Conus marmoreus)**. The best known of the stronger cones, and the most striking looking. Very heavy, solid, and smooth. Marbled all over with black and white triangular shaped spaces.

- **Tulip Cone (Conus tulipa)**. This species inflicted the wound on Ron Pahl. Is known to have wounded other people. Pretty, long, less solid than the others. Purple brown or violet in general colouring, encircled with fine lines of white-spotted brown.

- **Court Cone (Conus aulicus)**. Rather elongate, brown, crossed with numerous lines and ornamented with large unequal triangular marks. It is a recognized poisonous species of a virulent nature.

- **Sriated Cone (Conus striatus)**. Cylin­drical in shape. Colour is white stained with pale rose, variegated, streaked and mottled with black.

- **Geographus Cone (Conus geographus)**. This species killed Theophile Gnai and a number of other people. It appears to be the most virulent of cones. Large oblong and thin of texture. Faintly stained flesh or washed-out blue shades bleached and reticulated with reddish-brown.

- **Cloth Of Gold (Conus textile)**. Best known of all cones. Shell is ovate, smooth and striated towards base. Reticulated all over with orange-brown forming triangular shaped white areas. Has been responsible for many cases of poisoning.

Perhaps the most mitigating knowledge which cone collectors can store in their minds is the fact that there is a standing offer of an extremely high price for a perfect 5" specimen of the Conus gloriamaris—said to be the rarest shell in the world.

First SPC Secretary - General Re-appointed

Mr. W. D. Forsyth, O.B.E., an Australian who from 1949-1951 held the position of first Secretary-General of the South Pacific Commission, has again been appointed to the post eleven years later, for a five-year term.

Mr. W. D. Forsyth

Mr. Forsyth, who holds the degrees of M.A. (Melb.), B.Litt. (Oxon.) and Dip.Ed. (Melb.), has had a distinguished and varied career with the Australian Department of External Affairs, where he is at present Assistant Secretary. He is fifty-three, married, with two daughters and one son. He will take up his new post next March after the present Secretary-General, Mr. T. R. Smith, has completed his five-year term of office and returned to Government service in New Zealand.

Mr. Forsyth has been associated with the South Pacific Commission from its inception. He assisted in drafting the Agreement establishing it at the Canberra Conference held for the purpose in 1947. As the Commission’s first Secretary-General he set up its headquarters in Nouméa in 1949, recruited, organized and directed the international Secretariat, supervised the work programme, organized the first South Pacific Conference at Suva in 1950, and generally administered the launching of the Commission as a going concern.

After leaving the Commission’s service in 1951 Mr. Forsyth resumed duty with the Department of External Affairs in Canberra. From 1951-1955 he was Minister and Permanent Representative of Australia at the United Nations headquarters in New York and Australian Representative on the Trusteeship Council. In 1956 he returned to duty with the International Organizations and Economic Relations section of his Department at Canberra. From 1959-1961 he served as Ambassador to Vietnam, and Minister to Laos (to 1960).

School For Boatbuilders

(Continued from page 22) for their practical interest and cooperation at all times, and the members, Secretary-General and staff of the South Pacific Commission, whose efforts had resulted in the establishment of the Course. The students would show their appreciation of all that had been done for them by faithful service in the future, and by passing on to others what they themselves had gained. They all paid tribute to Mr. Fisher for his excellent leadership and guidance. They owed him much for the help he had given them, from beginning to end.

Two Further Courses

The success of the Auki Course has been so outstanding that two new courses will begin in 1963, one at Auki and the other at Nouville, near Nouméa, New Caledonia.