

**TO THE NADIR AND BACK: THE EXECUTIVE BRANCH OF THE  
ROYAL NAVY 1918-1939.**

**Volume 1 of 2.**

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the award of a degree by this or any other University**

**Signed:**

**This thesis is dedicated to Miss Macaulay, an inspirational teacher and head of history at Dorking County Grammar School. When I gave up the study of history to pursue a medical career, she told me that she ‘could have made a historian’ of me.**

I could not have completed this thesis without the help, direction and guidance of my supervisor, Dr Michael Duffy and my tutor Dr Maria Fusaro. Dr Duffy in particular has always had a very gentle, but firm hand on the tiller; he has been a truly outstanding pilot and helmsman. I am also extremely grateful for the assistance of Dr Trevor Preist, Dr Alan Wall and Dr Shaun Kilminster for specialist advice on physics, navigation and statistics respectively.

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## **ABSTRACT**

The Royal Navy, and especially its leadership, is perceived to have performed poorly in the First World War and its officers have been described as being automatons who only came alive when directed by superiors. By contrast in the Second World War the Royal Navy and its officers are seen as having ‘done well,’ displaying both flair and initiative. There does not appear to have been any attempts made to look in any detail at what, if anything, changed in the twenty years between the wars to explain the perceived improvement. This thesis critically examines the executive branch of the Royal Navy, and contends that the navy continually adapted and modified the training of its officers to meet whatever was required of them; when they were required to passively obey orders as in the Grand Fleet of the First World War, they had been trained for that eventuality, when to show initiative likewise.

During the 1920s the officer corps was mismanaged and morale and motivation suffered badly. The influence of the Admiralty civil service, the repository of institutional memory, which managed junior officers’ careers, was conservative and resistant to change. Changes in training both before and after the mutiny at Invergordon (September 1931) brought the officer corps up to date and set it on track for its outstanding performance in the next war, in particular recognising that leadership was not an innate class based ability, but had to be taught and developed. However, the navy had since the latter part of the nineteenth century changed the emphasis of officer’s career paths; specialist training was seen as the ‘route to the top’ and command was downgraded as a necessary part of an officer’s career development. It was only during the latter part of Second World War that having exercised command at sea was recognised as being an important part of an officer’s experience.

The thesis also addresses the ‘RNVR myth’. that the Royal Navy was only able to prosecute the Second World War successfully because of an influx of well educated temporary officers and that they were the major driving force.

This thesis has been largely based on primary sources, including personnel records which have not been studied before and have been examined in such a way as to allow statistical analysis.

## LIST OF CONTENTS

Volume 1	
Submission	1
Index	2
Abstract	3
Dedication	4
List of illustrations	5
Introduction	7
PART ONE: The Royal Naval Executive Officer 12 November 1918	37
Chapter 1: The Executive Branch Officer	39
Chapter 2: Entry, Education and Training	57
Chapter 3: Personnel management	91
PART TWO: To the Nadir and Back	103
Chapter 1: Declining to the Nadir: Admirals Wemyss, Beatty and Madden and their policies regarding the officer corps.	105
Chapter 2: Declining to the Nadir: Admirals Wemyss, Beatty and Madden and the morale of the officer corps.	137
Chapter 3: The Nadir and the Inflection: Admiral Field	169
Chapter 4: The Ascension: Admiral Chatfield and the improvement of the officers' lot.	217
Chapter 5: The Ascension: Admiral Chatfield and the coming war.	235
PART THREE: The Apogee	257
Chapter 1: Admirals Backhouse and Pound.	259
Chapter 2: Conclusion: The Naval Officer on 2nd September 1939	297
Volume 2	
Submission	315
Appendix A: Royal Naval officer's rank insignia etc	319
Appendix B: Cohort Study, Ethical Approvals etc and methodology	325
Appendix C: The Branches of the Executive Branch	335
Appendix D: Illustrative Officer's training Record and Certificates	343
Appendix E: Admiralty Fleet Order 2315/32 Confidential Admiralty Fleet Order 2023/32	365
Glossary	373
Bibliography	381
Annexes (on CD in rear pocket)	
List of abbreviations used in the Annexes	
Annex A: Spreadsheet of Midshipmen of 1920 seniority	
Annex B: Spreadsheet of Midshipmen of 1925 seniority	
Annex C: Spreadsheet of Midshipmen of 1930 seniority	
Annex D: Spreadsheet of Midshipmen of 1935 seniority	



## LIST OF FIGURES

- Fig.1 An index page and an Admiralty Fleet Order from December 1930.
- Fig.2 Herzberg's factors affecting employee motivation.
- Fig.3 The three sons of the Cambell family.
- Fig.4 Numbers of Royal Naval personnel up to the First World War.
- Fig. 5 Instruction on a Whitehead torpedo.
- Fig. 6 Britannia Royal Naval College, Dartmouth.
- Fig. 7 Frontispiece of the 'Blue Book' for January 1920.
- Fig. 8 A portion an officers Admiralty personal record.
- Fig. 9 Officers record card.
- Fig. 10 An Officer's ledger.
- Fig. 11 Two pages of an officer's ledger.
- Fig. 12 Extract from a 1925 Navy list
- Fig. 13 BRNC 'Blue Book' showing cadets 'Admiralty numbers'.
- Fig. 14 Letter from ADM 116/1734.
- Fig. 15 Instructions for completing form S206.
- Fig. 16 First page of a completed S206.
- Fig. 17 Second page of S206 showing the end of the first section.
- Fig. 18 Last page of S206.
- Fig. 19 Total numbers of executive branch lieutenant commanders each September.
- Fig. 20 Cartoon from the '*Evening Standard*' 20 March 1928.
- Fig. 21 Herzberg matrix at the end of the 1920s.
- Fig. 22 Admiral Field, according to Roskill, 'the most colourless First Sea Lord' of the inter war period.
- Fig. 23 Extract from an S206 transcribed onto an officers record card.
- Fig. 24 Example of a 'flimsy'.
- Fig. 25 Form S206 prior to introduction of numerical marking.
- Fig. 26 Post 1931 S206.
- Fig. 27 Post 1931 S206.
- Fig. 28 HMS *Frobisher* as a training cruiser.
- Fig. 29 Herzberg Matrix at the end of Field's term of office.
- Fig. 30 Portion of the record card of an officer discharged to the retired list in 1935.
- Fig. 31 To illustrate the degree to which RNVR officers came to predominate.
- Fig. 32 Herzberg matrix on the outbreak of war.
- Fig. 33 Table of cadets showing ultimate rank reached by year of passing out as cadets/entry as midshipmen.
- Fig. 34 The probability of a Dartmouth or Special Entry cadet reaching the rank of commander, captain or flag rank.
- Fig. 35 The first course at the Imperial Defence College.
- Fig. 39 Army officers in combat arms relied on specialists from other corps.

## ABBREVIATIONS USED IN THIS THESIS

1SL	First Sea Lord
2SL	Second Sea Lord
2SLPersRec	Second Sea Lord's Personnel Records
ACNS	Assistant Chief of the Naval Staff
ADM	Admiralty files at the national archive
AFO	Admiralty Fleet Order
AMO	Admiralty Monthly Order
AWO	Admiralty Weekly Order
BR	Book of Reference
BRNC	Britannia Royal Naval College (at Dartmouth)
CAFO	Confidential Admiralty Fleet Order
CB	Confidential Book (of reference)
CID	Committee on Imperial Defence
CNS	Chief of the Naval Staff
DCNS	Deputy Chief of the Naval Staff
GS	General Service (unofficial abbreviation)
HMSO	His Majesty's Stationery Office
KR & AI	Kings Regulations and Admiralty Instructions
NA	Naval Assistant
NDA	Naval Discipline Act
RNR	Royal Naval Reserve
RNVR	Royal Naval Volunteer Reserve
S206	Confidential report on an Officer
TBD	Torpedo Boat Destroyer (archaic)
TNA	The National Archive (formerly PRO)
VCNS	Vice Chief of the Naval Staff

**TO THE NADIR AND BACK: THE EXECUTIVE BRANCH OF THE  
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**INTRODUCTION**



The Royal Navy was a major participant in the two major wars of the twentieth century. The First and Second World Wars were, truly, wars like no other. The increasingly rapid technological advances of the nineteenth<sup>1</sup> and early twentieth centuries had meant that the Royal Navy had undergone a near total revolution, not only in material and tactical thinking but also in its organisation and training. Its ships were outstanding and the industrial organisations (private and public) to build and support it were world leaders.<sup>2</sup> For centuries naval warfare had evolved incrementally as had the demands placed on naval officers. Now the new technologies made very different demands of them, on how they were educated and trained, how they led and in turn, how they were led. The developments meant that a single executive officer could no longer aspire to know everything he needed to know about his profession, and seamanship was no longer the only or even the major professional ability.<sup>3</sup>

There is a widespread perception in the literature that the officer corps of the Royal Navy born of these changes did not perform ‘well’ in the First World War. This has been ascribed in large part to the rigidity of their education and training, but, paradoxically, it is believed that in the Second World War many of the same officers performed exceptionally ‘well’.

The aim of this thesis is to examine how the Royal Navy managed its officers between the two wars - barely twenty years apart - to ascertain what contributed to this perceived change in their performance. Because the relevant literature is sparse and in part erroneous, it cannot do so without looking back to how the officers had been inducted, moulded, educated and trained. It has to address significant misperceptions in the literature concerning the professional character of the executive branch officer, which in turn questions the perceptions of naval officers performance in the First World War, the genesis of their generally outstanding performance in the Second World War and the conclusions drawn by some as to which part of the navy was actually responsible for the perceived improvement.

The lack of understanding of how naval officers were produced and, more importantly, the breadth of their abilities and capabilities has blinkered historians in

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<sup>1</sup> Jan S. Breemer, *The Great Race: Innovation and Counter-Innovation at Sea, 1840-1890*, Corbett Paper No2 (Corbett Centre for Maritime Policy Studies, 2011).

<sup>2</sup> Ian Johnston, Brian Newman & Ian Buxton ‘Building the Grand Fleet: 1906-1916’, in John Jordan (ed.) *Warship 2012* (London: Conway, 2012) pp. 8-21.

their understanding of the officer corps and their assessment of its performance. These include significant and differing misperceptions as to their professional character. Gordon in his seminal work on naval command in the First World War paints a compelling picture of a rigid unthinking officer corps up to and including admirals, <sup>4</sup> in thrall to the concept of ‘all laws are as naught beside this one,/ thou shalt not question but obey’.<sup>5</sup> Barnett reflected a common opinion when he wrote that:

in 1900 the officer corps of the Royal Navy displayed the characteristics of professional inbreeding to the extent of Goyaesque fantasy. Arrogance, punctilious ritual, ignorance of technical progress ... were added to the unchanged organisation of the eighteenth-century navy to produce a decadence hardly matched in any force of modern time. <sup>6</sup>

Churchill was another to make much of the supposed lack of initiative shown by naval officers. In the context described by Gordon (the Battle of Jutland), Churchill said that ‘[e]verything was centralized in the Flagship, and all initiative except in avoiding torpedo attack was denied to the leaders of squadrons and divisions.’<sup>7</sup> Churchill went further, attributing their poor performance to poor education, ‘mere sea service’. Like much of Churchill’s dealing with naval affairs, this conceals an amazing degree of ignorance of naval matters, but is, typically, beautifully written.

Navies are by their very nature extremely hierarchical and discipline is rigid, because it has to be, ‘things happen too quickly at sea to allow time for long and detailed instructions. Orders must be short and snappy, and they must be instantly and exactly obeyed’.<sup>8</sup> Discipline at sea rests on that very basis and often there can be no room for individuality or initiative.<sup>9</sup> Barnett described the resulting officer as ‘an

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<sup>3</sup> Michael Howard, *War in European History*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1976) p. 127.

<sup>4</sup> Andrew Gordon, *The Rules of the Game: Jutland and British Naval Command*, (London: John Murray, 1996).

<sup>5</sup> Which is actually a telling misquotation, perpetuated to this day in engravings of the poem found on many Royal Naval officers’ office walls. In the original it is ‘*Thou shalt not criticize but obey!*’, somewhat less of an injunction to unthinking obedience, see Ronald A. Hopwood, *The Old Way and Other Poems* (London: John Murray, 1916) p. 20.

<sup>6</sup> Corelli Barnett, *The Swordbearers: Studies in Supreme Command in the First World War*, (London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1963) p. 185.

<sup>7</sup> Winston Churchill, *The World Crisis 1911-1918*, (London: Penguin Classics, 2007) p. 620.

<sup>8</sup> BR 827 *A Seaman’s Pocket-Book*, (London: HMSO, June 1943) p. 4.

<sup>9</sup> By way of illustration, a twin fifteen inch BL Mark 1 magazine/shell room/barbette/turret in service (latterly as the Mark 1\* and Mark 1 N) in both wars was manned by 64 men. Each man had particular duties and actions to be carried out in a particular and specific sequence, thirty seven to load and fire, seven further after firing. If these were not carried out in the correct sequence, each gun could not and did not fire continuously. This required discipline, obedience and teamwork of the highest order. See Ian Buxton *Big Gun Monitors: The History of the Design, Construction and Operation of the Royal Navy’s Monitors* (Tynemouth: World Ship Society and Trident Books, 1978) p.173; Peter Hodges *The Big Gun: Battleship Main Armament 1860-1945* (London: Conway Maritime Press, 1981) pp. 133-4; John Campbell *Naval Weapons of World War Two* (London: Conway Maritime, 1985) pp.25-8.

automaton who only came to life at the impulse of a superior.’<sup>10</sup> Andrew Lambert looked at this with rather more breadth ‘The Royal Navy did not ... need an officer corps wholly composed of Admirals. Most officers [were] expected to follow their orders, and to exercise their judgement within fairly narrow limits’.<sup>11</sup> Interestingly Davison reports a dissenting note from the period of the First World War of a senior army officer asking an admiral why ‘naval officers seemed to be much more self-reliant than their army brethren’.<sup>12</sup>

The Grand Fleet has attracted most of the attention of historians of the First World War, representing as it did the major focus of the war at sea, until unrestricted submarine warfare developed later in the war.<sup>13</sup> Apart from the Dardanelles, the naval war elsewhere has attracted much less attention and the performance of the officers even less. The centralization and denial of initiative described above applied primarily in the Grand Fleet, and indeed only to the major fleet units, the capital ships, battleships and battle-cruisers. Even cruiser, and certainly destroyer, commanding officers<sup>14</sup> had greater freedom of action and used plenty of initiative even at the Battle of Jutland.<sup>15</sup> While the whole naval history of the First World War awaits re-examination,<sup>16</sup> there remain significant discrepancies in perceptions of the performance of the involved navies, and by extension, their personnel.

Matters had changed radically for the Royal Navy by the Second World War. Firstly, while there were designated fleets (notably the Home and Mediterranean fleets), much of the focus of the war at sea was elsewhere and major responsibility and requirements for initiative fell to junior officers; the example of a decorated commanding officer aged twenty of a warship of a type with the proven capability of

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<sup>10</sup> Corelli Barnett, *The Swordbearers*: p. 184.

<sup>11</sup> Andrew Lambert, ‘The Development of Education in the Royal Navy: 1854-1914,’ in Geoffrey Till (ed.) *The Development of British Naval Thinking: Essays in Memory of Bryan McLaren Ranft* London: Routledge, 2006) p. 34.

<sup>12</sup> Robert L. Davison, *The Challenges of Command: The Royal Navy’s Executive Branch Officers, 1880-1919* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2011) p.92.

<sup>13</sup> Arthur J. Marder, *From the Dreadnought to Scapa Flow – The Royal Navy in the Fisher Era 1904-1919: Jutland and After (May 1916 – December 1916)*, (London: Oxford University Press, 1966) p. 269 et seq.

<sup>14</sup> And their subordinates on their death or incapacity in action.

<sup>15</sup> See Taprell Dorling (writing as ‘Taffrail’), *Endless Story: Being an Account of the work of the Destroyers...*, (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1936) pp. 149-221.

<sup>16</sup> James Goldrick, *The Need for a New Naval History of The First World War*, Corbett Paper No 7 (Corbett Centre for Maritime Policy Studies: 2011).

sinking a battleship is illustrative.<sup>17</sup> Rodger is among those historians who have ‘agreed that British naval officers performed notably better in the Second World War than in the First – which raises its own question, for only twenty years elapsed between the two’ because ‘[i]t is extremely unusual for adults to change radically the habits of thought in which they have been brought up.’<sup>18</sup> Curiously, having castigated officers in *The Sword Bearers*, in his later book on the Royal Navy in the Second World War *Engage the Enemy More Closely*, Barnett makes no reference to what was, if his account is to be believed, the change in the way officers performed.<sup>19</sup> The reality is that the generic naval officer in either war did not display initiative, *when he was required not to*. The fifteen inch gun referred to in footnote number 6 remained in service in the Second World War, and still required the same unthinking discipline, but broadly across the service, many more officers now had to show initiative. Thus the Gordon/Barnett/Churchill view, while correct, only describes a single facet of the naval officers’ professional character. Unremarked or un-noticed by Barnett and Churchill, when circumstances required it he did display initiative. The reality was that an executive officer in the Royal Navy had more than one dimension, he was expected to be multi-faceted, and had been educated and trained to develop all his facets.

There are indications in recent publications that the perception of differing performance in the two wars is changing. For example Rodger, specifically referring to naval officers, says ‘it may be that the contrast between the navy’s performance in the two wars has been overdrawn’.<sup>20</sup> Thus, rather than to argue that there was a radical change in their performance, it is much more logical to accept that there was no change in the performance of officers between the two wars, that the officers did what they had been trained to do in both, but in differing proportions and degrees reflecting the different nature of the two wars.

The perception of naval officers as having a single professional character has had another effect. The senior officers of the Second World War had been the middle

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<sup>17</sup> Sub Lieutenant (later Lieutenant) G. J. MacDonald (later DSO) DSC RNZVR Commanding Officer of MTB241 in 1942. See part 1 chapter 1 specifically p 51.

<sup>18</sup> N.A.M. Rodger, ‘The Royal Navy in the Era of the World Wars: Was it fit for purpose?’ *The Mariners Mirror* Vol 97:1, 2011 p.284.

<sup>19</sup> Corelli Barnett, *Engage The Enemy More Closely: The Royal Navy in the Second World War*, (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1991). His introductory chapter covering the inter-war period repeats his earlier strictures on initiative and discipline, generalised from the Battle of Jutland but makes no mention of any personnel aspects. For example the mutiny at Invergordon is not mentioned or indexed.

<sup>20</sup> N.A.M. Rodger, ‘The Royal Navy in the Era of the World Wars: p.284.



ranking and junior officers of the First World War. However, after the First World War, the officer corps' morale fell and they went through a period of self doubt, that they had not performed well. Allied to this was an uncertainty as to exactly what it was that they, the officer corps, had not done well. The perception that they had somehow performed badly was compounded by the service ceasing to be the focus of public attention that it had been before the war; indeed it had been the executive arm of the largest single department of state. The (eight) battleships and battlecruisers whose gestation had caused a government crisis before the First World War ('We want eight and we won't wait') went to the scrap yard in the 1920s after the wars end virtually un-noticed.<sup>21</sup> Almost adumbrated, the service was now far from being the centre of public attention and concern, and, with the reduced status of the Royal Navy, so with the officers perceptions of their service and their part in it.

The inter-war period was a time of well documented great changes in society as a whole.<sup>22</sup> It is noteworthy that, apart from Noel Coward's letters, none of the cited references give anything but a passing mention to the Royal Navy or its people. The press obviously continued to cover naval occasions and doings, but for the officers the sense of importance and self esteem deriving from the navy's earlier public status had, to a significant extent, gone. Matters went from bad to worse as the service was subject to severe financial strictures, and its material, ships and equipment, became steadily more worn out and out-dated.<sup>23</sup>

Reduced to absolute, even ludicrous, simplicity, the navy and elements of the broader population felt that it had not used the expensive weaponry that the service had been given by the nation to best effect. In thrall to Mahan, the navy, and its officer corps in particular, felt that it had not contributed very much to the winning of the war. Having not defeated the German navy in a fleet action, there was a widespread perception, within and outside the service that the navy had somehow failed. The views

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<sup>21</sup> Earl Gray of Fallodon, *Twenty five years: 1892-1916*, Vol1, (London, 1925) pp.199-200.

<sup>22</sup> D.J. Taylor, *Bright Young People: The Rise and Fall of a Generation 1918-1940*, (London: Chatto & Windus, 2007); Barry Day (ed.), *The Letters of Noel Coward*, (London: Methuen, 2007); A.N.Wilson, *After the Victorians: The World our Parents Knew*, (London: Arrow, 2005); Roy Hattersley, *Borrowed Time: The Story of Britain Between the Wars*, (London: Little Brown, 2007); Richard Overy, *The Morbid Age: Britain between the Wars*, (London: Allen Lane, 2009); Harold Perkin, *The Rise of Professional Society: England since 1880*, (London: Routledge, 2002); Anne Perkins, *A Very British Strike: 3 May-12 May 1926*, (London: Pan Macmillan, 2006); Virginia Nicholson, *Singled Out: How Two Million Women Survived Without Men after the First World War*, (London: Penguin, 2008).

<sup>23</sup> Lisle A. Rose, *Power at Sea: The Breaking Storm 1919 – 1945*, (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2007) p. 66.

of those like Sir Walter Runciman, the shipping magnate, who were in a position to understand the reality of the German defeat and knew that it had been due 'to our command of the seas' were unavailing against public and indeed, to some extent, service perception.<sup>24</sup> Increasingly this supposed failure was viewed, outside the service, as resulting, as claimed by Churchill, from poor education and poor training, allied to the lack of initiative already described, indeed seen as the cause of it. In fact Britannia Royal Naval College at Dartmouth delivered a broad education equivalent to that at the better public schools, and subsequent education and training was up to university standards in a period when such education was far from ubiquitous. In house, a Naval War College for senior officers had been established at Portsmouth in 1906.<sup>25</sup> Indeed the 'Green Pamphlet' described as being 'Strategical Terms and Definitions used in Lectures on Naval History' by Julian S. Corbett dated January 1909 emanated from the 'R.N. War College, Portsmouth' as part of a book,<sup>26</sup> which is still cited today and is even currently 'enjoying a renaissance among strategists of the [Chinese] People's Liberation Army Navy'.<sup>27</sup> This was very much a case where perception trumped reality and was fertile ground for internal critics of naval education such as Richmond.<sup>28</sup>

It was unfortunate for the service that the events of the Battle of Jutland in 1916 had given rise to major controversy: in short hand the Jellicoe/Beatty dispute, which rumbled on through the 1920s. Yates has argued that '[t]he controversy surrounding Jutland scarcely affected the service in any major way.'<sup>29</sup> In one respect, he was correct. As will be shown, until 1930 the events of the battle were not taught to or formally discussed with junior officers. However, Jutland was there, repeatedly bubbling up, as

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<sup>24</sup> Sir Walter Runciman (letter) to Jellicoe dated 14 November 1918 in A. Temple Patterson (ed.), *The Jellicoe papers: Selections from the Private and Official Correspondence of Admiral of the Fleet Earl Jellicoe. Volume II 1916-1935*, (Greenwich: Navy Records Society, 1968) p.281.

<sup>25</sup> Stephen Roskill, *Hankey: Man of Secrets Volume I 1877-1918*, (London: Collins, 1970) p. 99; Lord Fisher, *Memories*, (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1919) p.104.

<sup>26</sup> Julian S. Corbett, *Some Principles of Maritime Strategy*, (London: Filiquarian Publishing, 1911 reprt, no date given) p.143 (Appendix).

<sup>27</sup> James R. Holmes and Toshi Yoshihara, 'China's Navy: A Turn to Corbett' *Proceedings of the United States Naval Institute* 136, (2010) pp. 42-46).

<sup>28</sup> Admiral Sir Herbert Richmond 1871-1946 will be mentioned repeatedly in this thesis. He was a naval historian from early in his career and an educationalist. A founder of the 'Naval Review' he established the Senior Officers War Course at Greenwich and was first commandant of the Imperial Defence College (now the Royal College of Defence Studies) before leaving the service and becoming Vere Harmsworth Professor of Naval History at Cambridge and Master of Downing College, see Arthur J. Marder, *Portrait of an Admiral: The Life and Papers of Sir Herbert Richmond*, (London, Jonathan Cape, 1952 and Barry D. Hunt, *Sailor-Scholar: Admiral Sir Herbert Richmond 1871-1946*, (Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1982).

<sup>29</sup> James Alexander Yates, 'The Jutland controversy: a case study in intra-service politics, with particular reference to the presentation of the Battlecruiser Fleet's training, conduct and command.' Unpublished PhD Thesis University of Hull, 1998, p. 287.

when Harper published *The Truth about Jutland* in 1927.<sup>30</sup> It was, in the modern idiom, the elephant in the room. Most officers did not want to be seen to be on one side or other of the argument. The result was a feeling within the service was that something had to be hidden, making the issue corrosive of the morale and the self belief of the officer corps.

A prime example of misperceptions of naval officers and their performance has been the historical treatment of the Naval Staff. The Admiralty had by the turn of the century, created the worlds first operational Naval Staff.<sup>31</sup> Richmond argued that during the First World War and between the wars, it was neglected and populated by officers who were ‘cabbage-headed’ or ‘nonentities’,<sup>32</sup> which supported the broader view of a poor quality officer corps. Rodger in his first book *The Admiralty* wrote that during the First World War most of the staff ‘had been selected as too sick or incompetent to be sent to sea.’<sup>33</sup> Until the publication of Hamilton’s monograph in 2011,<sup>34</sup> apart from the classified history produced by the Training and Staff Duties Division of the naval staff which only covers up until 1929,<sup>35</sup> Rodger’s book remained the only complete history of the naval staff. Black, in a detailed analysis of the Naval Staff in the First World War, showed that the manning of the naval staff was far broader than Rodger describes; in fact not only were the officers on the operational side of the naval staff among the brightest and the best, but these more junior officers actually had a significant input to policy, even on occasion initiating and taking forward policy despite the reservations of senior officers, particularly with regard to Anti-Submarine warfare.<sup>36</sup> Nevertheless, the result is the view still widely held today that the navy did not place any premium on being in staff posts, that promotion and preferment was by sea service and sea command. In fact it will be shown that being a specialist staff officer was the route to

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<sup>30</sup> Rear-Admiral J.E.T. Harper, *The Truth About Jutland*, (London: John Murray, 1927).

<sup>31</sup> Norman Friedman, *Network- Centric Warfare: How Navies Learned To Fight Smarter Through Three World Wars*, (Annapolis MD: Naval Institute Press, 2009); Nicholas A. Lambert, *Sir John Fisher’s Naval Revolution*, (Columbia SC: University of South Carolina Press, 2002).

<sup>32</sup> Arthur J. Marder, *Portrait of an Admiral: The Life and Papers of Sir Herbert Richmond*, (London: Johnathan Cape, 1952) p. 252.

<sup>33</sup> N.A.M. Rodger, *The Admiralty*, (Lavenham: Terence Dalton , 1979) p. 128. However, he later describes his own book, from which that quotation is taken, as being ‘Sketchy and unreliable’ see N.A.M. Rodger, *The Command of the Ocean: A Naval History of Britain 1649 – 1815*, (London: Allen Lane, 2004) p. 845.

<sup>34</sup> C.I. Hamilton, *The Making of the Modern Admiralty: British Naval Policy-Making 1805-1927*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011).

<sup>35</sup> BR1875 (previously CB 3013) *Naval Staff Monograph (Historical): The Naval Staff of the Admiralty; Its work and Development* (Training and Staff Division, 1929).

<sup>36</sup> Nicholas Black, *The British Naval Staff in the First World War* (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2009) p. 14.

preferment, over and above those who practised ‘mere’ sea command, the exact reverse of what is widely assumed.

If the general belief that the officer corps was largely composed of hidebound rigid unthinking automatons was correct, it leads inexorably to the question, how do the authors espousing this view explain why it was that they performed so well in the Second World War? To explain this apparent paradox there has arisen what this author regards as ‘the RNVR myth’. Put simply, the Royal Navy was saved in the Second World War by an influx of freer thinking, intelligent, better educated junior officers who formed the Royal Naval Volunteer Reserve. Rodger has gone as far as to say that ‘the Battle of the Atlantic – surely the most crucial campaign the Navy has fought this century – was almost entirely left to them’ and by extension, therefore the RNVR won that battle rather than the Royal Navy.<sup>37</sup> The truth is that the RNVR was deployed by the Royal Navy as a group of able officers, each trained to undertake a single role. The Royal Navy used its own regular officers across the full spectrum of duties, and itself filled all the senior posts above commander (and there were very few RNVR commanders).

Thus it is necessary to start by addressing major misconceptions that underpin a lot of thinking and the literature concerning the Royal Navy in the twentieth century which are taken as a given and are the starting point for most writing. A parallel can be drawn with the assumption which persisted for many years that British Western Front generals of the First World War were unfeeling bungling incompetents, encapsulated in the ‘lions led by donkeys’ shibboleth. Of recent years the inconsistencies of this view have been questioned and better analysis has led to the realisation that the British army in 1918, for the first time in its existence, took on a continental field army effectively by itself; its allies had been beaten, riven by mutiny or were very inexperienced and not yet an efficient combat force.<sup>38</sup> They not only beat the German army, they destroyed it as a fighting force.<sup>39</sup> Immediately after the First World War and for the next decade the army’s role in the First World War was viewed in a positive light. Only after the death

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<sup>37</sup> N.A.M. Rodger, ‘Training or Education: a Naval Dilemma over Three Centuries,’ in P. Hore (ed.) *Hudson Papers 1* (London: Oxford University Hudson Trust, 2001) p. 22.

<sup>38</sup> Russia had been beaten, the French army was recovering from a series of mutinies and the US army was very much on the lower reaches of a learning curve, see Peter Hart, *1918: A Very British Victory*, (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 2008) p. 431.

<sup>39</sup> Gary Sheffield, *Forgotten Victory, The First World War: Myths and Realities*, (London: Review, 2002) p. 263.

of Earl Haig<sup>40</sup> and the publication of Lloyd George's memoirs did perceptions,<sup>41</sup> both public and academic, change to those that have dominated thinking until very recently. There were some, particularly Terraine,<sup>42</sup> who did not subscribe to the commonly expressed view, but for a long time his was almost a lone voice. However, for the Royal Navy, the temporal progression of perceptions of the service was rather different. Firstly, introspection in the 1920s, followed in the 1930s by a realisation that perhaps they had performed better than they had been given credit for. In support of this view the publication dates of many of the books concerning the First World War activities of the Royal Navy should be noted. It is difficult to prove a negative, so too much should not be made of the apparent paucity of books in the 1920s, but it is interesting how many books about the doings of the navy in the First World War intended for a general readership were first published during the 1930s and went into many reprints. This suggests a public appetite to read about the navy and it occurred just as the army was entering a phase of introspection and is discussed in greater detail in part 2 chapter 4.

The misunderstandings and misperceptions concerning naval officers are broader and span both popular and academic literature. To illustrate, the highly regarded popular author C S Forester<sup>43</sup> wrote thus: 'The Captain was a Captain R.N. ... only a few grades lower than God; out of a hundred who started as naval cadets only a very few ever reached that lofty rank'.<sup>44</sup> The reality was far different, of the 118 midshipmen of 1920 seniority, 32 achieved captain's rank, i.e. 27% and the percentages in the other years studied for this thesis were not much different.<sup>45</sup> As well as those in popular literature, there are significant misconceptions in the academic literature. For example Glover in a London PhD thesis states, without citing a reference, that 88% of RN officers underwent specialist training.<sup>46</sup> Again the reality was much different, of the 118 midshipmen of 1920 seniority studied for this thesis, sixty one underwent specialist training, i.e. 52%. Even if qualifying 'for command of a TBD'<sup>47</sup> is regarded as a specialisation (which the navy did not) and seventy are regarded as having specialised,

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<sup>40</sup> Gary Sheffield, *The Chief: Douglas Haig and the British Army*, (London: Aurum Press, 2011) p. 366.

<sup>41</sup> David Lloyd George, *War Memoirs Volume II*, (London: Odhams Press, 1933-36) p.2011 et seq.

<sup>42</sup> John Terraine, *Douglas Haig: The Educated Soldier*, (London: Hutchinson, 1963).

<sup>43</sup> Alastair Wilson and Joseph F. Callo, *Who's Who in Naval History: From 1550 to the Present*, (London: Routledge, 2004) p.111.

<sup>44</sup> C.S. Forester, *The Ship*, (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1969) p.35. The book is a fictionalised account of one light cruiser's involvement in the Second Battle of Sirte.

<sup>45</sup> 2SLPersRec. The spreadsheets from which these and subsequent figures are derived are annexed to this thesis.

<sup>46</sup> William Reavely Glover, 'Officer Training and the Quest for Operational Efficiency in the Royal Canadian Navy 1939 – 1945', Unpublished PhD Thesis, University of London, 1998, p.29.

only 59% underwent specialist training not 88%.<sup>48</sup> In some respects 1920 might be regarded as a ‘different’ year,<sup>49</sup> but the other cohorts of midshipmen studied, representing those of seniority falling in the years 1925, 1930 and 1935 were broadly similar with 61%, 59% and 70% specialising respectively.

## Sources

While matters have improved since the statement in 1913 that there was ‘need of a catalogue of sources’ for naval history,<sup>50</sup> it is curious that there is a continuing paucity of literature concerning officers and their training covering the period leading up to the First World War and particularly during the interwar period. To illustrate the point, Eugene L. Rasor’s estimable compendium of academic references to the Royal Navy after 1815 devotes but three pages to references about officers in any context (and ten to ‘*Sexuality and the role of women*’).<sup>51</sup> The nineteenth century is reasonably well covered, and personnel aspects and particularly the training of Second World War officers has been well covered by, among others, Lavery in well researched books,<sup>52</sup> but the only historian who covers the interwar period addressing personnel issues in general is Roskill, who strove to make the inter-war period his own.<sup>53</sup> Arthur Marder covered the period in his study of Anglo-Japanese naval relations<sup>54</sup> and in a series of vignettes which included some aspects of officer education and training.<sup>55</sup> The disputes between Roskill and Marder through the 1970s only served to muddy already cloudy waters.<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> Torpedo Boat Destroyer, see glossary.

<sup>48</sup> 2SLPersRec.

<sup>49</sup> Specialist engineers were ‘hived off’, as will be described, possibly reducing the numbers of those likely to specialise.

<sup>50</sup> Lieutenant Alfred Dewar, R.N. (retired) ‘Naval History and the Necessity of a Catalogue of Sources in Naval and Military Essays’ in the *Naval and Military Section at the International Congress of Historical Studies, 1913* Julian Stafford Corbett (ed.) (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1914 – facsimile 2009) pp. 83-114.

<sup>51</sup> Eugene L. Rasor, *British Naval History Since 1815: A guide to the Literature*, (New York: Garland Publishing, 1990).

<sup>52</sup> Brian Lavery, *Churchill’s Navy: The Ships, Men and Organisation 1939-1945*, (London: Conway, 2006); *In which They Served: The Royal Navy Officer Experience in the Second World War*, (London: Conway, 2008); *Able Seamen: The Lower Deck of the Royal Navy 1850-1939*, (London: Conway, 2011).

<sup>53</sup> He apparently claimed that Arthur Marder agreed with him not to cover the inter-war period, see Barry Gough, *Historical Dreadnoughts: Arthur Marder, Stephen Roskill and Battles for Naval History*, (London: Seaforth Publishing, 2010) p. 217.

<sup>54</sup> Arthur J. Marder, *Old Friends, New Enemies: The Royal Navy and the Imperial Japanese Navy – Strategic Illusions, 1936-1941*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1981) This was to be the first volume, but the authors death meant the second volume was not published under his authorship.

<sup>55</sup> Arthur J. Marder, *From Dardanelles to Oran: Studies of the Royal Navy in War and Peace 1915 -1940*, (London: Oxford University Press, 1974).

<sup>56</sup> Eugene L. Rasor, *British Naval History Since 1815* pp. 39-40.

While Roskill wrote the Official History<sup>57</sup> of the Royal Navy for the Second World War,<sup>58</sup> his subsequent history of naval policy between the wars, covering both the Royal Navy and to a lesser extent the United States Navy<sup>59</sup> in two volumes, whose publication was temporally much separated, (of which Marder was critical ‘Badly organized and something of a jungle of facts in places, yet an indispensable work’<sup>60</sup>) were, like his other works including his biography of Lord Hankey written in a private capacity.<sup>61</sup>

Nonetheless Roskill remains by default the leading historian of the period, oft quoted and regarded as the authoritative voice on many issues. As such, his work must be examined with some care. He did have the advantage that he had not only lived through the latter part of the period as a naval officer and knew some of the personalities both personally and professionally. As the historian of the Royal Navy in the Second World War, he was also given fairly open access to most Admiralty records but not to the contents of the Admiralty Record Office’s ‘special vault’.<sup>62</sup> He had some stylistic idiosyncrasies which are annoying to some, for example, the anachronistic, and repeatedly used orotund phrase ‘And thus it came to pass’.<sup>63</sup> While Roskill’s re-iteration of the definition of nautical twilight is,<sup>64</sup> at worst, irritating, his use of astronomical terminology has prompted their use in the title and some chapter headings of this thesis. His use of sources, his intellectual honesty including personal prejudice with regard to some of the personalities of the period and also his thoroughness must at times be questioned as must his use of selective quotations/omissions which border on the tendentious. Additionally there is a pattern of personal animus directed at some senior officers which led Barry Gough to describe him as having ‘scores to settle’.<sup>65</sup> This

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<sup>57</sup> Roskill was never officially designated the official historian, despite being the writer of the ‘Official History’. He actually never so described himself, but appears not to have corrected others when they did. Subsequent works were written in a private capacity without official imprimatur.

<sup>58</sup> S.W. Roskill, *The War at Sea 1939-1945*, 3 vols, Vol. III in 2 parts (London: HMSO 1954 – 1961). Grenfell remarks on its long gestation compared with Morison’s equivalent work concerning the US Navy, see Grenfell, Russell *Main Fleet to Singapore* (London: Faber and Faber, 1961) p. 12.

<sup>59</sup> Stephen Roskill, *Naval Policy Between the Wars: The period of Anglo-American Antagonism 1919-1929* (New York: Walker and Company, 1969); Stephen Roskill, *Naval Policy Between the Wars II: The Period of Reluctant Rearmament 1930-1939*, (London: Collins, 1976).

<sup>60</sup> Barry Gough, *Historical Dreadnoughts*, p. 212.

<sup>61</sup> Stephen Roskill, *Hankey, Man of Secrets*, in three volumes (London: Collins, 1972).

<sup>62</sup> Barry Gough, *Historical Dreadnought* p. 145. Presumably, although it is not stated, this contained Ultra/Magic material.

<sup>63</sup> Stephen Roskill, *Hankey, Man of Secrets: Vol II 1919-1931* (London: Collins, 1972) p. 509; S.W. Roskill, *The War at Sea 1939- 1945: The Period of Balance*, (Uckfield: Naval and Military Press, 2004) p.130 etc.

<sup>64</sup> S.W. Roskill, *The War at Sea 1939-1945: The Defensive*, (Uckfield: Naval And Military Press Ltd, 2004) p. 400 footnote 1 is the first of many.

<sup>65</sup> Barry Gough, *Historical Dreadnoughts* p. 219.

would matter less if it were not that Roskill's account is now accepted fact and is repeatedly cited. For all his shortcomings, he is the only continuous secondary source to draw on covering the period, described, as previously noted, by Marder as 'indispensable', but with the added caveat, by this author, 'with caution'.

Unfortunately biographers of naval officers tend in large part to ignore the interwar period, they spend most their effort and paper on the Second World War. This varies, but most are mainly about the war and the subject's part in it. One illustrative example is Chalmers biography of Admiral Horton,<sup>66</sup> which concentrates on the Second World War and, for example, totally ignores a major episode in his life in 1931, the *Lucia* mutiny (see Part 2, chapter 2, below). Even biographies of major figures such as Mountbatten<sup>67</sup> devote little to naval personnel aspects of the interwar period, concentrating (in his case) on social and material matters.

Biographical material – published and unpublished - is useful, but cannot be relied on unverified; for example a sympathetic biographer records Admiral Oliver's actions when Second Sea Lord regarding liberalising the manner in which officer's preferences regarding their appointments were to be handled.<sup>68</sup> This was actually the exact opposite of what his subject did.<sup>69</sup> Additionally, there are many inevitable instances of self-justification and retrospective wishful thinking and inevitable bias; Hankey dedicated his memoir to David Lloyd George and recorded his particular thanks to him, which, for example, must call into question the objectivity of his account of the sacking of Admiral Jellicoe.<sup>70</sup>

The remaining literature on the Royal Navy, such as it is, largely concentrates on the political and material matters,<sup>71</sup> and makes only passing mention of training.<sup>72</sup> The

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<sup>66</sup> Rear-Admiral W.S. Chalmers, *Max Horton and the Western Approaches: A Biography of Admiral Sir Max Kennedy Horton GCB, DSO*, (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1954).

<sup>67</sup> Richard Hough, *Mountbatten: Hero of our Time*, (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1980); Philip Zeigler, *Mountbatten: The Official Biography*, (London: Book Club Associates, 1985); Adrian Smith *Mountbatten: Apprentice War Lord*, (London: I.B. Tauris, 2010).

<sup>68</sup> William James, *A Great Seaman: The Life of Sir Henry F. Oliver GCB, KCMG, MVO, LLD*, (London: H.F.& G. Witherby Ltd, 1956) p.172.

<sup>69</sup> AFO 1607/20 *Appointments –Officers*.

<sup>70</sup> Lord Hankey, *The Supreme Command 1914-1918*, (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1961) pp. 5-8.

<sup>71</sup> For examples see among many others G.A.H.Gordon, *British Seapower and Procurement between the Wars: A Reappraisal of Rearmament*, (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 1988); Thomas C. Hone, Norman Friedman, and Mark D., Mandeles, *American & British Aircraft Carrier Development 1919-1941*, (Shrewsbury: Airlife Publishing, 1999); Louis Le Bailly, *From Fisher to the Falklands*, (London: Marine Management (Holdings) Ltd, 1991); Lisle A. Rose, *Power at Sea: The Breaking Storm, 1919-1945*, (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2007); Stephen Roskill, *Hankey: Man of Secrets Vol. II*



only significant exception is *Brassey's Naval Annual*, (variously *Brassey's Annual* and *Brassey's Naval and Shipping Annual*), virtually the only contemporary publication that dealt with naval personnel matters in general. Biographical material such as Murfett's estimable compendium of biographical sketches barely mentions the personnel policies of the interwar First Sea Lords.<sup>73</sup> Otherwise, what there is, is of limited academic value.<sup>74</sup>

Apart from the circumstances which gave rise to the Invergordon mutiny, personnel matters attract very little attention. Despite the importance of officers to any military organisation, their selection, education, training and career management has received much less attention than it warrants.<sup>75</sup> Even personal memoirs deal only briefly with these aspects of their career, except anecdotally,<sup>76</sup> let alone broader texts, with the notable exception of some recent publications.<sup>77</sup> Clowes in his history of the Service up to the turn of the nineteenth century makes but passing references to officer education and training.<sup>78</sup> Professor Rodger pays far more attention to training,<sup>79</sup> but he is a notable exception. Dickinson's monograph on Royal Naval officer education is almost unique but does not continue into the period covered by this thesis.<sup>80</sup> Davison has looked at the officer corps in a well argued thesis, but says little about education beyond what became

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1919-1931 (London: Collins, 1972); Stephen Roskill, *Hankey: Man of Secrets Vol. III 1931-1963*, (London: Collins, 1974); Correlli Barnett, *The Audit of War: The Illusion & Reality of Britain as a Great Nation*, (London: Papermac, 1987); Chris Henry, *Depth Charge! Mines, Depth Charges and Underwater Weapons, 1941-1945* (Barnsley: Pen & Sword, 2005).

<sup>72</sup> George Franklin, *Britain's Anti-Submarine Capability 1919-1939*, (London: Frank Cass, 2003) p.49

<sup>73</sup> Malcolm H. Murfett (ed.), *The First Sea Lords: From Fisher to Mountbatten*, (Westport, CT: Praeger, 1995).

<sup>74</sup> For example see: John Wells, *The Royal Navy: An Illustrated Social History 1870-1982*, (Stroud: Alan Sutton Publishing, 1994).

<sup>75</sup> A notable exception is Mary Jones, 'The Making of the Royal Navy Officer Corps 1860- 1914' (unpublished PhD thesis: University of Exeter, 1999).

<sup>76</sup> Louis Le Bailly, *The Man Around The Engine: Life Below The Waterline* (Emsworth: Kenneth Mason, 1990) p.29 et seq.; C. C. Anderson, *Seagulls in my Belfry* (Bishop Auckland: Pentland Press, 1997) pp. 6-25; Adrian Holloway, *From Dartmouth to War: A Midshipman's Journal*, (London: Buckland Publications, 1993).

<sup>77</sup> N.A.M. Rodger, 'Training or Education: A Naval Dilemma over Three Centuries' in P.Hore (ed.) *Hudson Papers I* (London: Oxford University Hudson Trust, 2001); Brian Lavery, *Churchill's Navy: The Ships, Men and Organisation 1939-1945*, (London: Conway Maritime, 2006); Jane Harrold and Richard Porter, *Britannia Royal Naval College Dartmouth: An Illustrated History*, (Dartmouth: Richard Webb, 2005); Brian Lavery, *In Which They Served: The Royal Navy Officer Experience in the Second World War*, (London: Conway, 2008).

<sup>78</sup> Wm. Laird Clowes, *The Royal Navy: A History From the Earliest Times to the Death of Queen Victoria*, 7 vols (London: Chatham Publishing 1997).

<sup>79</sup> N.A.M. Rodger, *The Command of the Ocean: A Naval History of Britain, 1649-1815*, (London: Allen Lane, 2004). See also his 'Officers, gentlemen and their education, 1793-1860' in E. Freeman (ed.), *Les Empires en Guerre et Paix 1793-1860. II<sup>es</sup> Journées franco-anglaises d'histoire de la Marine* (Vincennes, 1990) 139-54.

<sup>80</sup> H.W. Dickinson, *Educating the Royal Navy: Eighteenth and nineteenth-century education for officers*, (London and New York: Routledge, 2007).

an almost theological debate on the importance of a knowledge of history to a naval officer.<sup>81</sup> In a recent book he returns to the theme, and looks at the wider changes that took place in the executive officer corps up to the end of the First World War.<sup>82</sup> Bell in 2009 looked at the officer corps addressing becoming an officer from the class and social mobility viewpoint in the inter-war period. His is a very detailed study, but deals almost entirely with matters at what would now be termed the politico-military interface; he does not address officer education, training or morale *per se*.<sup>83</sup> Similarly Colville in his 2003 'Alexander Prize Lecture'<sup>84</sup> addresses the very narrow aspect of naval uniform within the contemporary class structure. It has however been a surprise to the author how useful contemporary fiction has been at fleshing out and even explaining detail obtained from other sources.<sup>85</sup> It follows that much reliance has had to be placed on primary sources.

### Admiralty Fleet Orders

The most useful single source for this thesis has been the collections of 'Admiralty Fleet Orders' (AFOs) and their immediate precursors (until 1923), 'Admiralty Weekly Orders' (AWOs) and 'Admiralty Monthly Orders', themselves the successors to 'Admiralty Weekly Memoranda'. It is believed that there are only two complete sets extant: one in the Admiralty Library; one in the National Archive.<sup>86</sup>

AFOs were issued in a continuous numbered series throughout a given year in weekly batches. Each weekly batch was (ultimately) divided into six sections with an index: firstly 'Fleet Administration, Exercises Navigation, Ceremonial etc' (the exact title varied); secondly 'Personnel and Internal Organisation of Ship'; thirdly, 'Repairs, Armaments, Fittings Etc'; fourthly 'Stores, Victualling and Supplies Generally'; fifthly 'Books, Returns, Correspondence etc'; and lastly 'Civilian Establishments'. An

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<sup>81</sup> Robert Lynn Davison, 'In Defence of Corporate Competence: The Royal Navy Executive Officer Corps, 1880-1919', (Unpublished PhD thesis, Memorial University of Newfoundland, 2004).

<sup>82</sup> Robert L. Davison, *The Challenges of Command: The Royal Navy's Executive Branch Officers, 1880-1919*, (Farnham: Ashgate, 2011).

<sup>83</sup> Christopher M. Bell, 'The King's English and the Security of the Empire: Class, Social Mobility, and Democratization in the British Naval Officer Corps, 1918-1939,' *Journal of British Studies* 48 (July 2009), pp. 695-716.

<sup>84</sup> Quintin Colville, 'Jack Tar and the Gentleman Officer: The Role of Uniform in Shaping the Class- and Gender Related Identities of British Naval Personnel, 1930-1939', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society* 13 (2003), pp. 105-29.

<sup>85</sup> John Lodwick, *The Cradle of Neptune: A Novel*, (London: William Heinemann, 1951); Charles Gidley Wheeler, *Jannaway's War*, (Lincoln NE: iUniverse, 2005).

example showing an index page of one week's AFOs is at Figure 1. Each AFO gave its originating departmental reference with a date which in some cases has allowed 'backtracking' to the origin of the order. At first sight the titles of AFOs are oddly phrased and capitalised, in part because the capitalised words in the title are indexed. They were printed<sup>87</sup> and were widely distributed, some issued in a form suitable for display on a notice board, and some, marked '\*', additionally made available to the press. Numbers of orders in each section varied and some weeks there might be none issued in a given section. In the same numerical sequence but published separately, were 'Confidential Admiralty Fleet Orders' (CAFOs). These were given a more limited distribution, usually confined to flag officers and commanding officers of ships. There were more highly classified AFOs which were mainly used to distribute signal and cryptographic material and were numbered separately. An important feature of AFOs was the last subscripted/italicised line which listed, if any, preceding AFOs which were ordered to be cancelled on promulgation of the current one. Thus it is possible in some cases to track the evolution of policy.

In modern terminology, AFOs were a bulletin board, distributing a vast range of information from the trivial, even banal, to that of international importance. AFO 693/29 (number 693 of 1929) reported the finding of a gold signet ring, AFO 3338/39 the dates for 'National Rat Week, 1939', through to AFO 1266/30 which included the full text of the London Naval Treaty of 1930. Their importance cannot be exaggerated, they were what the Admiralty and Admiralty Board communicated to the navy; they were actual promulgated policy. It is curious that this does not seem to be appreciated, as will be seen Roskill refers to discussions within the Admiralty concerning redundancies (see part two, chapter 1) and expresses surprise that the redundancy programme had no effect on numbers of personnel. He appears not to have noticed that it was never promulgated either by directed letter or AFO. Similarly Bell in his excellent description and discussion of the ebb and flow of debate within the Admiralty concerning officer selection,<sup>88</sup> does not reference a single AFO which is how the substance of the debate would have been enacted.<sup>89</sup> Possibly this is what leads him to

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<sup>86</sup>The filing of the latter is somewhat inaccessible as each bound volume containing six months of AFOs is catalogued separately.

<sup>87</sup> With the single exception of AFO 2329/31, issued in the immediate aftermath of the Invergordon mutiny which was mimeographed.

<sup>88</sup> Christopher M. Bell, 'The King's English and the Security of the Empire: Class, Social Mobility, and Democratization in the British Naval Officer Corps, 1918-1939', *Journal of British Studies* 48 (July 2009), pp. 695-716.

<sup>89</sup> 'Directed Letters' would have been another mechanism but does not cite any either.

discuss the late 1930s failings of the Mate system of commissioning from the lower deck. In fact AFO 2473/31 had abolished the title of Mate; ratings were now to be commissioned as sub lieutenants.<sup>90</sup>

While many published sources include references to individual AFOs (and repetition of errors by multiple authors suggests that in some cases the original AFO itself may not have been referred to) these do not appear to have been systematically examined previously. Indeed a section in one of the six monthly bound editions in the Admiralty Library is uncut which suggests that they may not have been consulted methodically. For this thesis, every section two AWM/AWO/AFO/CAFO from 1918 to 1939 was scrutinised and all that referred to officers (694 in total) entered on a searchable spreadsheet (Excel © Microsoft). They are referred to by number (which includes the year of issue) and title.

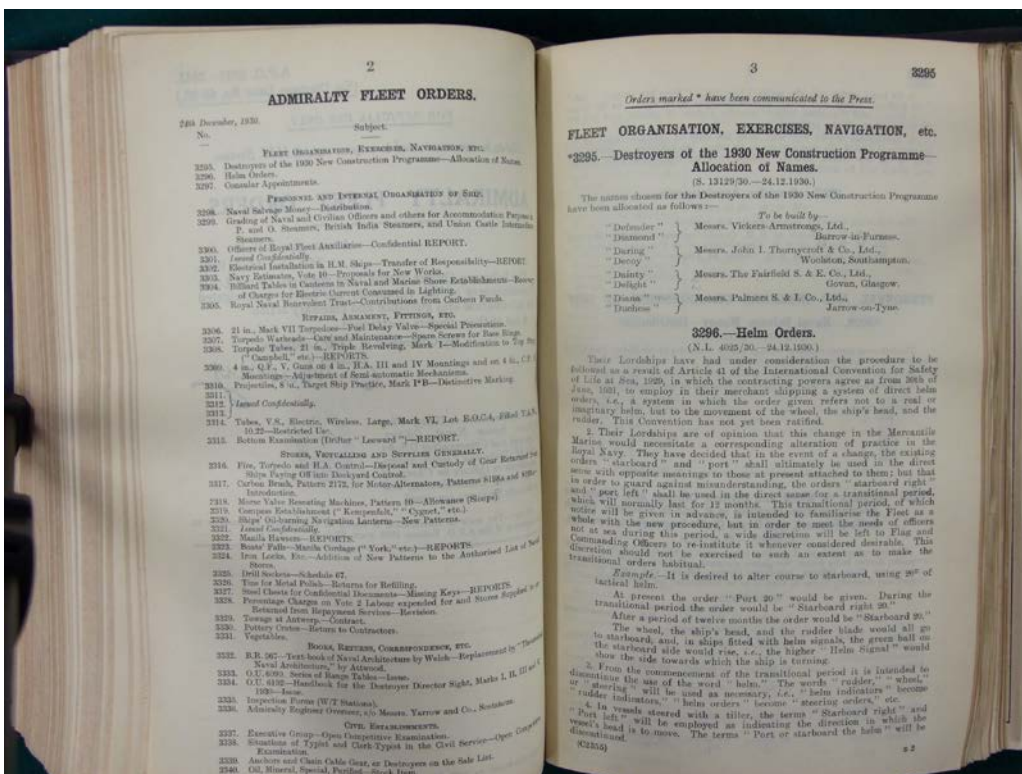


Fig. 1. To show an index page and an Admiralty Fleet Orders from December 1930.

## The Navy List

The Navy List was published monthly throughout the period. Containing as it does both alphabetical and seniority lists (conveniently totalled by page and rank) of all naval

<sup>90</sup> AFO 2473/31 *Commissioned Rank – Promotion from the Lower Deck*.

officers, it is an invaluable source document, and it is possible to follow an individual officer's career through successive issues. It also contains such material as entry regulations etc. Full sets are held by the Admiralty Library and the Institute of Naval Medicine among other institutions. It will be shown that some opinions expressed in the literature are readily disproved by recourse to this source.

### The Public Record Office/National Archive

Another valuable source has been Admiralty documents in the ADM series at the National Archive (formerly the Public Record Office – PRO). These have proved to be an excellent source, but with some reservations. Many have been obviously ‘weeded’ (to use the internal Admiralty term) of what was seen by the person undertaking the weeding as extraneous material before being archived. In most cases this process has removed manuscript minute sheets leaving only formal minutes and papers. This has meant that the record of any discussion and argument that took place, and who the protagonists were has often been lost. Some files have obviously been edited and re-paginated, and in some cases copies of the original document pasted onto a backing sheet. The dating of some documents indicates that they were not filed in the correct order, which gives rise to occasional difficulties sequencing undated files. Most files are not indexed or numerically paginated, but fortunately in the main ADM files are quite slim, as identifying a specific source within an ADM file is often impossible except by the file number. Files are referred to as ‘ADM’ and their National Archive number. Where possible, the title and, if possible, more detailed source identification is given.

The author has been fortunate in researching this thesis in commencing not long after seventy years had passed following the mutinies in HMS *Lucia* of the Atlantic Fleet at Invergordon in 1931. Some of the files consulted appear not to have been seen since having been released under the seventy year embargo under which they were originally held.

### Personnel Records

The author of this thesis approached the then Second Sea Lord (Vice Admiral Sir Adrian Johns) and asked to research the personal files of officers commissioned between the wars. These are among the wealth of material held by the Royal Navy

under the aegis of the firm TNT in their depot at Swadlincote. After taking the advice of an epidemiological statistician<sup>91</sup> as to how to configure the research, the names of every midshipman of seniority 1920, 1925, 1930 and 1935 appearing in the Navy List was submitted to the Second Sea Lord's disclosure cell. The personal files of the officers concerned were then made available for scrutiny. The author was informed by both Second Sea Lord's office and by TNT that he was the first person to see any but individual files before. The treatment of the data derived was such as to allow statistical analysis.<sup>92</sup>

The files included the record of service of each officer including their training, and confidential reports made upon them during their career. How the information derived was treated is set out Appendix B which also includes the ethical constraints, particularly with regard to anonymisation, imposed by the Second Sea Lord's Disclosure Cell and the University of Exeter. The spreadsheets (Excel © Microsoft) derived from the data are annexed to the thesis.

### Interviews (oral history)<sup>93</sup>

Officers who lived through any part of the interwar period are now very elderly. Interviews were sought by direct approach (the most fertile source) and by advertising for subjects in the 'Navy News' and in the 'Naval Review', which together produced one subject, who in turn press-ganged another! The interviewees ranged from an Admiral of the Fleet to Lieutenants; some had made the navy a lifelong career, others left prematurely either voluntarily or by medical discharge (but all were regular officers, i.e. RN not RNR, RNSVR or RNVR). All have given written consent in accordance with the ethical approval granted by Exeter University. None asked for anonymity, excepting one officer who asked that his views on freemasonry within the service to be anonymised, and another, Admiral O'Brien, who while allowing access to his unpublished autobiography (written for his family), asked that references to named officers not be used. One interviewee has been anonymised as 'Rhymer'. While he was content to be named, he gave vital biographical information about his father whose

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<sup>91</sup> Dr Shaun Kilminster BSc(Hons) PGCEd MSc(Psych) PhD CPsychol FSS Hon FFPM (RCPEng), Head of the Medical Statistics Division, Institute of Naval Medicine.

<sup>92</sup> Anna Green and Kathleen Troup 'Quantitative History' in Anna Green and Kathleen Troup (eds) *The Houses of History: A Critical Reader in Twentieth Century History and Theory* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1999) pp. 141-150.

<sup>93</sup> The methodology adopted is set out in Appendix B.

records are one of the anonymous records studied and as he obviously shares his father's distinctive surname, he agreed to be anonymised.

It was suggested by a very senior officer that details of the addresses of the interviewees be only given very broadly for reasons of personal security. While others were happier for their full address to be given, a uniform style has been adopted.

Bearing in mind the old caveat that 'old men forget', the information gained from interviews has been rigorously checked against other sources, and has been found to be surprisingly consistent and reliable – more so than some published sources - and above all honest, on occasion, embarrassingly so.

### Diaries

In the process of researching this thesis much effort has been expended attempting to find the diaries of (then) junior officers, to little avail. Little significant material has been derived from those that have been found. Such diaries as have been found have read more like a midshipman's journal than a personal diary.<sup>94</sup> As, during wartime, the keeping of a diary had been forbidden for security reasons,<sup>95</sup> possibly officers in the 1920s had got out of the habit. Conversations with interviewees suggest that if a diary was kept, it tended to be for forwarding to the officer's family during the not infrequent periods of separation, and thus they tended to be more of a travelogue.

### Evaluating Leadership, morale and command

In large part it has been possible to construct this thesis as a narrative based on a framework of the secondary and primary sources. The latter have been used both directly and to provide statistical information on which to base assertions and conclusions. However, some issues have required examination across a wider canvas, particularly leadership, morale, discipline and initiative. These are core to understanding the multi-faceted professional and personal character of the executive branch naval officer. To a large extent, they are inter-dependent; good leadership is essential for high morale and for the maintenance of discipline. At first sight, initiative may be thought to

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<sup>94</sup> Midshipmen under training were required to keep a daily journal which was marked regularly by their training officer ('Snottie's nurse' – see glossary) and seen at intervals by their commanding officer.

be antithetical to discipline, but the Royal Navy's ability to balance the two was absolutely essential to its fighting capability, particularly in the Second World War. If there is one feature that defines the success of the navy in training its officers, it is that they produced a rigidly disciplined officer who, when required to, could display flair, originality and initiative.

The officer corps of the Royal Navy between the two World Wars was at times itself badly led, suffered poor morale and there were major breakdowns of discipline. Thus how officers were prepared to lead, be it by training or experience, is a recurring theme. Leadership is not a science. If it were, teaching it would be much easier. Rather, it is 'the art of dealing with humanity, of working diligently on behalf of the men, of being sympathetic with them, but equally, of insisting that they make a square facing toward their own problems'.<sup>96</sup> The foregoing was written about leadership in a land setting. The Duke of Marlborough is quoted as having said 'The Sea service is not so easily managed as that of land',<sup>97</sup> that matters on land differ from those at sea. Naval leadership at the lower level is fundamentally different from that on land. Firstly and most obviously, at sea a sailor cannot run away; at the risk of being hackneyed, everyone is in the same boat and, leaders and led, exposed to similar if not identical risks.<sup>98</sup> More importantly is the qualitative difference. The quote from Marshall above was taken from his book concerning the United States Army, and specifically its infantry in the Second World War. That quotation spells out the degree to which man management is a major part of leadership in an army. A junior officer in the army had to involve himself with and manage his men in a way unthought-of in the navy; he had even to regularly inspect their feet and oversee their rations.<sup>99</sup> In a ship such was unnecessary; a naval officer was not required to man manage in the same way or to the same degree. Indeed, a Royal Naval context 'leadership' is rarely used as a term in the primary sources until about 1931 and thereafter infrequently; the term used is 'Officer Like Qualities' often abbreviated to 'OLQs', which is nowhere formally defined.

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<sup>95</sup> And Midshipman's journals.

<sup>96</sup> S.L.A. Marshall, *Men against Fire: The Problem of Battle Command*, (Norman OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 2000) p. 160.

<sup>97</sup> Michael A. Palmer, *Command at Sea: Naval Command and Control since the Sixteenth Century*, (Cambridge Mass: Harvard University Press 2005) p. 82.

<sup>98</sup> What might be termed internal desertions did occur, but they were rare; there was little point in moving from one part of a ship to another.

<sup>99</sup> John Lewis-Stempel, *Six Weeks: The Short and Gallant Life of the British Officer in the First World War* (London: Orion, 2011) p. 96.



Morale is absolutely crucial to a fighting organisation. History is replete with many examples that bear out the contention, attributed to Napoleon that ‘morale is to material as three is to one’.<sup>100</sup> In the nineteenth century, Clausewitz broke morale down into “mood” and “spirit” (which in modern usage would be “mood” and “morale”) and warned of the dangers of confusing the two.<sup>101</sup> In the opinion of the author based on 38 years as a naval medical officer, Clausewitz’s contribution distinguishing mood and morale is still the only still the most solid basis for the study of morale in a military setting. Even modern writers fail to differentiate between the two factors, even over a century and a half later and after the Second World War, and commonly misread one as the other.<sup>102</sup> The important distinction is that mood is transient, and tends to affect individuals or small groups, whereas morale affects large units or entire organisations or cadres within organisations, but, importantly, is slower to change for better or worse. Consider, for example, the moods within a ship with high morale immediately after an inter-departmental five-a-side football tournament. The occurrence of such a tournament contributes to the ship’s high morale; however while the mood of the winning department may be high, that of the losers, i.e. most of the ship’s company, would be low. The transient nature of mood and its superficial similarity to morale must not be forgotten when trying to assess morale retrospectively.

As with leadership, morale at sea, and by extension in a navy, is very different from that in an army. Literature on military morale tends to be about army morale, and is largely confined, not unexpectedly, to wartime.<sup>103</sup> The author is unaware of any published material concerning the assessment of military morale, army or navy, in peacetime. Additionally, methodologies vary; those that rely on letters, diaries, and even combat performance,<sup>104</sup> mean inevitably that the assessment of morale is assertion based on the authors own perceptions, albeit evidentially derived. For example when talking about army officers pay, Watson supposes that ‘not only would such measures have demoralised officers ...’ and in dealing with the aftermath of the Battle of Amiens

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<sup>100</sup> Christian P. Potholm, *Winning at War: Seven Keys to Military Victory throughout History* (Lanham, Md; Rowman & Littlefield, 2010) p. 150.

<sup>101</sup> Carl von Clausewitz, *On War* (ed. and trans) Michael Howard and Peter Paret (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press 1989)Book One Ch 3.

<sup>102</sup> For example see J.G. Shillington, ‘Morale’ *Journal of the Royal United Services Institute* Vol 95 No 578, 1950 (reproduced *RUSI Journal* Vol 156, No 2, 2011 pp. 96-98).

<sup>103</sup> S.L.A. Marshall, *Men against Fire*; Alexander Watson *Enduring the Great War: Combat, Morale and Collapse in the German and British Armies, 1914-1918* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008); Johnathan Fennell *Combat and Morale in the North African Campaign: The Eighth Army and the Path to El Alamein* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011).

‘...its effect on morale was probably far less decisive’.<sup>105</sup> Fennel in his recent work has established a much more reproducible metric using rates of desertion, sickness, surrender as well as less easily measured factors including recruit quality, food quality leave etc.<sup>106</sup>

However, factors such as desertion rates used by Fennel are not readily applied to navies and specifically not to naval officers and are largely irrelevant in peacetime anyway. Of the officers studied for this thesis, none are recorded as having gone absent without leave or as having deserted throughout their careers including during the Second World War.<sup>107</sup> Additionally, despite their complexity, the result can be little more than a statement that morale was high or low, or more importantly undergoing change at a given point in time. The point remains that morale is difficult to assess or measure contemporaneously, let alone at a temporal remove.

A further factor makes the methodology used by Watson and Fennel difficult to apply to naval officers. These authors rely on the subjects themselves to delineate their morale by their writings and their actions. This could be termed an active assessment of morale, attempting to measure the outputs. However, naval officers tended not to keep diaries, and it must not be forgotten that they were expected to and did act significantly differently to ratings in a given situation. They were expected to give a lead, and this would often require them to submerge their own feelings. Thus rather than assess morale by the outputs, in an attempt to apply a metric to officer morale in a peacetime navy, the author has cast back to the teaching he received at the (now defunct) Royal Naval Management School.<sup>108</sup> They recommended the application of the teachings of the business psychologist Frederick Herzberg (1923-2000) to the service, specifically naval, environment.<sup>109</sup>

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<sup>104</sup> Alexander Watson *Enduring the Great War*; Holloway, S.M. (ed.) *From Trench and Turret: Royal Marines' Letters and Diaries 1914 – 1918* (London; Constable and Robinson, 2006)..

<sup>105</sup> Alexander Watson *Enduring the Great War* pp.128, 194

<sup>106</sup> Johnathan Fennel *Combat and Morale in the North African Campaign*, pp.9-10.

<sup>107</sup> 2SLPersRec.

<sup>108</sup> Much naval management training is now by civilians in civilian schools.

<sup>109</sup> Frederick Herzberg, *One More Time, How Do You Motivate Employees*, (Boston, MA: Harvard Business Press 2008).

Herzberg believed that people in any organisation are influenced by two factors which he termed motivation and hygiene, which he then sub-divided:

<b><u>Motivational factors</u></b>	<b><u>Hygiene factors</u></b>
<b>Achievement</b>	<b>Pay and benefits</b>
<b>Recognition</b>	<b>Company policy/administration</b>
<b>Work itself</b>	<b>Relationship with co-workers</b>
<b>Responsibility</b>	<b>Physical environment</b>
<b>Promotion</b>	
<b>Growth</b>	

Fig.2. Herzberg's factors affecting employee motivation. (from source cited in fn109)

According to the theory, the two factors are independent of each other. 'Hygiene' factors are essentially about the work environment in the broadest possible terms. Herzberg's view was that whereas people are dissatisfied by a bad environment, they are seldom actively satisfied by a good one. Thus the hygiene factors if 'wrong' cause dissatisfaction, if 'right' are unnoticed. Interestingly Marshall's description of military morale is a recognisably less ordered version of Herzberg,<sup>110</sup> (and in turn is the core of Watson's definition of morale).<sup>111</sup>

Using the Herzberg matrix it is thus possible to examine inputs to morale in a business environment. If, for example, pay were to be poor it would have negative impact on the hygiene side of the matrix and impact negatively on morale. Transferred to a military environment, the sum of the Herzberg factors is Clausewitz's fighting spirit or morale. Thus Herzberg's very highly regarded work can be used as a template to assess morale by breaking it down into parts, which thus goes some way to providing a metric. Nonetheless, individual inputs to the matrix must ultimately be the author's impression/assertion.

While it is obviously not possible at this temporal remove to carry out a detailed 'Herzberg audit' of the Royal Navy's executive branch officers in the interwar period,

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<sup>110</sup> S.L.A. Marshall *Men against Fire*, p.158.

<sup>111</sup> Alexander Watson *Enduring the Great War*, p. 140.

the matrix above has been completed at various points temporally through this thesis in order to attempt to give some indication of officers' morale and motivation at that point.

Subsequently in this thesis when a pertinent change etc is noted, the author ascribes a likelihood of it impacting on morale. While subjective, the impact of some are fairly obvious; a pay cut could reasonably assumed to affect the Hygiene factors and to have a negative impact on morale. Some are less easy to quantify, the increasing operational tempo leading up to the Second World War might have had a positive impact on the Motivational column (doing the job the officer had trained for) or a negative impact (being worked too hard). Thus the author, while accepting that at each stage the insertion of individual factors into the Herzberg matrix must be in large part subjective, feels that the application of Herzberg's methods represent a step towards a comparative assessment of morale. It is accepted that it is a crude measure, and may well be best viewed across the period, that is by comparing matrices sequentially rather than by placing too much weight on a single matrix, that is to say while individual 'snapshots' are helpful it is change that is probably the best indicator.

Allied to initiative is the matter of methods of command; in modern theory, 'Mission Command' over its alternative 'Directed Command'. There are extensive writings on the theoretical basis of mission and directed command in the military literature. Many are German in origin, indeed the *Wehrmacht* (properly the *Reichsheer*) in the Second World War is still studied to this day by military theorists as the archetypal exponents of mission command (and the contemporary *Kreigsmarine* as a directed command organisation).<sup>112</sup> The detail of the various theories is of no concern to this thesis. Directed Command takes all the decisions at a higher level, much as Churchill described the Grand Fleet. The concept of mission command could not be expressed better than by General (later Field Marshal) Haig, British Commander-in-Chief on the Western Front for most of the First World War, 'The Commander-in-Chief should only set out the strategic objectives – the details and execution ... should be left to subordinates'.<sup>113</sup> The great strength of the Royal Navy was its ability, in both World

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<sup>112</sup> A good starting point, albeit from a land forces perspective with a good review of the literature is Fitz-Gibbon, *Not Mentioned in Despatches: The History and Mythology of the Battle of Goose Green*, (Cambridge: Lutterworth Press, 1995) which, while largely concerning the battle in 1982, goes in some detail into the theory of *auftragstaktik*, and *befehlstaktik*. It is however somewhat inaccessible to the non-military reader. Confusingly he describes the former - mission command - as 'directive command', referring to the practice of issuing a single command directive and leaving the subordinate the latitude as to how the directive is to be achieved.

<sup>113</sup> J.P. Harris, *Douglas Haig and the First World War*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009) p.192.

Wars to be a Mission Command and a Directed Command organisation as and when the situation required it, with officers educated and trained to perform under either constraint.

This thesis examines how the navy managed to continue to train its officers against a rapidly changing societal background to show such flexibility, all the while being themselves, for a decade, mismanaged. Thus officers and what the navy required of them changed according to circumstances and evolved with time. However, importantly and extremely pertinent to this thesis, was the neglect in both materiel and manpower terms of what can be thought of as the ‘Administration’ part of the Naval Staff,<sup>114</sup> which came under the Second Sea Lord, what would now be termed the ‘Human Resources’ arm of the Naval Staff. This reflects the fact that it was almost exclusively manned by civil servants and separate from the Naval Staff of which it was nominally a part, like a Navy Board of old.

### Thesis Structure

To achieve its aim, before it can define the changed requirements placed on the officers, the generic officer who emerged from the First World War must be described; how he had been selected, educated (because for most officers, their education was by the navy itself in its own school) and trained and to what end(s). This has to be done by casting back, sometimes as far as the turn of the century, because, while the officers of the First World War had been educated and trained against, as it were, a nineteenth, even eighteenth, century template, there were stresses and even strains emerging in the navy before and during the First World War that affected and shaped the changes that took place between the wars.<sup>115</sup> As is common in any organisation, the forces of reaction attempted to stop and even reverse what turned out eventually to be inevitable changes.

After this introduction, the thesis is in three parts. The first part, entitled ‘The Naval Officer on 12 November 1918’, contains ‘scene setting’ material. It is descriptive of structures and processes, and describes the officer corps at the end of the First World

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<sup>114</sup> ADM 1/8536/235 *Naval Staff Organisation*.

<sup>115</sup> Stress and strain are used here in the engineering sense. Stress is the force applied to an object, strain the deformation (change in form or shape) that stress causes.

War.<sup>116</sup> It will describe how he had come to be in the service, how he had been educated (for most, within the service but for some outside), how he had been trained, and examine the role of the specialist in some detail because, as will be shown, this had a major effect on officers employment, career path and ultimate achievement within the service. It will also examine how he individually had been managed, and in the broader sense of central administration, how officer manpower was managed.

The second part is a broadly chronological perspective of what happened to the officer corps between the wars, based on the successive First Sea Lords of the period who set the tone for their periods in office. It examines how near total neglect reduced the officer corps, and, because the navy is essentially about people, the whole service, to a nadir. This will include attempts to assess effects on morale, which can only be inferred at this distance in time, and applying at various points the Herzberg matrix described earlier. Inevitably in part this will cast back to before the end of the war. While 11 November 1918 marked the end of hostilities many fundamental changes predated the end of the war. The navy had started planning for demobilisation as early as July 1918.<sup>117</sup> Since the Battle of Amiens, the ‘turning point on the Western Front’<sup>118</sup> which started to push the German army back after the ‘George’ and ‘Michael’ offensives had yet to be fought, this must be regarded as very prescient. Additionally some changes, particularly those regarding commissioning from the lower deck and the place of engineering overlap the end of the war.

In the aftermath of the First World War, the ‘Geddes axe’, or rather the part of it which concerned with the reduction of officer manpower, has attracted much attention. What has not is the failure of the Admiralty Board to control officer numbers after the redundancies, and the effects that this and repeated pay cuts had on officer morale. These amounted to indifference, even neglect, of naval personnel, including the officers, culminating in the mutiny at Invergordon.

After the Invergordon mutiny, the thesis looks then at the inflection, or turning point which marks a celestial bodies nadir, its lowest point in the sky, and will argue that Admiral Field, despite the obloquy heaped on him by Roskill, actually introduced a

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<sup>116</sup> While there were continuing naval hostilities in the Baltic into 1919, for the purposes of this thesis, the war is assumed to have ended 11 November 1918.

<sup>117</sup> AWO 2325/18 *Demobilisation of Personnel of the Naval Service on the Cessation of Hostilities – Outline of Principles*.

series of reforms that were to serve the navy well as it moved towards the Second World War. Then the ascension from the nadir, under Admiral Chatfield, is examined. Unlike the majority of the personnel of other Armed Forces,<sup>119</sup> it will be shown that the navy was actively involved in various episodes of international tension during the 1930s particularly the Abyssinian crisis and the Spanish Civil war (the supposed ‘non-intervention’ often came close to being anything but) even before the Munich Crisis and the outbreak of war itself. These, it will be argued, all played a vital part in preparing the navy psychologically for the coming war.

The third part of the thesis re-examines the executive branch as it was on 2 September 1939. As the first part looked back to describe the officer the day after the end of the First World, this part looks forward to examine the naval officer who was the product of the inter-war years to see if he was fit for purpose. This looks more broadly than the individual officer and looks at the structures developed between the wars to recruit, educate and train the officer corps and how well they functioned. Thus the expansion of the officer corps necessary to fight the war is examined, particularly how the lessons of the First World War were incorporated and how the reforms initiated by Admiral Field formed an essential part of the process. It looks at how officers’ career evolved, and return to the question of ‘ship command’ and in particular who achieved it, whether specialist or non-specialist and at what point in their career and its apparent importance for career progression.

A particular aspect that has had to be examined is the role and to some extent the capabilities of the RNVR and its interactions with the Royal Navy itself and shows that the RNVR could not have been the dominant force within the naval service as some have claimed except purely numerically. The RNVR was very much a subordinate part of the navy, the performance of the navy in the Second World War was led by and largely due to the Royal Navy. The thesis concludes by examining the role of the officer and his education and training as the Royal Navy reached an apogee, indeed, what might prove to have been its apotheosis.

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<sup>118</sup> Gary Sheffield, *Forgotten Victory* p. 237.

<sup>119</sup> Large forces were employed on imperial policing and peacekeeping, up to 20,000 in Palestine in the 1930s.





**TO THE NADIR AND BACK: THE EXECUTIVE BRANCH OF THE  
ROYAL NAVY 1918-1939**

**PART ONE**

**THE NAVAL OFFICER ON 12 NOVEMBER 1918**



## Chapter 1

### The Naval Officer on 12 November 1918: The Man

As the First World War ended, the naval officer (using the term to describe the totality of the executive officer corps as if it were an individual) shared the relief and exultation of the nation that the war was over and had been won. However, there was a feeling of dissatisfaction, a feeling that the navy had ‘not done well’, that the army had won the war and that, at least to some extent, the navy had been bystanders. As Marder put it:

[t]he mood of the Royal Navy and the Admiralty<sup>1</sup> as the war neared its end was grim. There was ‘a feeling of incompleteness’, to quote the First Sea Lord.<sup>2</sup> The Navy had, in a sense, won a victory greater than Trafalgar, but it was less spectacular – there had been no decisive sea battle.<sup>3</sup>

Overall ‘[d]espite a good deal of patriotic bluster, the war had done the image of the navy no good. The vastly expensive fleet of dreadnoughts had not deterred war. It had failed to bring the enemy to a decisive action, as the navy had allowed the public and the press to expect’.<sup>4</sup> This had a significant psychological impact on the service and the officer corps’ self belief was dented. Beatty recognised this early on. His manner of receiving the *Hochseeflotte* as it arrived in British waters to be interned as part of the Versailles treaty settlement was theatrical,<sup>5</sup> and was intended to publicly emphasise the dominance of the Royal Navy, and specifically the Grand Fleet.<sup>6</sup> Nonetheless a nagging doubt persisted which had public manifestations. In central London numerous memorials to various parts of the army were built, but the only significant naval memorial in the centre of the capital was to the Royal Naval Division, which sustained the majority of the navy’s casualties in the war, fighting on land at the Dardanelles and on the Western Front.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> In view of the division that was to develop between the Admiralty and the rest of the navy through the 1920s, it is interesting that Marder makes this differentiation in 1918.

<sup>2</sup> Marder gives no reference for this quote.

<sup>3</sup> Arthur J. Marder, *From the Dreadnought to Scapa Flow; The Royal Navy in the Fisher Era, 1904 -1919* – Volume V *Victory and Aftermath (January 1918 – June 1919)*, (London: Oxford University Press, 1970) p. 176.

<sup>4</sup> Brian Lavery, *Able Seamen: The Lower Deck of the Royal Navy 1850-1939*, (London: Conway, 2011) p. 265.

<sup>5</sup> Arthur J. Marder, *From the Dreadnought to Scapa Flow: The Royal Navy in the Fisher Era 1904-1919* Vol Vpp.190-1

<sup>6</sup> With the addition of Admiral Rodman’s USN battle squadron.

<sup>7</sup> Originally outside the Admiralty building adjacent to Horseguards, it was removed to the Royal Naval College at Greenwich before being recently restored to its original location.

The executive officers of the Royal Navy who emerged from the First World War were the product of a system that had evolved over centuries. Unfortunately, while naval officers of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries have been well served by some historians (for example by Professor Rodger<sup>8</sup>), those of the latter part of the nineteenth and the Edwardian period have been less so. Historians have concentrated on the major figures such as Fisher<sup>9</sup> and disputes between them,<sup>10</sup> while lesser or more junior figures have received very little attention. Gordon has looked at wider aspects, but while his seminal work, *The Rules of the Game* did look at the officer corps,<sup>11</sup> it is primarily concerned with issues of command and control procedures, concentrating on leadership and initiative issues in the major fleets of the late Victorian and Edwardian periods and into the First World War. Partly the result of the uneven coverage a mythology surrounding the navy and its officers has grown up of a hide-bound, ill-educated, rigid and unchanging officer corps. The reality was far different, the navy had actually been in the forefront of technological advance. It had embraced organisational change and educational change to the point that there were some voices, Richmond among them, arguing that there was too much technical education at the expense of a broader education.<sup>12</sup> Not only were its officers far from ignorant of technical progress, they were technical leaders, and the service was receptive to their lead, indeed '[i]nnovation has been a hallmark of the Royal Navy'.<sup>13</sup> A good example is that of Lieutenant John Saumarez Dumaesq, a product of the navy's educational and training system, who in 1902 invented his eponymous fire control calculator which was adopted by the Royal Navy and was widely used for many years.<sup>14</sup> It will be shown in the next chapter that the education at Britannia Royal Naval College was fully the equal, if not better than most contemporary public (i.e. private) schools.

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<sup>8</sup> N.A.M. Rodger, *The Wooden World: An Anatomy of the Georgian Navy*, (London: Fontana Press, 1988).

<sup>9</sup> P.K. Kemp, (ed.) *The Papers of Admiral Sir John Fisher*, (Navy Records Society, 1960, 1964); David Wragg, *Fisher: The Admiral who Reinvented the Royal Navy*, (Stroud: The History Press, 2009); Nicholas A. Lambert, *Sir John Fisher's Naval Revolution*, (Columbia SC: University of South Carolina Press, 2002).

<sup>10</sup> Richard Freeman, *The Great Edwardian Naval Feud: Beresford's Vendetta against 'Jackie' Fisher*, (Barnsley: Pen & Sword Maritime, 2009).

<sup>11</sup> G.A.H. Gordon, *The Rules of the Game: Jutland and British Naval Command*, (London: John Murray, 1996).

<sup>12</sup> Herbert Richmond, *Naval Training*, (London: Oxford University Press Humphrey Milford, 1933) pp.14-22 reviews the arguments from the time of the Fisher reforms of 1902.

<sup>13</sup> Joseph Moretz, *The Royal Navy and the Capital Ship in the Interwar Period: An Operational Perspective*, (London: Frank Cass, 2002) p.xv.

<sup>14</sup> John Tetsuro Sumida, *In Defence of Naval Supremacy: Finance, Technology and British Naval Policy, 1889 -1914* (Boston Mass: Unwin Hyman, 1989) p.74.

## The naval officer's place in society

In his wide ranging criticism referred to in the introduction, Barnett missed an important point. For historical reasons (they had 'always done it that way') and for fear that if they were not caught young they would never be caught at all,<sup>15</sup> the navy recruited its officers young, at the age of twelve and a half, entering Dartmouth at the age of thirteen. In a society stratified by class divisions, a very real feature of the Dartmouth education was that it separated naval officers even further from society in general than was otherwise the case for those of their class – essentially the upper middle class with a smattering of the nobility or upper class – who, in general, were educated in the public school system. Right up to the First World War (and after) on leaving school they went into the 'normal' middle class professions or occupations such as law, medicine, business, government service and the Army. The 'fighting services' took a significant portion of the output of the Public Schools throughout the period. When Oundle School was inspected by the Board of Education in 1937 it was reported that 67 out of the last 1000 boys to leave had joined them.<sup>16</sup> James in his history of the middle class shows the ultimate careers of a cross section of ex-public school boys through the nineteenth century and into the twentieth century.<sup>17</sup> Some went into the army but none into the navy because, until the introduction of the Special Entry scheme in 1913, there was no route for them to do so; they had to have joined at the age of thirteen, instead of going to public school. The result was that boys did not mix with those of a naval bent, and those who had chosen a naval career could only mix with those who had not during school holidays.

The executive naval officer was to undergo significant trials and tribulations in the inter-war period. There was a stereotypical naval officer, with certain characteristics of personality common to most if not all, which placed him in some respects outside the norm of society. As has been said, in the contemporary class structure, he lay in the upper middle class. While the study of officer entrants undertaken for this thesis does show that six officers entered with hereditary titles, most officers were of middle class

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<sup>15</sup> There was some debate, see ADM 167/86, specifically memorandum *CWE2398/22 initialled RK dated 3 April 1922*, but the conclusion was that the Dartmouth system, recruiting children to be the future officers, was to be preferred.

<sup>16</sup> Anon, *Report of Inspection of Oundle School Northamptonshire*, (London: Board of Education, 1937) p. 5.

<sup>17</sup> Lawrence James, *The Middle Class: A History*, (London: Abacus, 2008) pp. 335-8.

origin.<sup>18</sup> A study conducted by the Admiralty showed that of 469 Special Entry (executive) and Paymaster cadets entered between June 1925 and November 1929, 129 (25%) were the sons of servicemen.<sup>19</sup> In addition, there were significant numbers of sons of Admiralty civil servants. Many had siblings serving as well (see fig. 3 for an example). They were thus to some extent a self-perpetuating caste. Perhaps Barnett had a point about inbreeding, except that in his view the inbreeding was professional rather than genetic.



Fig. 3 The three sons of the Cambell family in the 1930s shown as Sub Lieutenant, Cadet and Lieutenant. All served in the Fleet Air Arm. From left to right, (giving final rank) Commander Neville Cambell spent most of the war as a prisoner of war, Lieutenant Brian Cambell was killed on active service in 1941 flying against *Panzerschiff BISMARCK*, Rear Admiral Dennis Cambell was the inventor of the aircraft carrier angled flight deck. (author's collection).

The point about being outside the norm of society warrants further examination. During the latter part of the nineteenth century and into the twentieth century, the

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<sup>18</sup> 2SL Pers Rec.

<sup>19</sup> ADM 116/2896 Appendix B to enclosure to Board Secretary's memorandum for the Board of Admiralty 17<sup>th</sup> February 1932.

professional middle class was getting steadily larger. This is where the archetypal executive officer sat in terms of class origin, education, training and profession. However, Perkin in *The Rise of Professional Society: England since 1880* does not even index the Royal Navy or the navy, let alone discuss its place in society, or more crucially that of its officers.<sup>20</sup> While the Royal Navy obviously was a part of British society, it was to a surprising degree separated from it. While at first sight it would appear to have been a true microcosm, it in fact had many differentiating features from the rest of society. While for most of its history, the navy had existed in a confined 'wooden world', so well described by Nicholas Rodger, he also makes the point that its officers frequently returned to the society of which they were a part when ships paid off, albeit in many cases to the merchant service,<sup>21</sup> indeed the boundaries of the maritime community had been 'porous', with a very fluid membership' from the earliest days of English seafaring.<sup>22</sup> The advent in the nineteenth century of continuous service, and as those wooden walls had transitioned to iron clad wood, to iron and ultimately to steel and from sail to steam propulsion meant that the naval officer of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century returned to society at much less frequent intervals.<sup>23</sup> Thus, having effectively left society at the age of thirteen, he was for extended periods separated from it. This isolation went far further than just the fact of sea service; the navy had its own social structures and mores. Thus, unlike those of other semi-separated segments of society such as the army, the navy was much different from the society as a whole, and so, inevitably, were its officers.

However the navy did seek a degree of social change in the sourcing of its officer before the First World War. The army was forced into commissioning from outside the normal social milieu from which it had until then drawn its officers (Field Marshal Robertson was a notable exception<sup>24</sup>) by its losses at Mons and the subsequent retreat in 1914. It initially commissioned over fifty warrant officers and by the war's end 'the British officers corps became a rough meritocracy, as potential subalterns,

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<sup>20</sup> Harold Perkin, *The Rise of Professional Society: England since 1880*, (London: Routledge, 2002)

<sup>21</sup> N.A.M. Rodger, *The Wooden World* p.269.

<sup>22</sup> Cheryl A. Fury, 'Conclusion' in Cheryl A. Fury (ed.) *The Social History of English Seamen, 1485 - 1649* (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2012) p. 301.

<sup>23</sup> Andrew Lambert, *Battleships in Transition: The Creation of the Steam Battlefleet 1815 – 1860* (London: Conway, 1984); David Evans *Building the Steam Navy: Dockyards, Technology and the Creation of the Victorian Battle Fleet 1830 – 1906*, (London: Conway, 2004).

<sup>24</sup> Field Marshal Robertson, eventually the Chief of the Imperial General Staff was unusual in the Victorian and Edwardian army in being a commissioned ranker, and remains to this day the only man to progress from the bottom to the top of the army.

regardless of social background were trained'.<sup>25</sup> The navy had introduced two additional methods of obtaining officers before the outbreak of war. Firstly it had introduced the 'Mate' system, which was intended to produce officers from the lower deck. In the socially rigid aftermath of the Edwardian age, this was a groundbreaking change. The other major change was the 'Special Entry' scheme; the navy had broken away from its centuries old practice of entering its future officers as children. While undoubtedly political pressure played a significant part,<sup>26</sup> the changes were proposed by the serving First Sea Lord and supported by men such as Beresford.<sup>27</sup> This was not the resistance to change of a rigid unimaginative service, rather an illustration of its flexibility.

### Indentured servants

There is a natural tendency to sentimentalise members of the armed forces, that they are better and different from the rest of society. In some respects they are, they are more highly motivated and have an innate sense of superiority over civilians. However, even if they wear funny clothes to work and are subject to far harsher management than is customary in civilian life and ultimately may be expected to go in harm's way, they are employees and the same basic mechanisms of employee management applicable in civilian employment are required. Some of the boundaries that apply to civilians are vastly different, working hours immediately spring to mind. However, even in contemporary employment, there were few parallels with the servicemen and, in particular, the naval officer. Even contemporary religious orders no longer recruited at twelve and a half, even apprenticeships in industry did not run for ten years, and there was no other employer that required to be paid to educate and train its employees and then expected the employee to remain with the same employer until the age of 45.<sup>28</sup> A potential officer had to choose at the age of 12 1/2 to enter the Royal Navy and the Admiralty made it plain that it expected them to make this their career for life. Boys, or rather their parents/guardians had to give a written undertaking that 'the Candidate, if he obtains a Cadetship, shall adopt the Navy as his profession in life.'<sup>29</sup> They were then

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<sup>25</sup> Gary Sheffield, *Forgotten Victory: The First World War, Myths and Realities*, (London: Headline Book Publishing, 2002) caption to picture between pp. 114-5.

<sup>26</sup> Christopher M. Bell, 'The King's English and the Security of the Empire: Class, Social Mobility, and Democratization in the British Naval Officer Corps, 1918-1939', *Journal of British Studies* 48 (July 2009) pp. 695-716.

<sup>27</sup> Stephen Roskill, *Churchill and the Admirals*, (London: Collins 1977) pp.22-3.

<sup>28</sup> Even the law and hospital medicine were no where near as restrictive.

<sup>29</sup> Cd1962 *Selection of Candidates for Nomination as Naval Cadets* (HMSO 1904).



educated at Dartmouth which offered ‘a sound public school education’<sup>30</sup> but they were then effectively tied to the service until their forties. Thus a naval officer was essentially an indentured employee, on much longer terms of indenture than was usual in civilian life. As a result, the executive officer corps was a closed and almost monastic society. It is not the place of this thesis to explore the parallels with the medieval military orders, but the navy demanded a level of commitment and obedience not far short of that expected of a knight of the medieval Teutonic Order.<sup>31</sup>

### Leadership

The question of leadership and leadership training will be addressed through this thesis. The navy in 1918 did not teach or train its officers in the exercise of leadership. Rather it appears to have expected its officers to be natural leaders. Indeed it would appear that this was expected to be innately a characteristic of their class. To modern perceptions this seems a bizarre concept. However in Victorian and Edwardian times it was accepted without question. It is no part of this thesis to consider wider social aspects, but it must not be forgotten that the better nutrition and healthier lifestyle of the upper middle class meant that boys and ultimately adults were taller and bigger than their lower class contemporaries; the lower classes literally looked up to the upper middle classes. James points out that ‘[i]n 1904 the average height of a thirteen-year-old boy at Rugby [a public school] was five feet one inch and he weighed ninety eight pounds. His contemporary at a Salford board school was four feet five inches tall and weighed seventy-nine pounds’. He goes on to make the point that this ‘marked an individual’s position in a complex pyramid’.<sup>32</sup> Thirteen was the age at which cadets entered Dartmouth, and there is no reason to suppose that they were any different to their social contemporaries entering Rugby. The difference in height and general body habitus

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<sup>30</sup> ADM 167/86, *Memorandum CW 2398/22 initialled RK dated 3 April 1922* but with – curiously for a supposed ‘Naval College’ - less maritime components than that of its merchant service equivalents such as HMS *Worcester* HMS *Conway* and later Pangbourne College.

<sup>31</sup> The oath of a recruit to the Teutonic Order was ‘I promise the chastity of my body, and poverty and obedience to God, Holy Mary and you, to the Master of the Teutonic Order and your successors, according to the rules and practices of the Order, obedience unto death’. Considering that a naval cadet was told that he could not expect to live on his pay, was subject to compulsory religious observance, was prevented from marrying until he was a lieutenant, was effectively bound to the service until into his forties and was subject to Kings Regulations and Admiralty Instructions, he would probably have recognised the oath. See William Urban, *The Teutonic Knights: a Military History*, (London: Greenhill Books, 2003) p. 18.

<sup>32</sup> Lawrence James, *The Middle Class* p. 401.

persisted into adulthood and this applied across the social class.<sup>33</sup> It was even been observed in 1914 by a German naval officer when a Royal Naval squadron visited Kiel in the summer of 1914 that '[m]ost of the English sailors were little fellows. ... The tall Teutonic type was far rarer than among our men.'<sup>34</sup> Thus the naval officer was literally a superior physical specimen when compared to those he was to lead, and being bigger makes leadership easier, particularly because naval leadership, especially at the lower levels, was much to do with setting, and thus leading, by example. In contrast, a junior army officer in the First World War was expected to physically lead from the front, which was a major contributor to the appalling death rate among junior officers on the Western Front; an officer was expected to be first out of a trench during an attack and to lead patrols in no-man land.<sup>35</sup> A naval officer by contrast (serving afloat) rather than physically leading, had to set an example and lead in that manner. Thus the navy in describing and assessing 'Officer Like Qualities', to wit 'physique, bearing, character etc'<sup>36</sup> were looking for someone who would be a role model. The navy expected imperturbability and coolness under pressure to comprise the 'character' component. A story that became a legend within the submarine service about the future Admiral Horton (then a lieutenant commander) when commanding HMS/M *E-9* during the First World War illustrates what was expected. His submarine was bottomed while being searched for by the Germans with sweep wires. With nothing to do but wait, the officers played bridge in the control room which would have been in full view of most of the ships company. When one officer revoked, distracted by a sweep wire noisily catching on the bow of the submarine, Horton told him that he had to concentrate if he was to play bridge well.<sup>37</sup>

### The naval officer's value system

Thus the resulting officer held, and was held to, a subtly different set of values when compared to his civilian counterparts. These were largely differences of degree, but of so many characteristics and to such a degree as to mark a naval officer out as being

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<sup>33</sup> John Lewis-Stempel, *Six Weeks: The Short and Gallant Life of the British Officer in the First World War*, (London: Orion, 2011) p.14.

<sup>34</sup> Georg von Hase, *Kiel and Jutland*, (trans. Arthur Chambers, F.A. Holt) (London: Skeffington & Son, [not given]) p.28.

<sup>35</sup> John Lewis-Stempel, *Six Weeks: The Short and Gallant Life of the British Officer in the First World War*, (London: Orion, 2011) p. 111.

<sup>36</sup> ADM 116/1888 *O Murray letter 1 March 1920*.

<sup>37</sup> William Guy Carr, *By Guess and By God: The Story of the British Submarines in the War*, (London: Hutchinson & Co, 1930) p. 17.

'different'. For example, patriotism was a normal, indeed expected, emotion in British society between the wars, but for a naval officer it ran much deeper. Probably the most important differing characteristic was loyalty, first to the service, then to the ship and only then to friends. An illustrative example was that of Admiral Tomkinson. He had assumed command of the Atlantic fleet just before the Invergordon mutiny and was told soon after the mutiny by the Admiralty Board that they considered he had done well in the circumstances. He was promoted to vice admiral 16 February 1932 and given a further command afloat. After a further enquiry within the Admiralty into the mutiny conducted by the then DCNS,<sup>38</sup> Tomkinson was relieved of his command with immediate effect and placed on half pay. Dudley Pound was a close personal friend and Tomkinson asked that he secure him a personal hearing by the Board. Pound's loyalty to the service came before that to a friend and 'he refused to support Tomkinson'.<sup>39</sup> Pound's action was not regarded as abnormal by his peers. Such loyalty to the service was to be sorely tested through the 1920s because, as will be shown, the officers were managed badly. This was the consequence of an increasing gulf between the Admiralty and the navy as a whole, and because the officers were the middle management of the service, they were most affected, and their morale and motivation was to suffer as a consequence.

An additional problem for the navy, if problem it was – the navy and its officers saw it as a strength – was that it had long traditions of its way of doing things. Such traditions formed part of its attraction to the idealistic motivated boys and young men it sought to attract, and so were not lightly or easily changed. This was, as the navy saw it, a vital part of its 'ethos'. Recruitment of its officers as children was seen as an integral part of this. It is this perception that it was vital to 'get them young' that probably contributed to the resistance to the whole concept of 'Special Entry' (and later 'Direct Entry') cadets, ones who, by virtue of not being at Dartmouth (and Osborne in the early years of the period), had supposedly not been imbued with the naval ethos. This attitude persisted; when interviewed for this thesis Admiral O'Brien (Exmouth term 1930-1934)<sup>40</sup> was firmly of the opinion that Dartmouth cadets made better officers than Special Entry cadets who joined at aged eighteen. Ethos is a major component of morale discussed in the introduction. The navy believed in ethos and its close cousin, tradition.

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<sup>38</sup> Vice Admiral Dreyer.

<sup>39</sup> Robin Brodhurst, *Churchill's Anchor: The Biography of Admiral of the Fleet Sir Dudley Pound OM, GCB. GCVO*, (Barnsley: Leo Cooper, 2000) pp 84-5.

<sup>40</sup> Admiral O'Brien interview 22 April 2008.

When pushed (in 1928) by an Imperial Japanese Navy Commander ‘in charge of one of the Japanese commissions which occasionally visited Dartmouth to study the Royal Navy’s training methods’ the Commanding Officer of the college ‘explained that they had no need to teach cadets tradition. It is part of the atmosphere; it is in the air they breathe’.<sup>41</sup>

Initiative, responsibility and command.

Before the First World War, the officer corps of the Royal Navy was a dynamic and the evolving organism in a process of constant change which continued right up until the end of the First World War. Inevitably there was a balance between what the service wanted modified by what the individuals were prepared to tolerate, after all it was a volunteer service, even in many respects, internally. As the century turned, the navy was officered by increasingly better educated and trained young men. Initially the problem that this was to cause was not obvious as their aspirations and ambitions were met by the enormous expansion in the size of the navy, which meant that prospects for promotion with the attendant improved status and income – the former more important in a hierarchical society such as the navy - were good.<sup>42</sup> The deleterious effects were only to become truly apparent when the navy shrunk after the First World War, culminating in the belated recognition of poor state of the officer corps around the time of the Invergordon mutiny in 1931.

Date	Personnel (Officers and ratings)
1888-9	62,400
1892-3	74,100
1897-8	100,050
1902-3	122,500
1907-8	128,000
1911-2	134,000
1914-5	151,000

Fig. 4. Numbers of Royal Naval personnel up to the First World War.<sup>43</sup>

<sup>41</sup> Arthur J. Marder, *Old Friends, New Enemies: The Royal Navy and the Imperial Japanese Navy – Strategic Illusions, 1936 – 1941*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1981) p. 284.

<sup>42</sup> That said, naval pay, particularly that of its officers, was rapidly falling behind that of society in general.

<sup>43</sup> ‘Lower Deck’, *The British Navy from Within*, (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1916), p.11 quoted in Robert L. Davison, ‘In Defence of Corporate Competence: The Royal Navy Executive Officer Corps, 1880-1919’ (PhD Thesis University of Newfoundland, 2004) Appendix 1.

However well educated and trained he was, a lieutenant serving in a larger warship actually had very little authority or need to display initiative, unless, on duty at sea as officer of the watch when he was directly responsible to the commanding officer, irrespective of the ranks and status of all other officers who were subordinate to him while he was on watch.<sup>44</sup> Otherwise his responsibilities were circumscribed to his specialist area and to his own division of ratings, for whom he was an administrator and welfare officer. With the increasing concentration of the fleet in home waters from 1904 instituted by Fisher in response to the rise of the German Navy,<sup>45</sup> even captains of such ships had less and less responsibility. While on detached service as private ships, with the communications of the day, the captain of a ship had immense responsibility, acting at times as a proto-ambassador. However, when part of a fleet he was responsible just for his ship, and had very little freedom when doing that. This was the result of the difficulty of in handling large groups of warships using 19th century command systems, essentially by signal flag, or later by flashing light,<sup>46</sup> the only viable systems for tactical handling.<sup>47</sup> To direct ships moving at up to twenty knots, and with ever increasing fighting ranges made for an inevitable move to a directed command structure. The perception was that there was no other way to do it. Thus in the space of a few years, the navy moved from being in large part a mission command organisation, where officers would see the initiative and relative freedom given to their captain, to a directed command organisation, and the importance of ship command was downgraded.

The officer had evolved of necessity. Until the latter half of the 19th century it was possible, indeed was expected, that an officer would be master of all aspects of his profession. However the rise of the importance of gunnery led to some officers being chosen for specialist training in this area.<sup>48</sup> This was the first recognition that some officers would have special expertise.<sup>49</sup> This had progressed further, by the outbreak of the First World War officers could specialise in gunnery, torpedo, signals (later signals

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<sup>44</sup> KR & AI para 178.

<sup>45</sup> Richard Hough, *The Great War at Sea 1914-1918*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983) p. 8.

<sup>46</sup> Arthur J. Marder, *From the Dreadnought to Scapa Flow: The Royal Navy in the Fisher Era, 1904-1919* Volume III *Jutland and after (May 1916 – December 1916)*, (London: Oxford University Press, 1966) p. 175.

<sup>47</sup> Wireless was in its infancy, had poor range and took significant time to transmit a message.

<sup>48</sup> The gunnery school at HMS *Excellent* was established in the 1830's to train officers and ratings, see Brian Lavery, *Royal Tars: The Lower Deck of the Royal Navy, 875 – 1850*, (London: Conway, 2010) p.315.

<sup>49</sup> Some officers had been earlier recognised as experts, e.g. Captain James Cook as a navigator, but this was by way of special interest, not formal specialisation.

and wireless), navigation and engineering. As part of his reforms while Second Sea Lord Fisher had introduced the general list, by which all officers including engineers (but excluding paymasters, medical officers and marines<sup>50</sup>) were on a common list of officers. He envisaged that officers would spend their remaining time as lieutenants and as lieutenant commanders (when this rank appeared) in their specialisation and then return to more general duties on being promoted commander. At this point they would take on more general administrative and command roles. Implicit in this structure was the assumption that major war vessels, the successors of those able to ‘stand in the line of battle’ and cruisers (the successors to frigates, the modern frigate being a much smaller vessel) were to be commanded by such officers.

The downgrading of the importance of command which started about 1890 and continued well into the Second World War meant that having held a ship command *per se* was not seen as essential for career progression, either by ambitious officers or by the navy itself. What was seen as being essential for career progression was having specialised, and among the various specialisations there was a distinct hierarchy, with gunnery at the peak.<sup>51</sup>

Promotion from lieutenant was still dependent to some extent on patronage but without the ‘interest’ component; as Lambert has said, it depended on chance, being in the right place at the right time.<sup>52</sup> There were changes in the offing, driven by technological advances. Through the nineteenth century, the constant battle for supremacy between gun and defensive armour had made for larger and larger ships, inevitably commanded by officers of captain’s rank. However, the invention of the Whitehead locomotive torpedo had a very important effect on the development of the officer corps in the first half of the twentieth century.<sup>53</sup> The weapon, an unguided waterborne missile (what would now be termed ‘fire and forget’) carried a large explosive warhead, but unlike the gun/shell combination, the torpedo did not require a large, heavy and complex system to launch it, nor did it require large numbers of men to do so. Not only that, but a torpedo could be an immediate threat to a ship’s watertight

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<sup>50</sup> It had been originally proposed that Royal Marine officers would be on the naval ‘General List’. See Lord Hankey, *Supreme Command 1914-1918*, (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1961) p. 24.

<sup>51</sup> Lord Chatfield, *The Navy and Defence: The Autobiography of Admiral of the Fleet Lord Chatfield PC GCB OM etc*, (London: William Heinemann, 1942) p.25.

<sup>52</sup> Andrew Lambert, *Admirals: The Naval Commanders who Made Britain Great*, (London: Faber and Faber) 2008, pp.160-1.

<sup>53</sup> Originally torpedo meant what is now described as a mine. Via spar torpedo – a bomb on the end of a long spar stuck out from a boat- it became the ‘locomotive torpedo’.

integrity – put simply its ability to stay afloat – because of its very nature it made a hole below the waterline. This meant that a relatively small vessel, not even a ship,<sup>54</sup> could carry a weapon that could seriously damage or even sink ‘even the biggest ship, ... for the first time since their creation, ships-of-the-line could no longer defend themselves’.<sup>55</sup> A small vessel could carry a weapon capable of sinking of the largest ship. While to start with the short range of the torpedo and their relatively small size meant they were seen as a defensive weapon, by the 1880s torpedo boats were seen as offensive weapons and a threat to major surface units, as was to be convincingly proved in the First World War when the new SMS *Svent Istvan*, an Austro-Hungarian battleship, was sunk by two Italian torpedo boats.<sup>56</sup> The torpedo was also the primary weapon of the other major development, the submarine. Thus from the turn of the century, the torpedo was the coming weapon of naval warfare, driving tactical thinking ‘The advent of the torpedo, however, has given the idea [of counter-attacks] a new importance that cannot be overlooked.’<sup>57</sup>

**This image has been removed by the author of this thesis for copyright reasons.**

Fig. 5. Instruction on a Whitehead torpedo. A midshipman with white collar patches is bending over the tail of the torpedo, two cadets with collar badges on its far side are being instructed by a petty officer. (see Appendix A)(Crown copyright)

Developments in the structure of the officer corps followed the inception of the torpedo branch. Once the intricacies of the Whitehead torpedo had been mastered in reality there was not much for a torpedo officer to do. His weapon launcher was

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<sup>54</sup> The difference between a boat and a ship had been that the latter could hoist the former inboard. Later the distinction became blurred; a Second World War Motor Torpedo Boat (MTB) was never intended to be hoisted on board any kind of ship.

<sup>55</sup> Jan S. Breemer, *The Great Race: Innovation and Counter-Innovation at Sea, 1840-1890*, Corbett Paper No 2, The Corbett Centre for maritime Policy Studies, January 2011 p. 23.

<sup>56</sup> Erminio Bagnasco, Enrico Cernuschi and Vincent P. O’Hara ‘Italian Fast Coastal Forces: Development, Doctrine and Campaigns, 1914 – 1986: From the Beginning to 1934’ John Jordan (ed.) *Warship 2008* (London: Conway, 2008) p. 91.

<sup>57</sup> Julian S. Corbett, *Some Principles of Maritime Strategy*, (London: Filiquarian Publishing 1911 reprint no date given) p. 105 (Ch3 part 2).

simplicity itself, in the case of a torpedo boat it was aimed by aiming the vessel and in some cases by simply sliding the torpedo backwards in a trough off the stern.<sup>58</sup> For whatever reasons, the torpedo branch attracted responsibility for the other ‘new thing’, electricity. The branch became responsible for the increasingly complex electrical systems of warships, and remained so until it was transferred in 1927 to the engineering branch and ultimately into the ‘L’ branch, the electrical branch.<sup>59</sup>

The other major change was in the actual rank structure. Small torpedo boats and the ‘Torpedo Boat Destroyers’ that evolved from them were not initially seen as appropriate commands for senior officers; they were commanded by lieutenants, if only because of sheer numbers of such craft. To distinguish such lieutenants from the rest of the common herd, the appointment of a ‘Lieutenant-in-command’ was introduced. Initially this was an appointment that could be relinquished, evident by the way the rank was worn. A lieutenant’s braid, of a mark of his rank worn on the cuffs of his uniform jacket, comprised two rings the upper of which included a loop or executive curl which was both expensive and difficult to make.<sup>60</sup> Uniquely the lieutenant’s lower ring was moved downwards on the cuff and a narrow half ring inserted between the two. For every other promotion the upper ring was moved upwards. This difference meant that when an officer relinquished the appointment of lieutenant in command it was a cheaper to amend his uniform. Later, ‘lieutenant in command’ was formally made into a rank, lieutenant commander.<sup>61</sup>

While the torpedo became a ubiquitous weapon (almost every warship carried them, battleships carried below the waterline torpedo tubes, aircraft carriers as air stores for use by their embarked aircraft) the vast majority did not carry ‘Torpedo’ specialist officers. In part because there were insufficient (twenty eight of the 485 officers studied for this thesis specialised in torpedo<sup>62</sup>) but because a gunnery, torpedo, signals or torpedo specialist was actually primarily a staff officer, unlike submarine and aviation specialist officers who were trained for a specific job.<sup>63</sup> The reality was that a torpedo

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<sup>58</sup> Przemyslaw Budzbon, ‘The Beginnings of Soviet Naval Power: G5 Class MTBs’ in Anthony Preston (ed.) *Warship* 8 (October 1978) pp.230-245. The craft described were based on captured British Coastal Motor Boats (CMBs) which were similarly armed.

<sup>59</sup> The convention for use of initial letters in the Naval service was that if a letter is already ‘taken’ then the next letter in the word is used; thus because the Engineering branch was ‘E’, eLectrical became ‘L’.

<sup>60</sup> See Appendix A for a fuller description.

<sup>61</sup> And with formalisation of the rank, lieutenants per se were given commands!

<sup>62</sup> 2SL Pers Rec.

<sup>63</sup> This reflects a difference in specialist training, G, T, N, H, S and to some extent PRT were trained as specialists and staff officers, SM, P and O to do a job. The latter commonly reverted to general service



officer was, in terms of his employment, a staff officer first and a torpedo specialist second. By the time the Second World War came, this was overtly recognised, one 'T' was appointed to a staff position 'T in lieu of S'.<sup>64</sup> Specialists were over trained for their fighting role; the training was in some aspects redundant, but also had an educative element. As perceived future leaders, they were being trained for a staff function – to develop policy and undertake procurement functions.

The navy did give leadership and initiative experience to its trainee junior officers. The impression that before the First World War the navy in general and the Mediterranean fleet in particular were hidebound and hierarchical with no allowance for individuality and in particular initiative is not supported by contemporary witnesses. The future Lord Hankey, well recognised as an astute observer,<sup>65</sup> who served in the Mediterranean fleet after being commissioned as a Royal Marine officer, wrote that:

[m]y impressions during my first few months afloat, before Fisher hoisted his flag as Commander-in-Chief,<sup>66</sup> were somewhat mixed. So far as the personnel was [*sic*] concerned, in the handling of the individual ship they were almost wholly favourable. There was an infectious zeal, and a strong sense of personal responsibility engendered in all ranks by the nature of life. Even the midshipmen often found themselves in positions requiring prompt decision in taking their boats and launches ashore in rough weather, particularly at night. This tended to a self-reliance and resourcefulness ... superior to that developed by any civilian education or by the military system in which I had been trained.<sup>67</sup>

This held true for most officers in 1914. Those who commanded smaller warships such as destroyers and particularly submarines were actually given far more responsibility than the majority of junior officers, but they were a minority, and not seen as likely to advance – service in a major unit was necessary to be 'seen'.<sup>68</sup> 'Independent command' or in naval parlance, 'command of a private ship' had become increasingly rare as the nineteenth century turned to the twentieth. Even large warships commanded by senior captains were organised into squadrons of as few as four or five ships under the command of a more senior officer, either a commodore or more usually

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after a period in specialisation, the others retained their specialist designation even if employed in a general service appointment.

<sup>64</sup> 2SLPersRec.

<sup>65</sup> Lord Hankey started his career as an officer in the Royal Marine Artillery, and moved through Admiralty staff appointments to become secretary of the Committee of Imperial Defence, to secretary of the War Cabinet and Cabinet Secretary and was Clerk of the Privy Council. See Stephen Roskill, *Hankey: Man of Secrets*, in 3 vols (Collins: London, 1970, 1972 7 1974).

<sup>66</sup> There were two Admiral Fishers who commanded in the Mediterranean, this was 'Jackie' Fisher, later Admiral of the Fleet, the Lord Fisher of Kilverstone, First Sea Lord.

<sup>67</sup> Lord Hankey, *Supreme Command 1914-1918*, (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1961) p. 67.

<sup>68</sup> Cunningham and Tovey were very much the exceptions.

a rear admiral. This process was speeded as Fisher brought back scattered units from overseas to home waters. Even a rear admiral often had little independence of action, Evan-Thomas at Jutland was subordinate to Beatty and the famous ‘paintwork being more important than gunnery’ encounter between Beresford and Scott show how little freedom of action even a rear admiral actually had.<sup>69</sup> The navy did not see command, or rather the experience of exercising it as important and this thesis will show that having held command was not a pre-requisite for higher rank until at least into the Second World War. One example will be cited of an officer who retired as a vice admiral who did not exercise command at sea until a flag officer; his only ship command was as a captain for six months of a ship that did not go to sea during that period.<sup>70</sup> However, during the Second World War it was not uncommon for an entire convoy escort group of five or six ships in the Battle of the Atlantic to be commanded by a lieutenant commander who in reality was but a senior lieutenant. Such officers were still a minority, but now central to the navy’s fighting capability.

Despite the emphasis on its doings in some histories, the Grand Fleet was far from being the totality of the Royal Navy in the First World War. The Grand Fleet spending its war apparently doing pointless sweep after sweep across the North Sea waiting for the German navy to appear is far from the whole picture. Despite the words of the navy’s quick march ‘if they won’t fight us, we cannot do more’,<sup>71</sup> the Grand Fleet staff actually were pushing technology and doctrinal thinking to its limits to try and take the war to the enemy in its harbours. If they wouldn’t come to sea; they planned an aircraft carrier launched strike on the German fleet in Wilhelmshaven for 1918, delayed until 1919 because of late delivery of the necessary aircraft.<sup>72</sup> The activities of non Grand Fleet parts of the navy also warrant examination, not because of their effect on the outcome of individual campaigns or on the war, but because of what they say about the officers involved.

The Royal Navy entered the war with a submarine arm far bigger than that of any other navy, and used its submarines imaginatively and aggressively, characterised

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<sup>69</sup> Richard Freeman, *The Great Edwardian Naval Feud: Beresford’s Vendetta against Fisher*, (Barnsley: Pen & Sword Maritime, 2009) pp.134-5.

<sup>70</sup> 2SLPersRec.

<sup>71</sup> William Boyce, *Heart of Oak*, (libretto David Garrick) 1759.

<sup>72</sup> David Hobbs ‘The First Pearl Harbour: The Attack by British Torpedo Planes on the German High Seas Fleet Planned for 1918’ in John Jordan (ed.), *Warship 2007*, (London: Conway, 2007) pp. 29-38.

by individual daring and initiative.<sup>73</sup> The Royal Naval Air Service, until it was subsumed into the newly created Royal Air Force, similarly was handled at every level with flair, indeed the much lauded command structure that Fighter Command used to fight the Battle of Britain is recognisably based on that created by the RNAS in 1917 for the air defence of London.<sup>74</sup> The Harwich force, commanded during the war by Commodore Tyrwhitt, was everything that could be expected by a ‘Nelsonian’,<sup>75</sup> the attempted blocking of the submarine bases at Zeebrugge and Ostend in 1918 by the Dover patrol was fully worthy of the commandos of the Second World War,<sup>76</sup> and the conduct of some Royal Naval operations in the Mediterranean read more like a ‘Boys Own Paper’ account of the Napoleonic war than the First World War. For example, cattle raiding from the sea, both to deny food to the enemy and supply own troops were commonly carried out with flair and panache,<sup>77</sup> and it is often forgotten that the evacuation from the Dardanelles was a masterpiece of planning and execution at every level.<sup>78</sup>

The point of the foregoing is to illustrate what is core to this thesis. Naval officers of the executive branch throughout the First World War and the Second did what they had been educated and trained to do, and overall did it well; despite individual failings that can be expected in any organisation. Officers of the Grand Fleet did what they were told with little display of initiative, because that was the only way that the Grand Fleet could be handled with the extant methods of command and control. When officers, produced by the same system, but fighting the same war in a different environment (e.g. in submarines or destroyers) or a different theatre (the Mediterranean and specifically the Dardanelles) were required to show initiative, they did so, and this was a product of their training. That training was to evolve between the wars, as it had continuously since the Napoleonic wars, and was to develop the structures necessary to handle both the vast expansion of the officer corps during the Second World War and

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<sup>73</sup> William Guy Carr, *By Guess and by God: The Story of the British Submarines in the War*, (London: Hutchinson & Co, 1930) describes some well known and many lesser known episodes.

<sup>74</sup> S.W. Roskill (ed.), *Documents relating to the Naval Air Service: Volume 1 1908-1918*, (Not given: Navy Records Society, 1969) pp. 477-8.

<sup>75</sup> William Guy Carr, *Brass Hats and Bell-Bottomed Trousers: Unforgettable and Splendid Feats of the Harwich Patrol*, (London; Hutchinson & Co, 1939).

<sup>76</sup> Harry W Dickinson, ‘The Zeebrugge and Ostend Raids: Operation ZO, April 1918’ in T.T.A. Lovering (ed.) *Amphibious Assault: Manoeuvre from the Sea – Amphibious Operations from the last Century* (Not given: Crown Copyright, 2005) pp. 37-48; Dwight R. Messimer *Find and Destroy: Antisubmarine Warfare in World War I*, (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 2001) pp.170-80.

<sup>77</sup> Paul G. Halpern (ed.), *The Royal Navy in the Mediterranean 1915-1918*, (Aldershot: Navy Record Society/Temple Smith, 1987) p. 139-40, 158-9.

their increasing expectations. This is not to say it was perfect, far from it. In many respects, it lagged behind, especially during the 1920s and was reactive rather than proactive. In particular, the navy was late to recognise that leadership was not an innate ability of the upper middle class, but had to be learned. It was to go down a very wrong route in downgrading the importance of actual command experience for its supposed brightest and best, the specialist officers. However even that mistake brought on some officers who might not otherwise have risen to the top, such as Cunningham and Tovey, and the navy was late to realise the importance of making the individual feel appreciated as an individual by up to date career management structures.

So as the First World War ended, the navy had an outstanding well educated and trained officer corps, that had adapted to social change, indeed by widening the pool from which it selected its officers before the war had even started, can be said to have led the change. The officer corps was adaptive, innovative, but self doubting.

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<sup>78</sup> Michael Hickey, 'Gallipoli: The Constantinople Expeditionary Force, April 1915', in T.T. A. Loring (ed.), *Amphibious Assault: Manoeuvre from the Sea*, (Royal Navy: Crown Copyright, 2005) pp.19-21.

## Chapter 2

### **The Naval Officer on 12 November 1918: How he entered the navy and was educated and trained**

*... the navy needed a large supply of capable officers for junior command, watch-keeping, managing the men and imposing order. It required relatively few captains to exercise the independent command of ships. Rather than overeducate those who would not rise beyond lieutenant, the navy took in boys, and trained them for this specific rank, relying on chance and opportunity to select those who would become the next generation of leaders.<sup>1</sup>*

That quotation from Professor Lambert is almost a *leitmotif* for this thesis, describing succinctly the education training and career management of executive officers up until the early 1930s. It encapsulates the problem that faced the navy throughout its history; it needed a mass of officers who were intelligent and able enough to carry out duties that latterly had become increasingly complex due to rapid technological developments. This required higher levels of intelligence education and training, but officers often had to obey orders and for the most part only exercise judgement within quite narrow bounds.<sup>2</sup> However, from this mass of officers whose initiative and originality had during their developmental years been to a greater or lesser degree, restrained even constrained, the navy had to produce a relatively small number of leaders with initiative, the future admirals.

This chapter sets out briefly the way in which boys (and some men) became executive branch officers and their training up to the end of the First World War so that the changes that occurred between the wars can be fully understood. It puts into context one of the debates that started in the nineteenth century and continues to the present day concerning the need for and importance of further education for naval officers.

To some extent what follows is idealised, as much education and training was modified or even suspended during the First World War. Thus this is more a description of what would/should have been the common experience of all executive officers up to the rank of lieutenant, and is intended to establish as baseline for officer education and

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<sup>1</sup> Andrew Lambert, *Admirals: The Naval Commanders who Made Britain Great*, (London: Faber and Faber) 2008, pp.160-1.

<sup>2</sup> Andrew Lambert, 'The Development of Education in the Royal Navy: 1854-1914' in Geoffrey Till (ed.) *The Development of British Naval Thinking: Essays in Memory of Bryan McLaren Ranft* (London: Routledge, 2006)p. 34.

training between the wars. It also draws on what was the later experience of interviewees, but, as it will be shown that the Dartmouth education was largely unchanged and unchanging through the 1920s and into the 1930s, it is considered valid to use the material.

## Recruiting

The Royal Navy was aware that it had, to some extent, to actively recruit its officers. Its own officers were its main recruiting sergeants – there were (and still are) ‘Naval’ families; even a cursory look at the Navy List over years shows many names recurring at generational intervals. Indeed a paper taken by the Admiralty Board in 1932 records father’s occupation of four and a half years special entry cadets; many were the sons of officers or Admiralty civil servants.<sup>3</sup> What must not be forgotten is that the British middle class attitude of ‘duty’ and filial obedience extended into career choice. Admiral of the Fleet Sir Henry Leach recounts the fairly minimal level of consultation that his father had with him before he was entered into Dartmouth. This consisted of being asked through a partly opened bedroom door after he (Henry) had gone to bed ‘I take it that you have no objection to joining the Navy?’<sup>4</sup> Despite this there was still a need for ‘fresh blood’. As was discussed in the previous chapter, the navy was to some extent separate from the rest of society with different *mores* and outlook. It was a service which believed in and practised ‘all of one company’, if you were in, you were ‘in’. However, the Navy had to sell itself to the broader society as a whole as a means of recruiting. Some of the recruiting literature is, to a modern reader, extremely racist, for example ‘Your messmates will be white men’. Class was a selling point ‘You will have the *entrée*, almost without exception, to every Club in the world’,<sup>5</sup> and a concern. Captain G R Mansell in 1918 then commanding RNC Keyham, (at that time training Special Entry Cadets, those entering at aged 18 from Public Schools, rather than to BRNC Dartmouth at 13), wrote that ‘The difficulty appears to be to get the schools to go in for the [Special Entry] scheme’. He was concerned about the possibility of cadets from the lower deck joining the special entry cadets, went on ‘One may call people

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<sup>3</sup> ADM 116/2896 *Appendix B Special Entry and Paymaster Examinations June 1925 to November 1929.*

<sup>4</sup> Admiral of the Fleet Sir Henry Leach, *Endure no Makeshifts: Some Naval Recollections*, (London: Leo Cooper, 1993) p.2.

<sup>5</sup> Commander E.W. Bush DSC RN, *How to become a Naval Officer (Special Entry) (Being a detailed account of how a Public School Boy may become an Officer in His Majesty’s Navy)*, (London: Gieves Ltd, 1936) p.3.

snobs for not sending their boys here as Special Entry if the [ex-lower deck cadets] come as well, but ...'.<sup>6</sup>

### Entry as a Cadet

In 1903 the then Second Sea Lord <sup>7</sup> and the First Lord <sup>8</sup> implemented a 'New Scheme of Naval Training', known as the 'Fisher-Selborne' reforms. This introduced interview by 'a small committee' which was followed, if the candidate was successful at the interview, by an examination which 'was designed to be purely qualifying and not competitive; its object being to test whether the nominated candidates came up to a reasonable standard.'<sup>9</sup> This was very different from the examination sat by the 'Special Entry' cadets which was competitive.

Boys, or rather their parents/guardians, applied not before the boy was aged 12<sup>1/2</sup>. They had to give an undertaking:

in writing [of] their intention that the Candidate, if he obtains a Cadetship, shall adopt the Navy as his profession in life ... [e]very Cadet ... must therefore be prepared to continue his training so long as the Admiralty are satisfied with his progress and parents are not at liberty to withdraw their sons.

If the Cadet was withdrawn for whatever reason, including poor performance, up to confirmation in the rank of sub lieutenant, parents had to pay the Admiralty £25 per term for every completed term to date in addition to the £75 per annum fees they had already paid. There was an exemption for successful candidates who were the sons of Naval, Royal Marine or Army Officers killed in action. They would be styled 'Kings Cadets' and not be liable for fees.<sup>10</sup> The regulations also laid down strict nationality and racial qualifications:

Candidates must be of pure European descent, and the sons either of natural born or naturalized British subjects. In doubtful cases the burden of clear proof will rest upon the parents or guardians of Candidates.<sup>11</sup>

When it came to the interview, the committee was aided by being provided with such information as was supplied by the parents, a medical history sheet signed by

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<sup>6</sup> ADM 116/1734 *Extract from Private letter [sic] from Captain Mansell R.N. College Keyham to Rear Admiral Ley D.T.S.D. Admiralty dated 24 Januar2y 1918*

<sup>7</sup> The future Admiral of the Fleet Lord Fisher.

<sup>8</sup> Then Lord Selborne.

<sup>9</sup> Cd1962 *Selection of Candidates for Nomination as Naval Cadets* (London: HMSO, 1904).

<sup>10</sup> The regulations did not specify what would happen if such cadets were to be withdrawn.

<sup>11</sup> *Navy List Entry and Examination of Officers. Naval Cadets* (London; HMSO, August 1919), p.2335.

parents and the family doctor, and a report from the boy's headmaster. The interview is a common feature of naval officer's memoirs and fiction and amusing anecdotes abound.<sup>12</sup>

Social class was a recurring feature. An anonymous committee member's notes on considering how the new system should operate which apparently survived 'in a very old file' to be found by an Admiralty Interview Board chairman in the latter part of the twentieth century read:

We have before us a report from his headmaster as to his general attributes and we have the boy before us to ascertain (I suppose) [*sic*]:

- a. If he is a gentleman
- b. If he is a sharp and intelligent one
- c. If he is observant and enthusiastic
- d. If enthusiastic and keen about Navy and patriotic
- e. If fond of manly sports...

I am not quite clear as to whether his social fitness is entirely left to the Committee or whether invitations to appear before the Committee are only extended to those whose birth is considered suitable.<sup>13</sup>

In view of later remarks about the qualifications of potential candidates for lower deck commissions [vide infra] it is worth noting that the first part of the examination included either French or German, and a second part included as alternative options Latin, another modern language or an essay question on science.<sup>14</sup> Thus it was not necessary to take a Latin paper, and Latin was not taught at Osborne/Dartmouth, indeed one successful candidate's first thought on being accepted as a cadet was relief that he would no longer have to study Latin.<sup>15</sup>

Whether potential cadets had studied Latin is a recurring theme in officer recruit selection. The stated attitude to Latin needs to be put into a temporal context. That cadets, and at one point, officer candidates from the lower deck, were required to have studied it, but could avoid being examined in it on entry and, as already mentioned, it was not taught at Dartmouth, seems illogical. In reality, the justification was social:

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<sup>12</sup> For examples see Rear Admiral C C Anderson, *CC Seagulls in my Belfry*, (Durham: Pentland Press 1997) pp.2-3; Captain Oliver L. Gordon, *Fight it Out*, (London: William Kimber, 1957) pp. 11-12; John Winton, *We Joined the Navy*, (London: Michael Joseph, 1959) pp. 5-22.

<sup>13</sup> Rear Admiral C C Anderson, *Seagulls in my Belfry*, p.198.

<sup>14</sup> Jane Harrold and Richard Porter, *Britannia Royal Naval College Dartmouth: An Illustrated History*, (Dartmouth: Richard Webb 2005) p. 64.

<sup>15</sup> Rear Admiral C C Anderson, *Seagulls in my Belfry*, p.5.



it gave you an entrée into the world of those who had done Latin at School, i.e. a highly restricted, socially dominant, male hierarchy. ... The result was that Latin became a sort of bourgeois certificate of authenticity.<sup>16</sup>

### Entry as a Special Entry Cadet

In 1912-13 'the expansion of the fleet and the heavy demands for officers for the new Dominion navies, the Royal Naval Air Service (RNAS) and the submarine service, coupled with the increased needs of the dreadnought battle fleet, left the Admiralty critically short of executive officers.'<sup>17</sup> The Osborne/Dartmouth programme which entered cadets at aged thirteen and produced midshipmen four or more years later could not respond to the increased requirement quickly enough. Therefore the Admiralty decided to enter boys directly from public schools at the age of 18. They convened a committee chaired by Rear Admiral Evan-Thomas to advise on the 'arrangements to be made for [their] training'.<sup>18</sup> The first batch of thirty cadets joined in September 1913 and initially their training was undertaken afloat in a cruiser, HMS *Highflyer*. On the outbreak of the First World War the training of Special Entry cadets was moved ashore to the Royal Naval College at Keyham in Plymouth,<sup>19</sup> where it remained throughout the war. After the war training was successively moved to a training 'cruiser' (actually a battleship), then to HMS *Erebus* a monitor used for training alongside.<sup>20</sup> These cadets were entered after taking a competitive examination with the final selection decision resting on an interview. The examination was under the aegis of the Civil Service Commissioners and they had to be satisfied that the candidates had reached a satisfactory educational standard, usually taken as having passed 'School Certificate'.<sup>21</sup>

From 1913 to the end of the 'Special Entry' scheme after the Second World War the question as to which produced the better officer was often hotly debated within the service but with no agreement being reached. Admiral O'Brien when interviewed for this thesis was in no doubt that the Dartmouth scheme was better 'my term produced six

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<sup>16</sup> Peter Jones 'Ancient & Modern', *The Spectator* 21 February 2009, p. 62.

<sup>17</sup> Robert L. Davison, *The Challenges of Command: The Royal Navy's Executive Branch Officers, 1880-1919*, (Farnham: Ashgate, 2011) p. 104.

<sup>18</sup> W.S. Galpin, *From Public School to Navy: An account of the Special Entry Scheme*, (Plymouth: Underhill 1919) p. 10; but see John H Beattie, *The Churchill Scheme: The Royal Naval Special Entry Cadet Scheme 1913-1955*, (Private Publication, 2010) which covers the same ground in much greater detail.

<sup>19</sup> Latterly this was the Royal Naval Engineering College, Keyham.

<sup>20</sup> Buxton suggests that she was at a buoy rather than alongside, see Ian Buxton, *Big Gun Monitors: The History of the Design, Construction and Operation of the Royal Navy's Monitors*, (Tynemouth: World Ship Society, 1978) p. 131.

admirals and six captains ... [the equivalent batch] of special entries produced one admiral and one captain'.<sup>22</sup> There were equally strongly held opposing views which will be described and cited as they arise when describing the developments in officer training between the wars.

### Entry from the Nautical Colleges

In the first part of the nineteenth century merchant navy officers were trained by being apprenticed at sea for four years. However, they tended to be regarded as cheap labour rather than as cadets. To address this, two moored training ships, HMS *Conway* in the Mersey estuary and HMS *Worcester* in the Thames were established in 1859 and 1862 respectively.<sup>23</sup> They provided a steady stream of officers for the mercantile marine, latterly supplemented by the Brassey Training Scheme. Under this scheme cadets were trained at sea under sail in ships owned and managed by Sir Thomas Devitt (some merchant shipping companies preferred officers who had trained under sail, even after steam power became predominant) in working ships with school facilities. During the First World War, the difficulties of maintaining training at sea during a conflict led to the Brassey-Devitt scheme moving ashore and becoming Pangbourne College (the names of the training ships were preserved as house names).<sup>24</sup>

There were links established with the Royal Navy quite early; the Board of Trade which oversaw merchant training and issued certificates as mate etc, permitted cadets who had undertaken a training voyage to become Royal Naval Reserve (RNR) probationary midshipmen. They would then receive further training in the Fleet which would count both towards being confirmed as midshipmen and their civilian second mates certificate.

As well as being a route into the RNR, the Admiralty accepted officer candidates directly from 'the training ships "CONWAY" [*sic*] and "Worcester" [*sic*] and the Nautical College, Pangbourne'.<sup>25</sup> Additionally, latterly cadets who had served two years in the South African training ship '*GENERAL BOTHA*' [*sic*] were accepted

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<sup>21</sup> Navy List (London: HMSO, December 1931) Appendix p. 142.

<sup>22</sup> Interview with Admiral O'Brien 22 April 2008.

<sup>23</sup> As former warships they were allowed to retain their 'HMS' prefix.

<sup>24</sup> L.C. Stephens, *Pangbourne College: The Nautical College and its History*, (Reading: Pangbourne 1991) pp. 13-26.

<sup>25</sup> Navy List (London: HMSO, March 1931) pp. 140-141.

under similar regulations. These cadets took a different examination to that set for the Special Entry Cadets with alternative papers in French or Spanish (Afrikaans was accepted for the South African cadets), but underwent the same interview process and thereafter were trained alongside the Special Entry Cadets.<sup>26</sup>

### Becoming an officer from the lower deck

While today the lower deck is the source of about 40% of the Navy's officers, in the past there was remarkable resistance to using the lower deck as a source of officers, even to meet a major shortfall in numbers. Commissioning from the lower deck is a recurring subject throughout this thesis and is considered at some length here and subsequently, despite the fact that it was the source of remarkably few officers between the two World Wars. It is of major importance because the mechanisms evolved during the inter-war period to commission officers from the lower deck were to be basis of those used for the vast expansion of the officer corps during the Second World War.

Historically, all commissions were from the lower deck.<sup>27</sup> Even those identified as future officers were borne on ships books initially as seamen or officers servants, even Nelson and St Vincent first joined as Able Seaman.<sup>28</sup> However, during the long nineteenth century peace the officer cadre of the Royal Navy became increasingly socially restricted, and there was actively resistance to social mobility. Promotion from the lower deck largely fell into abeyance as the officer corps became increasingly rigidly class based.<sup>29</sup>

Latterly the only route to becoming an officer from the lower deck was by first being a warrant officer.<sup>30</sup> Unlike the Army who regarded warrant officers as 'other ranks', naval warrant officers, were 'subordinate officers'. In larger ships they messed apart from the other officers (as did midshipmen and sub lieutenants), wore narrow gold

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<sup>26</sup> Curiously, they were the only entrants who had to provide a certificate of their ability to swim 'at least fifty yards' prior to entry.

<sup>27</sup> N.A.M. Rodger, *The Wooden World: An Anatomy of the Georgian Navy*, (London: Fontana Press, 1988) p. 263.

<sup>28</sup> S.A. Cavell, *Midshipmen and Quarterdeck Boys in the British Navy, 1771-1831*, (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2012) p 7.

<sup>29</sup> Boyd Hilton, *A Mad, Bad, and Dangerous People? England 1783-1846*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press 2006) p.144.

<sup>30</sup> A warrant officer was an officer by virtue of an Admiralty warrant rather than by the sovereign's commission.

lace rank insignia and, until 1927, a smaller version of the officers cap badge.<sup>31</sup> Within the executive branch, warrant officers were narrow specialists, e.g. gunner, signal boatswain etc. However, it was possible for a warrant officer to become a 'Commissioned Warrant Officer' and progress from there to become a lieutenant.

The first change was the 'Mates' scheme introduced in 1912 following a proposal by Admiral Lord Battenberg, the then First Sea Lord. This was strongly supported by Admiral Lord Charles Beresford, sitting as an MP.<sup>32</sup> From its introduction until 1932, 371 executive officers were commissioned from the lower deck under this scheme.<sup>33</sup> Potential mates could be selected for promotion from warrant officers, petty officers, leading ratings and those 'who have fully qualified for advancement to Leading Rating'. This was based on recommendation by the 'Captain of a seagoing ship'.<sup>34</sup> They would then be successively considered by a committee of officers convened by a squadron flag officer, and the Admiralty. Once selected, they would be promoted acting mate, and go on various course at the Royal Naval College, Greenwich. On satisfactorily completing these courses they would be confirmed as mates before going to sea. Marks gained on these courses would shorten the time until promotion to lieutenant, for example if he gained 10 marks, he would be promoted after 2 years and 2 months, 4 or less, 3 years and 2 months, but ultimately promotion to lieutenant was subject to his gaining a certificate of professional proficiency and a certificate from his captain that 'He is recommended as in all respects fit for promotion to the rank of Lieutenant'.<sup>35</sup>

Most of the 371 of those promoted mates up until 1932 were actually commissioned during the First World War. A 1914 Navy List shows forty five with seniority of 1913 alone. Promotion to mate continued throughout the war, for example, thirty two were promoted in July 1918.<sup>36</sup> Of the 1913 seniority mates, all but two were lieutenants by the end of the war,<sup>37</sup> what happened to those two is unknown. That they had gained one Albert Medal (Lieutenant Rutland), six DSCs and one Medal for War Service suggests their service that not only had their service been satisfactory, but more

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<sup>31</sup> See Appendix A for a description of Officer's rank insignia.

<sup>32</sup> Stephen Roskill, *Churchill and the Admirals*, (London: Collins 1977) pp.22-3.

<sup>33</sup> Stephen Roskill, *Naval Policy between the Wars: The Period of Reluctant Rearmament 1930-1939*, (London: Collins) 1976, p.120.

<sup>34</sup> KR & AI Appendix XII, part 3.

<sup>35</sup> KR & AI article 261.

<sup>36</sup> AWO 2195/18 *Acting Mate – Promotion to*.

<sup>37</sup> Navy List, (London: HMSO, December 1918).

crucially, that they had been on active service;<sup>38</sup> they were not used, as were the women of the WRNS, to backfill shore appointments vacated by officers appointed to sea.

### The need for change

Towards the end of the First World War there was a shortage of officers at sea; ‘from Battleship to Destroyer is heard the same cry – “we want more Officers”’. One of the Grand Fleet Committees set up by Admiral Beatty, (which effectively constituted a ‘shadow’ Naval Staff) was directed to look at the training of midshipmen. Headed by Admiral Goodenough, this committee looked more widely than just the training of midshipmen, and expressed views on the quality of the midshipmen generated by each of the entry streams (including those from Royal Naval Reserve (RNR), which effectively ceased at the end of World War One).<sup>39</sup>

The committee also looked at commissioning from the lower deck. While its deliberations and the subsequent consideration by the Admiralty of their recommendations took place before the end of the war, it constituted a part of the inter-war ‘change process’ and thus is considered in greater detail in the second part of this thesis.

### Education of future officers

A feature of many fee paying schools of the period was the naval class. Some schools such as Stubbington preparatory school<sup>40</sup> were actually established as ‘crammers’ to get boys in to Dartmouth.<sup>41</sup> Public school prospectuses in the 1920s made a point that ‘[t]he general work of the School is well adapted for boys who wish to become Naval Cadets under the new system [i.e. Special Entry] ... Special attention is given to the Army and Navy Examinations, ... and tuition provided in the holidays (when necessary).’<sup>42</sup> By the 1930s, probably reflecting the tenor of the times, the same school made much less of preparation for the Armed Forces, beyond mentioning that the school had a Cadet Corps, an ‘OTC’ [Officers Training Corps] and that the attached

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<sup>38</sup> The Distinguished Service Cross was awarded for ‘gallantry in the face of the enemy’.

<sup>39</sup> ADM 116/1734 *Report on examination of boys for early advancement. Proposal to consider the best of the candidates for commissions & c.*

<sup>40</sup> A preparatory school was a junior fee paying school attended by boys from 5-7 to age 14.

<sup>41</sup> Andrew Cunningham *A Sailor’s Odyssey: The Autobiography of Admiral of the Fleet Viscount Cunningham of Hyndhope* (London: Hutchinson & Co, 1951) p14.

preparatory school made provision for ‘boys who wish to prepare for entry to the Navy through Dartmouth’.<sup>43</sup>

When considering the quality of the education delivered to naval cadets, it is as well to remember that contemporary public schools varied enormously. While Oundle was well reported on by the Board of Education, some were almost Dickensian. Shrewsbury school in 1932:

offered no science, no art, little music and was governed by an ethos that seemed to be a mixture of the Rule of St Benedict, the court etiquette of Louis XIV and the regime of HM Prisons.<sup>44</sup>

The Osborne/Dartmouth education certainly appears to be have been the equal of the better public schools (but with some of the disciplinary features attributed earlier to Shrewsbury; Dartmouth was run on strict and at times arbitrary rules). After entry cadets would first go to the Royal Naval College Osborne on the Isle of Wight for five terms and then to Royal Naval College, Dartmouth for six terms. After Osborne was closed in 1921 the entire eleven terms were spent at Dartmouth. Dartmouth was felt by the Navy to be an ‘unsurpassed’ educational establishment, ‘so much so that the Admiralty ... had to take precautions to prevent parents entering their sons merely in order to pass them through the College instead of a Public School’.<sup>45</sup> This was understandable; fees at Dartmouth were £75 per annum all in, whereas, for example, Oundle was £87 per annum, with an entrance fee of £3 and compulsory ‘extras’ of £19.19s.0d. as well as a variety of optional extras.<sup>46</sup>

Dartmouth, properly Britannia Royal Naval College has been described as ‘[a] masterpiece of Edwardian architecture’. It was designed by Aston Webb - who had previously designed the Victoria and Albert Museum - to replace the two training ships HMS *Britannia* and HMS *Hindustan* moored in the river Dart.<sup>47</sup> Viewed from a modern perspective, while it undoubtedly reflects the architecture of contemporary public

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<sup>42</sup> Anon, *Prospectus* (Peterborough: Oundle School, 1922) p. 6.

<sup>43</sup> Anon, *Prospectus* (Peterborough: Oundle School, 1935) p.13.

<sup>44</sup> Anon, *Michael Charlesworth* (obituary), *The Daily Telegraph* 11 June 2008.

<sup>45</sup> Anon, *How To Become A Naval Officer And Life At The Royal Naval College, Dartmouth*, (London; Gieves Ltd, 1937) p.17.

<sup>46</sup> Anon, *Prospectus* (Peterborough: Oundle School, 1922) pp.4-5.

<sup>47</sup> Jane Harrold and Richard Porter, *Britannia Royal Naval College Dartmouth: An Illustrated History*, (Dartmouth: Richard Webb 2005) p.33.

schools and that of English country houses,<sup>48</sup> whether intentionally or not, the psychology of the exterior of the building is interesting, indeed clever. The parade ground on which most parade training takes place and where divisions (which equate to an army parade) are held is directly in front of the main building. As may be seen from Fig. 6, the saluting base in the centre in front of the main doors, where the senior officer taking divisions would stand is at a level above the parade ground and the roadway behind the saluting base sweeps round either side of the parade ground descending as they do so.

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Fig. 6. Britannia Royal Naval College, Dartmouth showing the two sloping roadways as arms embracing the parade ground and the steps up which passing out cadets march into the college. (Crown Copyright)

The effect, particularly when on the parade ground itself, is of being surrounded, even embraced, by two enormous arms. The psychological effect is enhanced for the cadets when they pass out of Dartmouth as they march up the steps in front of the saluting base, across the road and into the college itself, when the doors are slammed shut behind them. A psychological embrace, and welcome into the Royal Navy.

Cadets entered twice a year as a group of cadets described as a 'Term' each named, presumably as part of the process of instilling ethos, after a renowned Admiral. Each term stayed together for their entire time at the college, sleeping together in a

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<sup>48</sup> Quintin Colville, 'The Role of the Interior in Constructing Notions of Class and Status: A Case Study of Britannia Royal Naval College Dartmouth 1905-1939', in Susie McKellar and Penny Sparke (eds) *Interior Design and Identity*, (Lancaster: Carnegie Publishing 2004) pp. 114-132.

dormitory for their eleven terms at the college,<sup>49</sup> but progressively moving through a sequence of improving accommodation areas. In charge of each term was a 'Term Officer', a serving naval officer.

Each year a class list was published officially entitled 'The List' but known informally as the 'Blue Book' (for the colour of the cover) which set out the full list of staff, civilian and service and listed cadets in academic order with, after 1935, cadets individual tutors and at the top of each year, the 'alpha class', those who were given a broader instruction and a wider academic regime. (See Fig. 7)

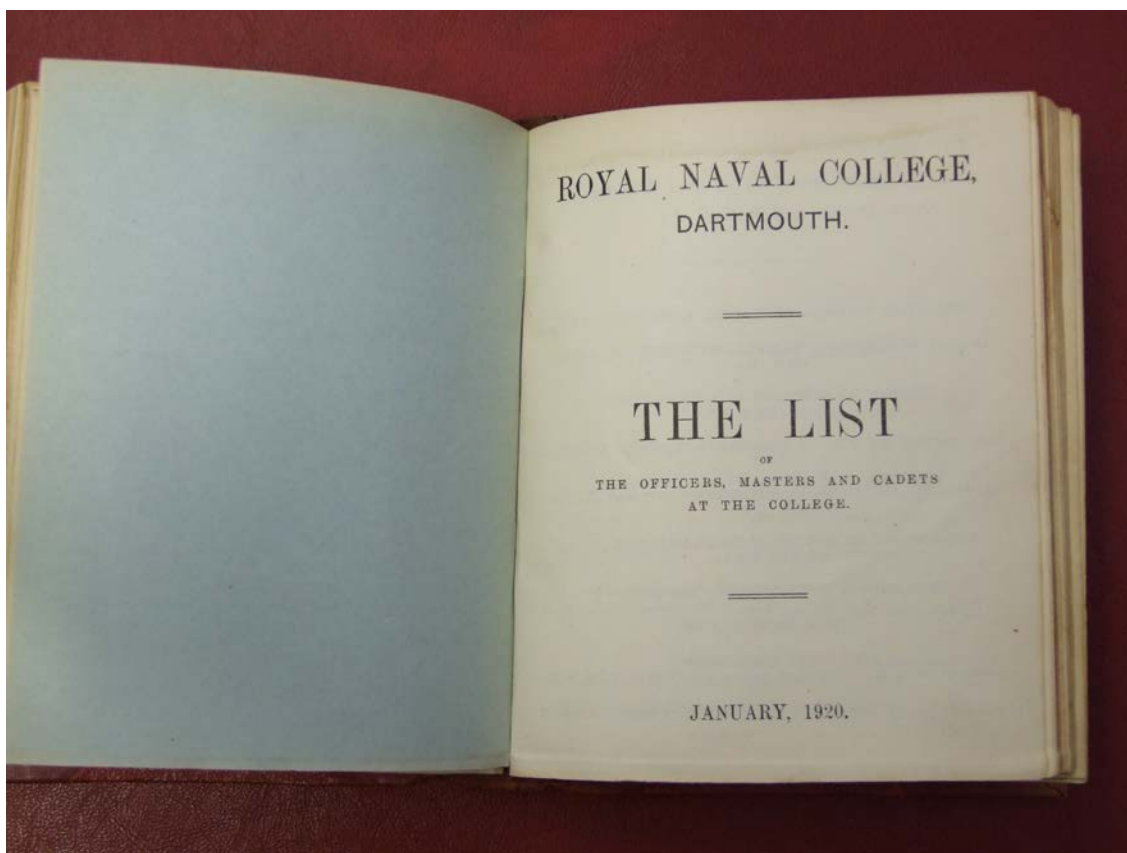


Fig. 7. Frontispiece of the 'blue book' for January 1920

Mixing between terms was actively discouraged. One former cadet recorded that he had to have permission to talk to his brother in a more junior term.<sup>50</sup> Initiating a conversation with a more senior cadet would lead to 'cuts' – a beating administered by a cadet captain. The most severe punishment was 'official cuts' administered in front of the whole term by a PT (physical training) instructor.

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<sup>49</sup> Confusingly 'term' described both the group of cadets and an academic period of time.



When it first opened in 1905 Britannia Royal Naval College had four academic and one professional department, the latter being Navigation. While it was to be a college for naval cadets, '[t]he central proposition was that education as opposed to training could produce not only knowledge of a particular subject, but could also produce certain generic abilities centred around leadership'.<sup>51</sup> In other words, the aim was to educate cadets, not to give them a professional training. This was reflected in the syllabus (or as it was termed the 'Scheme of Studies') which was 'designed to meet the special needs of a naval officer [*sic*]' but it was 'far from being purely vocational'.

The weekly allocation of class periods was:

Mathematics, pure and applied	6
Science, with laboratory work	6
Engineering	4
	(2 in first 4 terms)
French	4
History, including Naval History	2
English	3
Geography (in the first 4 terms)	2
Scripture	2
Seamanship	2
Navigation and Pilotage (in the last year)	2 or 3
Drill and Physical Training	2

During the first seven terms, there were additional lectures each week on what were termed 'Special Subjects', outside the normal curriculum.<sup>52</sup>

The curriculum, as can be seen, was not as Rodger has stated 'dominated by the engineering workshops'.<sup>53</sup> Indeed it was not much different from that at Oundle including the drill, 'All boys ... learn singing, and in addition to the Gymnasium are drilled for a quarter of an hour each day'<sup>54</sup> apart from the Navigation and Pilotage. The difference was public schools aimed for their boys to pass the School Certificate examination, and 'thereby exemption from the Matriculation Examination of the various universities and from the preliminary examination of the numerous examining and

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<sup>50</sup> Bob Whinney, *The U-Boat Peril: A Fight for Survival*, (London: Cassell Military Classics, 1986) p.21.

<sup>51</sup> Geoff Sloan 'The Strategic Studies and International Affairs Department, BRNC – An Introduction' *The Naval Review* Vol 97 No 4 Nov 2009 pp. 395 -397. However, leadership was not actually taught or exercised.

<sup>52</sup> Anon., *How To Become A Naval Officer And Life At The Royal Naval College, Dartmouth* (London; Gieves Ltd) 1937 p.49.

<sup>53</sup> Rodger NAM, 'Training or Education: A Naval Dilemma over Three Centuries', in (ed.) P. Hore *Hudson Papers* (London: Oxford University Hudson Trust, 2001) p. 17.

<sup>54</sup> Anon, *Prospectus* (Peterborough: Oundle School, 1922) p.7.

qualifying bodies such as the Law Society, [etc]’.<sup>55</sup> Obviously this was not of concern to Dartmouth boys, and there is no indication that they sat the School Certificate examination.

The teaching staff were civilian and of variable quality; one cadet describing the staff as a ‘pretty elderly unimpressive lot ... tired old second X1 men’ with some notable exceptions.<sup>56</sup> Looking at specific subjects; engineering was taught in the engineering workshops at Sandquay (on the waterfront below the College). This appears to have been a leftover from the Fisher reforms in which engineering would have been a specialisation like gunnery or signals, which however were not taught at Dartmouth. Cadets were taught mechanical drawing and use of a lathe but nothing of the ‘capabilities of the engine rooms to which we were later to telegraph countless revolution orders’, that is to say about the machinery they would actually have to work with.<sup>57</sup> Indeed, according to one cadet, there was little actual naval training at all.<sup>58</sup>

Teaching of history was confined to British, indeed English, naval history. The set book written by a then member of the academic staff at the Royal Naval College, Osborne, and which, according to Sir Henry Leach,<sup>59</sup> encompassed the entire curriculum, was Callender’s ‘The Sea Kings of Britain’.<sup>60</sup> (This series of books has been described by an eminent naval historian as being the archetype of how not to write history!<sup>61</sup>) History teaching included re-enacting the Battle of Trafalgar with model ships, but the curriculum included no teaching on or discussion of the First World War, and in particular the Battle of Jutland, or indeed any current affairs.

The seamanship classroom latterly contained a scale model of the foc’sle of a modern *Nelson* class battleship that could be used for practical instruction. The subject was either taught by one of the uniformed officers, usually reading in a monotone from the ‘Admiralty Manual of Seamanship’ or instruction from Naval Pensioners in abstruse

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<sup>55</sup> Anon, *Prospectus* (Peterborough: Oundle School, 1935) p. 9.

<sup>56</sup> Admiral of the Fleet Sir Henry Leach GCB DL Interview 28 October 2008. He singled out the French and the history masters as exceptions.

<sup>57</sup> Adrian Holloway, *From Dartmouth to War: A Midshipman’s Journal*, (London: Buckland Publications 1993) p.20; Admiral of the Fleet Sir Henry Leach GCB DL Interview 28 October 2008.

<sup>58</sup> Admiral of the Fleet Sir Henry Leach GCB DL Interview 28 October 2008.

<sup>59</sup> Admiral of the Fleet Sir Henry Leach GCB DL Interview 28 October 2008.

<sup>60</sup> For example, see G.A.R. Callender, *Sea Kings of Britain: Albemarle to Hawke*, (London, New York, Bombay and Calcutta: Longmans Green and Co 1909).

<sup>61</sup> Michael Duffy, *Personal communication*.

seamanship minutiae of little practical value such as tying Turks head knots.<sup>62</sup> Overall the teaching in seamanship ‘was uninspiring and uninspired’.<sup>63</sup> Boatwork was taught on the River Dart, either in ‘Blue boats’ i.e. non-service craft or in naval cutters which were only carried by battleships. There were no whalers, the boat used by the whole of the rest of the Fleet. Sir Henry Leach surmised that this was because they carried fewer people, and thus more boats would have been required. There was no instruction in power boats or their handling.<sup>64</sup>

Noteworthy was the near total absence of any formal instruction in or provision for the exercise of leadership. There was a minor exception to this. In their last terms, three cadets from each term having been recommended by their term officers were selected to be cadet captains. As such, they would take charge of a more junior term in their gun room and dormitory including imposing corporal punishment. Apart from the few cadet captains ‘as we reached the top of the College, we had no more responsibility than the day we joined’.<sup>65</sup> Sir Henry Leach felt that the cadets were ‘not brought on’; indeed that leadership training as such was non-existent.<sup>66</sup>

Dartmouth has an almost mythic status as being the cradle of the Royal Navy, the repository of its ethos, the very core of its being ‘the cradle of the whole officer corps’.<sup>67</sup> The Japanese certainly thought so, as described in the previous chapter. The reality was that Dartmouth was an above average public school with a naval flavour. It gave very little military or naval/maritime training, and certainly not as much as the schools in HMS *Worcester*, HMS *Conway* and at Pangbourne. For the navy, it was a means of ‘catching them young’ because of the repeatedly voiced fear that if they did not, they would get insufficient young men at a later age, and secondly instilling service ethos. To repeat, Dartmouth was nothing more than an ‘in house’ public school. It produced for the navy well educated (by the standards of the time) young men, with a smattering of naval knowledge, and a naval ethos. The effect of any changes at Dartmouth on the fighting efficiency of the Fleet would be minimal, and in view of the timescales involved, any such changes would have little effect for many years. For

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<sup>62</sup> Admiral of the Fleet Sir Henry Leach GCB DL *Interview* 28 October 2008.

<sup>63</sup> Bob Whinney, *The U-Boat Peril* p.21.

<sup>64</sup> Admiral of the Fleet Sir Henry Leach GCB DL *Interview* 28 October 2008.

<sup>65</sup> Bob Whinney, *The U-boat Peril* p.21.

<sup>66</sup> Admiral of the Fleet Sir Henry Leach GCB DL *Interview* 28 October 2008.

<sup>67</sup> ‘Areopogus’ ‘Dartmouth: Cradle or Coffin of the Navy?’ *The Naval Review*, (1989) Vol 77 pp 360-6.

example a cadet leaving Dartmouth in 1935 would finish the Second World War as a lieutenant and as such would be hardly likely to influence the navy as a whole.

The existence of the two major cadet schemes, Dartmouth and Special Entry, meant that there exists the means for a comparative audit of the two main schemes of officer education. Approximately 20% of cadets were Special Entry,<sup>68</sup> which is a sufficiently high proportion to allow statistical analysis. This is considered in the third part of this thesis (see Part 3, chapter 2), as the only realistic measure of success for a naval officer was the ultimate rank reached, it could not have been available to the Admiralty between the wars.

After Dartmouth cadets went to sea for a period of ‘two terms, each of approximately 12 weeks’<sup>69</sup> before being promoted to midshipmen.<sup>70</sup> Then they served at sea for up to two years, at the end of which they took an examination in seamanship. As the intent of this phase of naval education and training was to produce a lieutenant, the examination taken by midshipmen in seamanship was described as being ‘for the rank of Lieutenant’.<sup>71</sup> In 1911 Richmond was very critical of the examinations; ‘[t]he examining officers appear to imagine that the object of the examination is [to] test how much detail the boy has crowded into his head’. Such a criticism of examinations echoes down the years, but interestingly, for a supposedly hide-bound and rigid service, Richmond’s criticisms led to him being appointed President of the Seamanship Board, responsible for the examination.<sup>72</sup>

Once they had passed this hurdle they became ‘Acting Sub-Lieutenants’. They now wore a gold braid ring with an executive curl around the cuff of their uniform jacket, and instead of carrying a short midshipman’s dirk, now wore a sword on appropriate occasions.<sup>73</sup> The navy got itself in to an incredible muddle regarding the relative seniorities of Dartmouth and Special Entry Midshipmen. The solution adopted was to promote Special Entry midshipmen to acting sub lieutenants a year early, but pay

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<sup>68</sup> The 1935 entry, considered as part of the cohort study included seven Direct Entry cadets. Educationally they would have gone down a similar pathway to the Special Entry cadets and are considered with them.

<sup>69</sup> AWO 3448/21 *Dartmouth Cadets – Training in H.M.S. “Thunderer”*.

<sup>70</sup> Many contemporary documents describe this as being ‘rated as midshipmen’, they were not yet officers, and so were not promoted.

<sup>71</sup> For example, see AWO 2948/18 *Midshipmen – Examination for the Rank of Lieutenant*.

<sup>72</sup> Arthur J. Marder, *Portrait of an Admiral: The Life and Papers of Sir Herbert Richmond*, (London: Jonathan Cape, 1952) p. 80-1.

<sup>73</sup> See Appendix A.

them as midshipmen for that year.<sup>74</sup> As will be seen, this issue was to lead to further difficulties.

They were then sent on a series of ‘Sub-Lieutenants Courses’ each of three months duration in gunnery, torpedo and navigation at the various schools and a more general educative course introduced after the demise of the Cambridge course (see part 2, chapter 1) the ‘Greenwich course’. The introduction of this latter course marked the only change to their training through the 1920s. These courses were part of the normal career progression for every executive officer, and they were, in naval terms, essential basic training.<sup>75</sup> Until the end of engineering as an executive specialisation, they could take a semi-optional course on engineering.<sup>76</sup> They also had to attend a ‘divisional course’ which taught young officers the mechanics of looking after sailors, including their discipline and welfare.<sup>77</sup> This was the only formal instruction they received in man management. In 1923, for ‘Group A’ of ‘Midshipmen rated Acting Sub-Lieutenants’ [*sic*] it ran from ‘2<sup>nd</sup> to 14<sup>th</sup> July’, that is ten working days. This was combined for some courses with a signals course, and a PRT course. All other groups did courses of the same duration. There was what was termed a ‘Submarine course’ of two days duration).<sup>78</sup>

At the end of each component of the course (except the divisional and submarine course) there was an examination. Each candidate’s marks were forwarded to the Admiralty who, when all officers had completed all of the courses, issued the grades which were in ‘classes’, which were awarded as ‘Certificates’. It will be remembered that they had already taken an examination in seamanship, so, including the Greenwich course, there were five components; the divisional submarine signals and PRT elements did not count. An officer who got first class passes on all five was termed a ‘five-oner’. This was held to be of great importance for an officer’s subsequent career.<sup>79</sup> In fact, as will be discussed in detail with regard to entry to specialist training, it mattered very little, apart from being given an advance of seniority of at most a few months (termed

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<sup>74</sup> AWO 3372/21 *Midshipmen – Future Examinations for the Rank of Lieutenant*.

<sup>75</sup> Robert Lynn Davison, ‘In Defence of Corporate Competence: The Royal Navy Executive Officer Corps, 1880-1919’ Unpublished PhD thesis, Memorial University of Newfoundland, 2004 p.9.

<sup>76</sup> For an example of the administration of the courses, see AFO 2363/23 *Acting Sub-Lieutenants – Courses*.

<sup>77</sup> So called because sailors were administratively grouped into ‘Divisions’.

<sup>78</sup> AFO 1088/23 *Divisional Courses for Midshipmen rated Acting Sub-Lieutenants, 15<sup>th</sup> May, 1923*.

<sup>79</sup> Interview Admiral Sir William O’Brien 22 April 2008. He was a five-oner.

‘Marks for former service’<sup>80</sup>), which effectively did little more than establish their order in the ‘Navy List’.<sup>81</sup> To illustrate this point, one officer who managed one first class pass, three second class and a third class pass was very soon reported on by his commanding officer who said that he was ‘recommended for early promotion below the zone’, that is before his seniority would otherwise entitle him to be even considered for promotion. Lest it be thought that this was an aberration by a single commanding officer, the second reporting officer, a full admiral, wrote ‘concur’.<sup>82</sup>

On completion of the courses, officers were confirmed in the rank of sub lieutenant, at which point they became commissioned officers. They were then appointed to a seagoing ship to be trained as an officer of the watch to obtain a bridge watchkeeping certificate or ‘ticket’ (properly a ‘Certificate of competence as a bridge watchkeeping officer’).

#### Bridge watchkeeping certificate

The award of a bridge watch keeping certificate was an essential rite of passage for an executive branch officer and was the culmination of his mandatory education/training. Without it, he could not be promoted to lieutenant, and, obviously, could not be officer of the watch at sea.<sup>83</sup> The officer of the watch was primarily responsible for the safety of the ship by ensuring that the ship was following the correct course laid down by the navigating officer, and for obeying the rule of the road – avoiding collision with other ships etc, and complying with the captain’s standing orders and any specific orders as the captain might have set out in his standing orders or his ‘Night Order Book’. These usually specified when the captain was to be called, and often the last such order was that the Officer of the Watch was to call the captain ‘if worried’. This notwithstanding, being the officer of the watch at sea, particularly at night, was demanding of both professional competence, and of initiative.

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<sup>80</sup> AFO 1640/23 *Midshipmen – Marks for “Former Service”*.

<sup>81</sup> Davison ascribes this greater significance than it warrants, see Robert Lynn Davison, ‘In Defence of Corporate Competence: The Royal Navy Executive Officer Corps, 1880-1919’ Unpublished PhD thesis, Memorial University of Newfoundland, 2004 p.9-10.

<sup>82</sup> 2SLPers Rec. The officer concerned was not promoted below the zone.

<sup>83</sup> While the regulations were unequivocal about this requirement, scrutiny of personnel records shows that occasionally officers slipped through the net. Some were promoted weeks or even months before the award of their certificate. The most extreme example in the officers studied for this thesis was of one officer who was promoted lieutenant in the confusion, and that it was, at the beginning of the Second World War, and ultimately rose to being a Vice-Admiral and a navigation specialist to boot without ever having been recorded as being awarded a bridge watch keeping certificate.

There was no formal syllabus, the officer solely had to satisfy the commanding officer of his ship that he was competent to be officer of the watch (OOW) at sea, responsible to him (the captain) directly – irrespective of the officers rank and seniority *vis a vis* other officers – for the safety of the ship. In the merchant service, to reach an equivalent status, an officer had to pass a Board of Trade examination. However, the captain would have been hardly likely to award an officer his ticket lightly. The officer of the watch was responsible for the ship; if he got it wrong, for example by causing a collision or grounding, it was the normal practice for the subsequent courts martial to be of the officer of the watch, the navigating officer and the captain. Thus the officer under training would go through a period when he stood bridge watches as second (or even third) officer of the watch under a qualified officer, undertaking some of the myriad of duties that fell to the officer of the watch. At sea the ships routine was run from the bridge by the officer of the watch, for examples, pipes (general orders to the ship) could not be made, gash (rubbish) could not be ditched (thrown over the side), the boiler room could not blow tubes (vent live steam through the funnel) without his permission; he was totally in charge of the ship.

Gradually the trainee would assume more responsibility. At first he would run a watch with a trained officer present, but possibly following the formal order ‘You have the ship’ which, once he had taken the responsibility by stating ‘I have the ship’, allowed the trainee the legal responsibility to issue orders as OOW. Then he would stand a watch nominally by himself, initially at a quiet time of day, out of sight of land or navigational hazards.<sup>84</sup> This process was supposed to be completed after the officer had served six months at sea, but not before, when the captain would pronounce himself satisfied, and issue the officer his certificate and, if able to do so, separately, a recommendation for promotion to lieutenant, informing the Admiralty that he had done so and forwarding copies of the two documents. If the commanding officer did not feel the officer qualified for either or both certificates, he had to inform the Admiralty of his reasons at the same point.<sup>85</sup> For the successful officer promotion to lieutenant would follow, usually back dated to that date.

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<sup>84</sup>The captain, executive officer or navigating officer would contrive to be fairly close to, if not on the bridge.

<sup>85</sup> AFO3183/23 *Sub-Lieutenants – Watchkeeping Certificates and Recommendations for Promotion – REPORT*.

At that point he ceased to be a trainee; he would thereafter be appointed to what were described as complement billets, i.e. jobs actually required for the efficient running of a ship, rather than training or supernumerary billets. In fact, examination of the records studied for this thesis did not show a single example of an officer who had been promoted sub lieutenant failing to be promoted lieutenant.

### Further education and training

Once an officer was a lieutenant, until 1935, the navy ceased to direct his education and training in any way. His further professional development was entirely voluntary. If an officer chose to progress professionally, he would volunteer for a course, and if recommended by his current (or in some cases, previous) commanding officer, he would eventually be appointed to the relevant course(s). This applied to all officers; even attendance at the tactical course for captains was voluntary.

The variety of further education/training available to an officer will be briefly described, but in addition there were what would now be termed 'self help' publications. To illustrate, one such '*The Modern Officer of the Watch*'<sup>86</sup> was first published in 1904 and had reached a fifth edition by 1913. It is a *vade mecum* for junior executive officers, and throughout emphasises the need for 'coolness and quickness',<sup>87</sup> surely the hallmarks of initiative, but also devotes a significant part of the book to the need for further self education:

Every watchkeeper should remember that, if he intends to achieve success in his profession, he should devote a small portion of his spare time to the very important work of improving his education. The most valuable part of what we learn is nearly always that which we teach ourselves.<sup>88</sup>

### Specialisation

While officers had originally undergone the same training to the same level, technological developments had made specialisation inevitable. Fisher's original structure, including engineering as a specialty has already been mentioned, but even after the demise of the 'general list' as originally he configured it, there remained many specialisations within the executive branch. Even during the brief period covered by

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<sup>86</sup> Commander Hon. R Plunkett, R.N., *The Modern Officer of the Watch*, (Portsmouth: Gieve's, 1913)

<sup>87</sup> Commander Hon. R Plunkett, R.N., *The Modern Officer of the Watch*, p.98.

<sup>88</sup> Commander Hon. R Plunkett, R.N., *The Modern Officer of the Watch* p.99.



this thesis, the specialisations evolved and were added to. Those officers who had gained a specialist qualification had appended to their name on the Navy List a capital letter or letters. The specialisations and their indicative letter(s) were gunnery (G), torpedo (T), Navigation (N), Signals (later Signal and Wireless Telegraphy) (S, or S and W/T), Submarine (SM), Hydrographic (H) Observer (O), Pilot (P), and Physical and Recreational Training (PRT). Anti-submarine (AS) came into being in 1923. If this single letter had an obelos (dagger) suffixed, it indicated that the officer had undertaken the advanced course in that specialisation, and such an officer might be referred to colloquially as, for example a ‘dagger N’. Specialist officers remained within the executive branch, unlike the army whose specialists were in separate corps and arms. Some of the specialisations are examined in some detail because they bring out important points. For completeness, the other specialisations are briefly described in Appendix C. Those descriptions include the numbers entering each derived from the cohort study.

Of the 118 midshipmen of 1920 seniority sixty one became specialists (including submarine and hydrographic) i.e. 52% and later cohorts were broadly similar.<sup>89</sup> Officers who did not undertake specialist training were referred to as being ‘General Service’ or colloquially ‘salt horses’. They however could study for and take a series of examinations which qualified them for command of a destroyer.

As has been said, the specialisations evolved and changed. Signals ‘acquired’ wireless and Torpedo similarly responsibility for electrical, (which latter made for the odd division of responsibility in that an engineer was responsible for one end of the shaft of steam driven electrical generator, but a seaman officer for the other end). During the period, the responsibilities were hived off in stages, first responsibility for the generation of electricity was transferred to the engineering branch and then a new (non- executive) electrical branch (L, E already being used to designate an engineer officer) was formed. Ultimately Torpedo and Anti-submarine were merged into TAS.

It might be thought odd that physical training (PRT) was an executive specialisation. However, Admiral Burnett who commanded the 10<sup>th</sup> Cruiser Squadron covering the Arctic convoys during the Second World War was a PRT specialist, and

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<sup>89</sup> 2SLPersRec.

just after the Second World War, there was a cruiser whose commanding officer and executive officer were both PRT specialists.<sup>90</sup>

During their sub lieutenants courses junior officers were exposed to the major specialisations. The various schools would actively seek to recruit those they saw as likely candidates to apply. Having volunteered, the officers preference was recorded on their personal record card, and (see Figure 8.) changes to preferences were accepted.

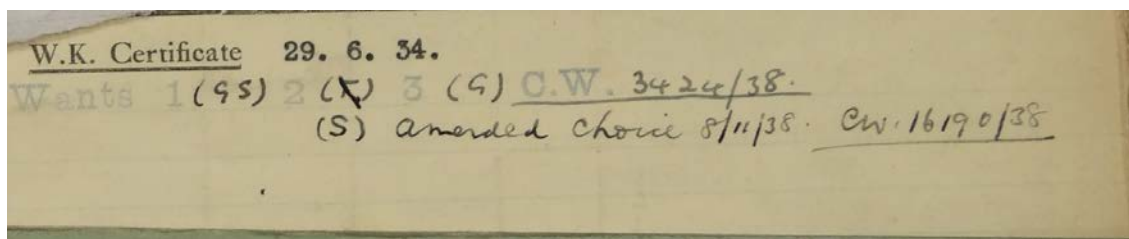


Fig. 8. A portion an officers Admiralty personal record showing an amendment to his choices for specialist training (in fact he went general service GS). The notation CW 3424/38 is the reference of the letter/memorandum informing the Commission and Warrant division in the Admiralty of his choice. 'W.K. Certificate' records the date of his being awarded his bridge Watchkeeping certificate.

Despite the belief held by young officers that they would be forced into a specialisation not of their own choosing, examination of personal records shows only two officers who did not get his first choice of specialisation. One got his second choice. In particular the fears of the 'five-oners' that they would be compelled to specialise and who devised stratagems to avoid it were simply not based in fact.<sup>91</sup> There was one officer who was 'drafted' into gunnery. Reading between the lines of his confidential reports, he made every effort to be dropped from the course, but was unsuccessful. However, he reverted to general service having qualified, almost as if the Admiralty having made its point, conceded it.

It was also a firm belief among officers that a first class pass on the relevant sub lieutenants course was essential if one was to be accepted for specialist training, particularly for gunnery or torpedo because these were held to be the most prestigious and demanding. This was a hangover from the days before the First World War when:

[t]o be allowed to enter a course for gunnery or torpedo lieutenant at least three, and preferably four or five firsts as sub-lieutenant were essential. Furthermore so

<sup>90</sup> "SLPersRec.

<sup>91</sup> Admiral O'Brien interviewed 22 April 2008. He wanted to go General Service and put Gunnery as his second choice as he was sure that this would mean that he would be turned down; he was!

stiff were these courses and so high the percentage of marks needed ... that it would have been little use for the, perhaps, fine young seaman with only second- or third-class certificates to have tried to compete. It was no day for even second classes.<sup>92</sup>

This belief it is not borne out by examination of personal records; for an example see Fig. 9.

The image shows a detailed officers' record card for Lord Chatfield. At the top, it lists his Date of Birth as 29 December 1911, Entered Service as 15 September 1925, and Married as 17 December 1936. A timeline at the top shows his age from 34 to 56, with 'Chce' written under 35 and 'Med' under 38. The Seniority section lists his ranks and dates: Act. Sub. Lieutenant (1 May 1932), Sub. Lieutenant (16 January 1933), Lieutenant (16 July 1935), Lieutenant Commander (16 June 1938), and Commander (16 June 1938). The Certificates section lists Seamanship (2), Greenwich (3), Navigation (3), Gunnery (2), and Torpedo (3). To the right, it notes 'W.K. Certificate 6. 2. 34' and 'Wants 1(4), 2(4), 3(7) C.W. 46/38', with '8. 39. (6) C.W. 23378/37' written in red. The Appointment section is divided into 'RETIRED' (Tiger, London, Greenwich and Courses) and 'GENERAL NOTATIONS' (various courses and dates). The 'GENERAL NOTATIONS' section includes 'Granted cert exam to French CW 515/35', '6. 3. 34. Read. for promotion to Lieutenant. Capt. Sedgwick.', '5. 2. 36. Wants No. 2. Ex. C.W. 1497/36', and '25. 9. 37. Wants (4) C.W. 10963/37'. It also lists 'DAMAGE CONTROL COURSE' and 'Granted 1/5. dur. "End of War" Leave (AFO 55-65) .....to.....'.

Fig. 9. Officers record card. Central close to the top are his passing grades on his sub lieutenants courses, none higher than second class, and including three third class passes. To the right can be see his specialist preferences, showing his preference for gunnery, and - in red - can be seen the record of his passing the gunnery course.

The form and underlying philosophy of the various specialist courses varied markedly. At one extreme was pilot training, a practical course aimed at acquiring a skill, not only of flying an aeroplane, but flying in a naval environment including landing on and taking off from an aircraft carrier, and at the other extreme, gunnery which was a heavily academic course. For example the 1924 gunnery course was of one year's duration comprising about 750 hours of lectures broken into Pure Maths 25%,

<sup>92</sup> Lord Chatfield, *The Navy and Defence: The Autobiography of Admiral of the Fleet Lord Chatfield PC*

Applied Maths 25%, Optics and Physics 25%, Chemistry / Metallurgy 15%, Drawing 10%.<sup>93</sup> Assessed by a twenty-first century Professor of Physics, this course content has been adjudged as equating to the first year of a university degree course, but weighted towards service need rather than a specific academic attainment.<sup>94</sup> The syllabus for the 1927 Navigation course<sup>95</sup> has been assessed as being 'equivalent to a full BSc(hons) at least.'<sup>96</sup>

The point made by Professor Preist regarding the weighting towards service need is important; the syllabus was drawn up by the individual specialist school, and forwarded to the Admiralty for promulgation. The school would teach what it thought was necessary. There was no direct mechanism until the 1960s for feedback from the fleet as to what they required for an officer to know to do his job.<sup>97</sup> The only feedback mechanism was by specialist officers coming to the school and modifying what was taught in the light of their views, prejudices and/or experience. This did lead to inappropriate training at every level. One special entry cadet was taught extremely detailed and abstruse navigational theory far beyond what he subsequently used when he went to sea because his navigation instructor's previous appointment had been at the Navigation school.<sup>98</sup> The result was that officers tended to be taught far more than they needed at the behest of enthusiasts, rather than what they needed, when they needed it. As one senior officer is quoted as having said:

If [the gunnery school's] methods were followed in other walks of life, applicants for motor driving licenses would be examined in thermodynamics and the manufacture of motor-car steel.<sup>99</sup>

This arose because the specialist schools were to a large degree autonomous. There was no central direction or co-ordination of officers training; the Director of Training and Staff Duties<sup>100</sup> had almost no supporting staff, as scrutiny of the Navy List shows. Each school was given a certain amount of time for a given course, and had

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*GCB OM Etc*, (London: William Heinemann, 1942) p.25

<sup>93</sup> AFO 252/24 *Gunnery Specialist Course – Syllabus*.

<sup>94</sup> Trevor Preist BSc PhD (latterly Head of Physics University of Exeter) 'Gunnery Course 1924' (received by email 20 July 2009)

<sup>95</sup> AFO 1954/27 *Navigation – Syllabuses of Specialist (N) and First Class Ship Courses*.

<sup>96</sup> Alan Wall BSc (Hons) MSc PhD FRIN FNI Master Mariner (Reader in Maritime Studies) Email 26 October 2009).

<sup>97</sup> Interview with Captain S.M.W. Farquharson-Roberts OBE RN 28 April 2008. He instituted the process when Captain of HMS *Vernon* then the TAS and mine warfare school.

<sup>98</sup> Interview with Captain S.M.W. Farquharson-Roberts OBE RN 28 April 2008.

<sup>99</sup> Brian Lavery, *Churchill's Navy: The Ships, Men and Organisation 1939-1945*, (London: Conway Maritime 2006) p.130.

<sup>100</sup> This post was occupied at the end of the First World War by Richmond.

its course dates and syllabus promulgated by the Admiralty through the CW division,<sup>101</sup> the entirely civilian manned Admiralty department which administered officers and their training.<sup>102</sup>

There was a lot of variation between the schools and the way they ‘looked after’ their alumni. In particular ‘Whale Island’, the colloquial name for the gunnery school accommodated there,<sup>103</sup> had a particularly good reputation in this regard. The schools were able to exert a degree of patronage; they could recommend officers for particular appointments to the CW division. Thus those seen as doing well on their courses would get the better appointments, and would return to Whale Island on the teaching or experimental staff. There was a longstanding and continuing rivalry between the torpedo school located on the gun wharf in Portsmouth at HMS *Vernon* and HMS *Excellent*. This even extended to a competitive attitude to the conduct of funerals.<sup>104</sup> Together the two schools formed what may be regarded as the navy’s own ‘Oxbridge’ with many of the connotations that implies. Thus being a gunnery or torpedo officer was seen as being, if not an assured way upwards, certainly as helping on the way.

The Admiralty did not promulgate an actual requirement in terms of numbers for each specialisation. Indeed the Admiralty does not appear to have had other than a vague idea of how many it required, apart from periodic bursts of interest in a particular branch, such as the signals branch in 1922<sup>105</sup> or torpedo branch in 1933.<sup>106</sup> The Admiralty Board in 1920 felt it ‘most undesirable that there should be any departure from the present policy of taking for Specialist duties only those Officers who volunteer’ even if shortages arose.<sup>107</sup> Occasionally volunteers were called for, but it would appear that the Admiralty felt until the 1930s that the number of applicants broadly matched what was required. That the Navy appears to have believed in one volunteer being worth ten pressed men is borne out by repeated calls for officers to

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<sup>101</sup> For example AWO 1193/19 *Lieutenants (G) and (T) – Syllabuses of Courses*.

<sup>102</sup> ADM 1/16506 sets out the responsibilities of the CW Division, ADM 198/36 its procedures and ADM 198/37 various precedents.

<sup>103</sup> Properly HMS *Excellent*.

<sup>104</sup> Admiral of the Fleet Sir Henry Leach. *Endure no Makeshifts: Some Naval Recollections*, (London: Leo Cooper, 1993) pp.66-7.

<sup>105</sup> ADM 1/8625/82 *Training and employment of (S) Officers*.

<sup>106</sup> ADM 1/8768/120 *Paper by the 2<sup>nd</sup> Sea Lord on recruitment, duties and promotion to the Torpedo Branch*.

<sup>107</sup> ADM 167/64. *Minute by Second Sea Lord initialled H.F.O. dated 29 December 1920*.

undergo Observer training which did not get the required number of volunteers after it became a specialist branch in 1921.<sup>108</sup>

The Fleet Air Arm and specifically the observer branch merits deeper examination, because of the bearing it has on the whole morale of the executive branch, and because it was ultimately to lead to the demise of the voluntary system of entry to specialist training. When the Royal Air Force was formed in 1918 by a merger of the Royal Flying Corps and the Royal Naval Air Service, the new service took on responsibility for naval aviation. Thereafter the elements that embarked in aircraft carriers and other ships became the Fleet Air Arm (FAA). Officers from the Royal Navy who elected for pilot training had to be commissioned in the RAF as well as the Royal Navy.<sup>109</sup> Some ludicrous situations arose, particularly later, when promotions got out of step. Second Sea Lord Personal records show an instance of a Lieutenant Commander who held the RAF rank of Flight Lieutenant who the Navy wished to promote to Commander. The RAF refused to recommend him to be promoted to squadron leader (equivalent to lieutenant commander).<sup>110</sup>

The Navy successfully retained observers fully in the navy. They would ‘not be “attached” to the Royal Air Force, as in the case of the Naval Officers to be employed as pilots and on other Naval air work’. They would undertake ‘All air observation duties for the Fleet, including gunnery-spotting, and air reconnaissance’.<sup>111</sup> They had to study significant amounts of gunnery, navigation (the RAF equivalent officers were actually termed navigators) and achieve a high degree of proficiency in wireless including morse transmission by key to 18-20 words per minute. While there was no shortage of pilots until the 1930s rearmament, presumably because being a pilot was attractive of itself, unlike other specialist training, the Navy had repeatedly to call for volunteers for observer training.<sup>112</sup> This was in spite of their being granted specialist pay in addition to their pay, in 1923.<sup>113</sup> Examination of Second Sea Lord Personal records shows eight of the 1920 seniority midshipmen volunteering, six of the 1925 (one of whom failed the course), seven of the 1930 midshipmen, and only three of the 1935 midshipmen.

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<sup>108</sup> AFO 3502/21 *Observers, Volunteers for Training as – REPORT.*

<sup>109</sup> S.W. Roskill (ed.) *Documents Relating to the Naval Air Service: 1908-1918* (Not given: Navy Records Society, 1969) p. 654.

<sup>110</sup> 2SLPers Rec.

<sup>111</sup> AFO 2445/27 *Naval Observers – Duties, Syllabus of Course, etc.*

<sup>112</sup> AFO 2485/23 *Naval Observers – Volunteers; AFO 2169/29 Observers Course October, 1929 – Volunteers required.*

<sup>113</sup> AFO 2553/23 *Observers – Volunteers for training.*

Why then was being an observer so unpopular? While officer's pay was being cut throughout the 1920s and redundancy was an ever present threat, the attractions of a branch short of officers which paid substantially more might have seemed obvious. Officers would not have been deterred by the dangers inherent in naval aviation, the submarine branch was far more dangerous<sup>114</sup> and that was adequately manned. The reason is probably that while aviators, they were not part of the broader aviation community, a major attraction of being in the FAA. Once qualified, observers were appointed to an aviation capable ship,<sup>115</sup> not to a squadron or flight. When a squadron or ship's flight embarked, they flew as the observer in the aircraft, but as a ship's officer. The Fleet Air Arm was, and is, a tight knit community with the squadron as its focal point. Observers were therefore outsiders; they did not 'belong' to a squadron, they did not, for better or worse, share the Royal Air Force experience; they were not even nominally part of a squadron.<sup>116</sup> The supposition must be that with low morale, it was not attractive to volunteers.

### The role of a specialist

From the foregoing a series of important points can be made which are fundamental to the structure of the executive branch and how its officers were used well into the Second World War. After becoming a lieutenant, if an officer had the ability, he could pursue whichever career path he wished. As has already been suggested, there were two types of specialist. The 'newer' specialists were skill based; they were trained for a particular role or capability, such as submarine and the aviation specialties. Of far more importance were the 'older' specialisations, those that had been in existence the longest. These were gunnery, torpedo, signals and navigation.<sup>117</sup> Their training had started as being skill based but had over the years grown into an education. In time they had become proto-staff officers and were recognised as such, to the point that in 1922:

only staff employment is open to Signal Officers. ... Continuous staff employment is not good training for Officers who thereby get out of touch with the personnel and the internal economy of a ship of war.<sup>118</sup>

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<sup>114</sup> Based on those killed on active service of the cohort studies.

<sup>115</sup> Obviously this included aircraft carriers, but increasingly cruisers were equipped with a catapult and crane to launch and recover floatplanes.

<sup>116</sup> Neither fish head nor fowl.

<sup>117</sup> The hydrographic service was effectively a separate navy, and can be ignored in this context.

'Old' specialist officers were regarded and used as staff officers. Staff training, to be described below was an adjunct for them and a basic qualification for others.

### Higher Naval Education and Staff Training

Herbert Richmond was a long time critic of naval education and training. He was concerned that they had become too technical to the exclusion of history in particular. He expressed the concern that 'when as a Lord of the Admiralty, or a Commander of a Fleet, his opinion is asked in the Cabinet ... [h]e may give a wrong opinion' for want of study of 'what service in council or command requires.'<sup>119</sup>

In January 1920 within two months of becoming First Sea Lord, Beatty had appointed Richmond to restart the Senior Officers' War course at the Royal Naval Staff College at Greenwich. Supposedly this course was to educate the navy's brightest and best. The redundancy programme known as the 'Geddes' axe' are described in detail in a later chapter. Suffice it to state that despite them being supposedly the best of their generation, nineteen of twenty four staff and students who made up the first course were made redundant.<sup>120</sup> This appears to have marked the demise of the course but the War Staff Course continued. For the latter course, officers 'confined to Commanders, Lieutenant-Commanders [including those who became Lieutenant-Commanders during the course] and Marine Officers under the age of 34' could apply to attend the War Staff Course. This would 'last about 12 months' at the Naval Staff College, Greenwich.<sup>121</sup> Officers would apply through their commanding officer who would forward their application with a recommendation. But applicants could 'should they so desire, apply to officers under who they have served during the previous four years for recommendations.'<sup>122</sup> This reflected the rather sparse officers' confidential reports of the early 1920s which meant that the Admiralty actually knew very little about their officers. Hence the recommending officer had, as well as giving his views on the officer's general aptitudes and intellectual capabilities, to detail any staff experience he had had in previous or current appointments.

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<sup>118</sup> ADM 1/8625/82 *Signal Branch Training and Employment of officers. Paper by Captain of HM Signal School, RN Barracks Portsmouth to the 'Director of Signal Department' dated 11 May 1922*

<sup>119</sup> Sir H.W. Richmond, *Naval Training*, (London: Oxford University Press/Humphrey Milford, 1933) pp. 10-11.

<sup>120</sup> Barry D. Hunt, *Sailor-Scholar: Admiral Sir Herbert Richmond 1871-1946*, (Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University Press 1982) p. 107.

<sup>121</sup> AWO 20/641 *War Staff Course, 1920-21*.

<sup>122</sup> AWO 21/399 *War Staff Course 1921-1922*.



The numbers involved are of interest. At the end of the 1920 course sixteen officers passed the course and were thus entitled to have the suffix WS on the Navy list (one of these officers was a Commander J.C. Tovey, later, as Admiral Tovey, to command the Home Fleet and oversee the sinking of the *Bismarck*). Thirty officers were selected to attend the 1920-1 course, twelve commanders, six lieutenant commanders, ten lieutenants and two marine officers. Only six of these officers were specialists.

In 1924, the objectives of the course were set out in an Admiralty Fleet Order:

- (a) To train War Staff Officers
- (b) To provide a higher naval education.<sup>123</sup>

It was felt ‘necessary to point out the [War Staff] qualification is one which may be obtained by any executive officer, whatever his specialist branch, and that it is in no way parallel to any such specialist qualification.’ The AFO went on to emphasise the advantages to be gained from officers of various specialisations pooling ‘knowledge and experience which is necessary for the formation of a common doctrine’ and continued that ‘this Course is of high educational value to any Officer who desires to study his profession and **aspires to rise to the higher ranks of the Service.**’ [author’s emphasis].

Later in 1924, there was a significant change of title; ‘War Staff Officers’ became ‘Staff Officers’ and the Navy list annotation of an officer so qualified changed from ‘WS’ to ‘psc’ (passed staff college).<sup>124</sup> Twenty four officers passed the course in 1924 and numbers remained fairly constant up until 1935, between twenty five and thirty being attending each year. Thereafter there was a small but steady annual increase until thirty seven officers were selected for the 1938 course.

In 1934 the instructions for the staff course were revised and updated. The objectives remained as before, but there was much more emphasis on the study and intellectual attainment that the course required. Potential applicants were advised on areas of study they should undertake in preparation for applying for the course, including obtaining a copy of the course syllabus.<sup>125</sup> In 1936 pre-reading was

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<sup>123</sup> AFO 188/24 *War Staff Course*.

<sup>124</sup> AFO2038/24 *Substitution of the term Staff Officer for the term War Staff Officer, and the letters p.s.c. for the letters W.S.*

<sup>125</sup> AFO 1168/34 *R.N. Staff Course – Revised instructions*.

introduced; study that officers selected for the course were required to have undertaken (naval warfare, tactics and strategy and the history of the naval staff) and those they were advised to have undertaken, staff work and naval and military history.<sup>126</sup>

It is apparent that the staff course evolved during the inter-war period from 'nice to do' - with almost an element of 'anything to keep Richmond quiet' - which continued for most of the 1920s, to a course that was far more intense, requiring greater commitment by its students that became seen as being essential for the navy and for naval officers with aspirations for the higher ranks. This shows that the navy recognised the need for further education, and delivered it to quite junior officers. As has been shown with entry into specialist training which was voluntary, the education was available to those with aspirations for advancement and this does not support Rodger's contention that the navy did not recognise the importance of adult education until the Second World War.<sup>127</sup>

#### Qualifying for 'Command of a Destroyer'

As with any human decision, there were many reasons for an officer choosing not to specialise. For some, it was a passive choice, whatever their personal wishes, they were not recommended. The personal files made available for research do not contain correspondence such as commanding officers recommendations, but there are few officers who chose an actual specialisation who did not eventually attend the relevant course. For some their achievements, or rather lack of them, at sub lieutenants' examinations would put them off applying and they would end up 'General Service' (GS). There must also have been a group who were disillusioned with the navy having entered at age 13 and were passive participants, but that appears to have been a very small group, although there is one officer's record which includes 'Does not wish to be considered for promotion',<sup>128</sup> and an interviewee who stated that 'Dartmouth killed it for me... what a ghastly life to lead'. He left the navy as soon as he could after the Second World War without regrets.<sup>129</sup> What follows is concerned with the remainder, those who actively sought to be 'General Service' or, in the usage of the day, remain as 'salt horses'.

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<sup>126</sup> AFO 1751/36 *Preliminary Study by Candidates for the Royal Naval Staff Course*.

<sup>127</sup> N.A.M. Rodger 'Training or Education: a Naval Dilemma over Three Centuries' in P.Hore (ed.) *Hudson Papers 1* (London: Oxford University Hudson Trust, 2001) p.24.

<sup>128</sup> 2SLPersRec.

Officers knew that specialising meant firstly a long course ashore, followed by various shore and sea staff and training and specialist appointments and a much delayed prospect of ship command.<sup>130</sup> Being General Service meant service at sea, and, obvious as it may seem, that is why many officers had joined the navy. This was also the route to 'Command of a Destroyer' (still referred to in some contemporary official publications as 'Command of a TBD'<sup>131</sup>). For a specialist the route to command was by promotion to at least commander, more likely captain, and a recommendation for command by one's commanding officer. However, for a GS officer, after 1921, it required passing a series of examinations, followed by, again, the all important commanding officer's recommendation. There was a distinction, the commanding officers of larger ships in which specialists served (and this included flotilla leaders of destroyer flotillas) were usually commanded by specialists. Destroyers, in which GS officers served, were commanded by GS officers. Until 1921 there was no formal qualification for command. At that point:

Officers who are of seven years seniority on 31<sup>st</sup> December, 1921 [presumably, but not stated, as a lieutenant] and who have at least one years experience in command ... will be considered fit for command without examination.

...

Future candidates for Commanding Officers of Destroyers, before being considered eligible for command, must qualify for command in the following subjects:- Gunnery, Torpedo, Navigation, Signals and W/T. The examinations will be based on the syllabuses laid down and candidates will be expected to work up for these in their own time, as it is impracticable to hold special courses.'<sup>132</sup>

This was then incorporated into KR & AI 'No officer will be appointed for the command of a destroyer until he has passed practical examinations in navigation and pilotage, gunnery, torpedo, signals, and an oral examination in the custody of Victualling stores and accounts '<sup>133</sup> as was the requirement for experience and self study<sup>134</sup> but syllabi were published and updated. The detailed knowledge required reflected the fact that destroyers did not carry specialist officers, except engineers. Hence an aspiring destroyer commanding officer was to be examined in subjects well beyond his previous competences, 'weighing of fresh provisions on receipt' 'Provisions.

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<sup>129</sup> Interview with Lieutenant Holloway 15 December 2008.

<sup>130</sup> Interview with Admiral O'Brien 22 April 2008.

<sup>131</sup> In the text of AWO 2196/21 *Training of Officers for Service in Destroyers*.

<sup>132</sup> AWO 2196/21 *Training of Officers for Service in Destroyers*.

<sup>133</sup> KR & AI Ch VII para 339.

<sup>134</sup> KR & AI App XII part 5.

Order in which to issue' 'Procedure for issue of clothing soap, and tobacco' etc<sup>135</sup> as well as those in areas with which he would already be broadly familiar, such as Navigation<sup>136</sup> Gunnery<sup>137</sup> etc. Interestingly asdic was not included in the syllabus for the command of a destroyer until 1936,<sup>138</sup> despite the decision in 1928 that all future destroyers would be fitted with the necessary trunks and offices 'so that they could later be fitted with Asdic.'<sup>139</sup>

The syllabus throughout the 1920s was purely concerned with handling and running a destroyer. Officers qualifying to command a destroyer were not actually formally taught anything of how they would be expected to use their ship tactically or indeed required to display any tactical knowledge or expertise until in 1930 AFO 2589/30 was published.<sup>140</sup> This was part of Admiral Field's programme of reforms which are dealt with in detail later, but reflects the realisation that individual commanding officers were in any future conflict going to have greater responsibility and freedom of action, i.e. a move to a mission command philosophy.

It is command of a destroyer that reveals one of the major dichotomies of naval education and training. By and large, officers with specialist training did not command destroyers. Research into Second Sea Lord Personnel records shows the very occasional specialist officer appointed to command a destroyer. Interestingly those few had not passed the examinations for command of a destroyer and had only their specialist training to qualify them; put simply they were neither qualified by training nor by experience for the command they were given and they were appointed in spite of the very specific Kings Regulation detailed above. While their number included the future Admiral Vian, a gunnery specialist,<sup>141</sup> whose wider naval abilities were never in doubt, Second World War experience suggests that the performance of some was less than adequate.<sup>142</sup>

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<sup>135</sup> AFO 3073/30 *Command of Destroyers – Examination in the custody of Victualling Stores.*

<sup>136</sup> AFO 2187/25 *Examination in Navigation for Command of a Destroyer.*

<sup>137</sup> AFO 2245/31 *Command of Destroyer- Gunnery Examination for Officers Qualifying.*

<sup>138</sup> AFO 3020/36 *Examination for Command of a Destroyer – Inclusion of Asdic Work.*

<sup>139</sup> Norman Friedman, *British Destroyers: From the Earliest Days to the Second World War*, (Barnsley: Seaforth Publishing, 2009) p. 187.

<sup>140</sup> AFO 2589/30 *Destroyer Officers – Attendance at the Tactical School.*

<sup>141</sup> Not a 2SLPers Rec 'study' officer.

<sup>142</sup> Roger Hill, *Destroyer Captain*, (London: Mayflower Books, 1979) p.246 recounts a good example of a specialist officer appointed to command a destroyer whose ship handling skills were found to be wanting.

It has not been possible to ascertain why it was considered necessary to examine officers for their fitness to command a destroyer, whereas specialists who came to command later, and of larger ships or destroyer flotillas,<sup>143</sup> cruisers and above, did not have to pass command examinations. Presumably it was because in a flotilla leader – often but not exclusively a specialist command - or a larger ship, the commanding officer would have specialist and specialised (e.g. paymaster) officers subordinate to him and therefore he did not need to know the detail of stores custody etc. It must be a reasonable assumption that it was felt unnecessary to require him to have such knowledge.

### The Executive Officer on 12th November 1918

The executive officer of the Royal Navy on 12 November 1918 had received a good general education by the standards of the time; indeed one that equated to the best then available in the country. Surprisingly this was not particularly navally oriented, certainly less so than if he had been to one of the nautical colleges. As will be seen when the post war pressures are discussed in part two of this thesis, there seems to have been an abiding concern, even fear, that if boys were not caught early, they would not join the navy in sufficient numbers. This was probably the proximate cause of the very restrictive rules on leaving once they entered the service.

Thereafter his training was directed at producing what might be considered a ‘standard’ lieutenant,’ that is a lieutenant with a watch keeping certificate able to stand a bridge watch in charge of a warship. Once he reached this level, there was no formal direction given to either his education or his training. If he wanted to, he could apply for specialist or staff training. If he did not, there was no compulsion or even pressure to do anything to progress professionally. This was taken to the extreme in the case of the ‘General Service’ or colloquially ‘salt horse’ officer who aspired to command a destroyer. To achieve this, an officer had to pass an extensive series of examinations, but no training was provided, it was self directed learning. It was almost as if the navy realised it could not pick its future leaders early, but instead gave every lieutenant a very broad education and training, and with it an equal opportunity to prosper

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<sup>143</sup> Command of Destroyer flotillas were often given to specialists, Mountbatten a signals specialist etc.

professionally.<sup>144</sup> Over the next twenty years this structure continued essentially unchanged, but strains were building up within the system, because the specialist officers, seen by the service as being its future leaders, were getting insufficient or no command experience, and little leadership experience.

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<sup>144</sup> Perhaps, to paraphrase Napoleon Bonaparte, the intention was that each lieutenant had an admiral's flag in his ditty box.

## Chapter 3

### The Naval Officer on 12 November 1918: How he was managed

This chapter looks at what would now termed 'Human Resource Management' of the executive officer corps. Historically, the navy (like most of society) had relied on a system of patronage, known colloquially as 'interest', to manage its officer's careers. In its full flower in the eighteenth century it was a relatively simple system. A senior officer would acquire a following of his favourites whose careers he would advance as the opportunity arose. This system relied on a crucial feature, if a senior officer advanced the careers of too many 'duds' his reputation would suffer, so it was in his own interest to pick quality favourites.<sup>1</sup> The system gradually withered through the nineteenth century.<sup>2</sup> Latterly the failings of the patronage system were apparent and in particular, the appointing officers on the basis of their class was decried. Wemyss, later to be First Sea Lord wrote in a private letter in 1916 from the Mediterranean:

I have a tame Duke here ... and the Admiralty ... have had the effrontery to appoint this amiable but exceedingly stupid young man to command the Motor Boat Flotilla in the canal! It is really extraordinary to what depths snobbery can drive a man.<sup>3</sup>

The navy had by the end of the First World War firmly set itself against even the last vestiges of patronage and was keen that promotion should be fair and that 'interest' should not play a part. A Confidential Monthly Order issued in 1917 directed 'that private recommendations for promotion are not to be forwarded.'<sup>4</sup> The Admiralty felt it necessary to return to the subject in 1920 setting out in a Confidential Weekly Order that Commanding Officers were to:

ensure that this order is brought to the notice of all Officers serving under them...

The claims of Officers recommended for promotion by selection are very fully considered at the Admiralty from the official records of the Officers' services ... No consideration can be given to private recommendations in settling promotion lists, as to do so would give those who make use of their private interest an unfair advantage ...

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<sup>1</sup> Although it would have been in his interests to accept some potential 'duds'; sons etc of his own patrons! See S.A. Cavell '*Midshipmen and Quarterdeck Boys in the British Navy, 1771-1831*' (Woodbridge: Boydell, 2012) for an excellent description of the early phases of the system.

<sup>2</sup> Basil Greenhill and Ann Giffard, '*Steam, Politics and Patronage: The Transformation of the Royal Navy 1815-54*,' (London: Conway Maritime, 1994) p.74.

<sup>3</sup> Paul G. Halpern (ed.), '*The Royal Navy in the Mediterranean 1915-1918*', (Aldershot: Navy Records Society/Temple Smith, 1987) p. 96. Perhaps Wemyss had rather higher standards than successive HM governments; the 'tame Duke' – 5<sup>th</sup> Duke of Sutherland – among many other political appointments - was to be Paymaster General 1925-8.

<sup>4</sup> CMO 9/17, referred to in CMO 1096/20 *Promotion by Selection – Private Recommendations*..

This practice is, in the opinion of their Lordships, most undesirable, and Officers who resort to it are warned that it will not in any way assist their prospects of advancement, but, on the contrary, will tend to prejudice them.<sup>5</sup>

The intention was that officer's selection for appointments and for promotion would rely solely on confidential reports submitted on Form S206.<sup>6</sup> However, Form S206 allowed very little latitude in reporting, making it very difficult to grade and compare officers. This weakness is considered in some detail in the second part of this thesis when the selection of officers for redundancy after the end of the war is discussed. Thus the end of patronage made for an unresponsive even rigid system. The reality was that the navy actually made little or no attempt to manage its junior officers as individuals, because with the management tools available to it, it could not do otherwise. It was not until the advent of better confidential reporting in the 1930s that the Admiralty actually knew very much about its individual officers. Allowing them to manage their own careers was the only realistic mechanism. There were some appearances of individual management, but the reality was completely different. This chapter describes the system that emerged from the First World War, the second part of the thesis examines the changes that made it into a system more responsive to the needs of the navy and the individual.

The inception of the central Naval Staff before the First World War was briefly mentioned earlier. Its development during the war is of little concern to this thesis except to remember that the Royal Navy was developing the first operational central naval staff in history under the pressures of war and, inevitably, it was heavily weighted towards war fighting. The new First Lord, Geddes re-structured the staff in September 1917 creating two bodies subordinate to the Admiralty Board, the Operations and the Maintenance Committees. Hamilton makes the point that this harked back to the pre-1832 structure of an Admiralty and a Navy Board '[c]reating a formal division between operations and administration'.<sup>7</sup> The problem for the future was relatively low priority given to personnel management which came under the maintenance committee, particularly that of officers compared to operational matters. The structure and relative priorities was to remain largely unchanged through the first half of the inter-war period.

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<sup>5</sup> CWO 1096/20 *Promotion by Selection – Private Recommendations*.

<sup>6</sup> AWO 2946/18 *Officers – Reports*.

<sup>7</sup> C.I. Hamilton, *The Making of the Modern Admiralty: British Naval Policy-Making 1805-1927*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011) p. 257-8. See also p. 254 for diagrams of the structure of the naval staff at various points through the war.



To fully appreciate the importance the Admiralty gave to its human resource management it is necessary to examine the actual procedures used.

### Cadets as individuals

As has been shown in the previous chapter, the Dartmouth education was as good as that given by most if not all the major public schools.<sup>8</sup> However, partly because the boys had already chosen their career, there was no output measure of quality; they did not sit the school certificate required to matriculate for university entry. Further, their performance at Dartmouth was almost a closed book to the broader navy and importantly its personnel managers; their personal records did not include anything of their performance at Dartmouth such as any academic marks, whether they had been selected as a cadet captain or later whether, after 1935, they had been in the alpha academic stream.<sup>9</sup>

		CADETS.			
		Date of passing out.	Time gained on passing out. Months.	Date of passing out.	Time gained on passing out. Months.
15 May	1925				
15 May	Edmund Thomas Larken [RR]	15 Jan	2	Ian Campbell Howden ... 15 Jan	2
15 May	Arthur Seymour Bolt ...	15 Jan	2	Charles Montague Donner ... 15 Jan	2
15 May	Richard Curling Lewis ...	15 Jan	2	Charles John Thompson Stephens ... .. 15 Jan	1
15 May	Christopher Douglas Bonham-Carter ... .. 15 Jan	2	William George Cortlandt Stokes ... .. 15 Jan	1	
15 May	Colin Hardie ... .. 15 Jan	2	Norman Warren Fisher ... 15 Jan	1	
15 May	Derek Norman Troubridge Hume Webber ... .. 15 Jan	2	Donald Hamilton Fuller ... 15 Jan	1	
15 May	James Anthony Surtees Wise	15 Jan	2	Patrick John Gerald Bernard	15 Jan
15 May	Reginald Ernest Terry ...	15 Jan	2	Percy Hattil Higginbotham	15 Jan
15 May	John Henry Tweedie Stilgoe	15 Jan	2	Mark Thornton ... .. 15 Jan	—
15 May	Michael John Rancé de Courcy ... .. 15 Jan	2	Kenneth MacIver Woods ... 15 Jan	—	
15 May	Richard Alan Vere Gregory	15 Jan	2	St. John Legh Clowes ... 15 Jan	—
15 May	Alwyn Douglas Lenox-Conyngham ... .. 15 Jan	2	Edmund Henry Cracroft Chapman ... .. 15 Jan	—	
15 May	Harry Ernest Huston Nicholls ... .. 15 Jan	2	Richard John Hollis Couch	15 Jan	
15 May	Richard Gibson Tosswill ...	15 Jan	2	David Alexander Fraser ... 15 Jan	—
15 May	Henry Nevile Reid ... .. 15 Jan	2	John Churchill Elworthy ... 15 Jan	—	
15 May				William Francis Roderick Segrave ... .. 15 Jan	—
	15			31	

Fig. 10. Extract from a 1925 Navy list showing the advance of seniority awarded to cadets on passing out from BRNC Dartmouth. This was described as 'Marks for former service'.

<sup>8</sup> It is difficult to compare the Dartmouth standard of education with that of the grammar schools, the selective academic top end of the state system. Their products appear rarely to have mixed professionally or to come into competition.

<sup>9</sup> 2SLPersRec.

The cadets were encouraged to strive for these goals but unknown to them, to little purpose apart from any sense of individual achievement or esteem among their peers and a gain of one or two months seniority, which was publicly promulgated in the Navy List (see Fig. 10).

Cadets at Dartmouth had numbers, described in the 'Blue Books' as 'Admiralty numbers' (see Fig. 11), but, despite the designation, the number does not appear on the officer's Admiralty personal records; either in the ledger or on the record card. Probably therefore these equated to a ratings 'number on ships books' used by a ship for internal administration.

Admiralty Number	Name	Term	Born	Dormitory	Tutor	Official Class
2994	Adre, Hugh M.	4	8-7-03	Hardy	H.E.P.	Sibd. a
3091	Agnew, John A.	3	26-9-03	Edingham	H.J.W.	Sibd. a
3210	Alexander, Henry C. R.	2	20-2-04	Boscawen	C.S.F.	Sibd. a
2992	Alison, Arthur B.	4	4-3-04	Cochrane	H.B.	Sibd. a
2987	Allen, Richard H. S.	5	3-2-03	Duncan	H.B.	Sibd. a
2996	Allfrey, Jack R.	4	2-4-03	Hardy	J.F. McK.	Sibd. a
3082	Allott, Richard	3	7-8-03	Raleigh	H.E.P.	Sibd. a
2988	Alsop, John B.	4	9-12-02	Hardy	P.F.R.B.	Sibd. a
3093	Ambrose, Geoffrey W. M.	3	24-10-03	Hawkins	P.T.H.	Sibd. a
3216	Anderson, Cutbert G. M.	1	14-7-04	Rodney	J.F. McK.	Sibd. a
2989	Anderson, Evelyn F.	5	30-3-03	Duncan	D.F.F.	Sibd. a
3094	Anson, Horatio St. G.	3	1-8-03	Edingham	A.H.S.	Sibd. a
3095	Armistead, Hugh C. H.	3	16-8-03	Profisher	H.J.W.	Sibd. a
3317	Armistead, Harold T.	1	12-7-04	Cornwallis	W.H.A.	Sibd. a
3096	Armytage, Reginald W. (Captain)	3	18-5-03	Cochrane	P.F.R.B.	Sibd. a
3097	Atkinson, Arthur D. S.	3	24-10-03	Raleigh	P.T.H.	Sibd. a
3213	Bachhouse, Ivan O.	1	24-2-04	Rodney	G.N.P.	Sibd. a
3319	Ball, Edward A. C.	1	4-6-04	Howe	H.B.	Sibd. a
3214	Banks, Edward W. J.	2	9-1-04	Hood	H.W.G.	Sibd. a
2997	Barchard, Francis	4	22-8-03	Hardy	H.W.G.	Sibd. a
3320	Barlow, Peter	1	19-4-04	Cornwallis	E.V.C.S.	Sibd. a
3321	Barlow, Richard H.	1	30-6-04	Rodney	K.G.B.	Sibd. a
3322	Barratt, John S.	1	3-6-04	Cornwallis	C.L.R.	Sibd. a
3315	Barratt, Richard H.	2	29-12-03	Boscawen	C.S.F.	Sibd. a
2980	Barwell, Stanley T. G.	5	25-2-03	Collingwood	H.J.W.	Sibd. a
3218	Bassett, Francis W. N.	2	31-3-04	Boscawen	C.L.H.	Sibd. a
2991	Bathurst, Peter (Term Captain)	5	1-3-03	Keppel	H.E.P.	Sibd. a
3098	Bawtree, Frank A.	3	28-6-03	Edingham	A.J.L.D.	Sibd. a
3099	Beasley, Frank M.	3	2-8-03	Profisher	P.F.R.B.	Sibd. a
2998	Beisfeld, Bruce E. (Captain)	4	15-5-03	Keppel	E.T.W.	Port A
3217	Bennetts, Sydney W. F.	2	15-12-03	Hood	A.R.M.	Port A
3100	Bentick, Wolf W. H.	3	28-11-03	Edingham	H.E.P.	Sibd. a
3102	Birch, Lawrence	3	31-3-04	Hood	K.G.L.	Port A
3103	Bisgood, Anthony F.	3	2-10-03	Raleigh	K.H.	Sibd. a
3104	Blackland, Robert G.	3	13-10-03	Raleigh	E.V.C.S.	Port c
3105	Bleck, Basil	2	2-8-03	Boscawen	H.W.H.	Port a
3106	Blandell, George C.	1	25-3-04	Anson	M.B.T.	Port c
3107	Boardman, Christopher A.	3	11-6-03	Hawkins	G.N.P.	Sibd. c
3108	Bollean, Noel A. R.	4	20-12-02	Keppel	J.F. McK.	Sibd. c
3109	Bonham-Carter, Jocelyn H.	2	28-1-04	Boscawen	H.E.P.	Sibd. a
3110	Booth, Sydney J. S.	1	29-4-04	Howe	A.E.H.	Port c
3111	Booth, Charles S.	2	3-2-04	Hood	K.G.R.	Sibd. a
3112	Booth, John W.	4	19-5-03	Hardy	J.F. McK.	Port c
3113	Borrett, Simon	1	23-7-04	Anson	G.N.P.	Port A
3114	Bourne, James A. F.	3	14-7-03	Edingham	H.W.G.	Sibd. c
3115	Bowerman, Harold G.	1	10-6-04	Howe	H.B.	Sibd. a
3116	Brame, John A. S.	1	16-7-04	Rodney	A.E.H.	Port c
3117	Bratt, Thomas L.	3	16-10-03	Hawkins	M.B.T.	Port c
3118	Brierley, Charles E.	1	12-5-04	Rodney	H.W.G.	Sibd. a
3119	Brierley, Christopher E. D.	3	5-10-03	Hawkins	G.N.P.	Sibd. a
3120	Brinkman, Roderick N.	6	27-12-02	Benbow	P.F.R.B.	Sibd. a
3121	Brittain, Wilfred G.	4	19-6-03	Hardy	E.V.C.S.	Port c
3122	Brook, Alan	5	2-2-03	Collingwood	J.C.	Port a
3123	Brook, William L.	2	3-2-04	Hood	H.W.G.	Port A
3124	Brodick, Charles G.	5	8-1-03	Troubridge	W.H.A.	Port c
3125	Brown, Eric R. J.	4	10-4-03	Keppel	H.B.	Port c
3126	Brown, Henry N. S.	1	29-4-04	Anson	E.V.C.S.	Port A
3127	Brown, Roy S.	2	16-1-04	Boscawen	P.T.H.	Sibd. a
3128	Browning, Hubert A.	4	17-12-02	Keppel	H.B.	Sibd. c
3129	Browning, John G. P.	3	26-11-03	Hawkins	J.C.	Sibd. a
3130	Buckley, John H.	1	16-6-04	Rodney	H.W.H.	Sibd. c
3131	Buckley, Kenneth B.	1	16-6-04	Howe	J.C.	Port c
3132	Buckmaster, Culbert H. S.	1	24-5-04	Howe	J.F. McK.	Port c
3133	Burdett, Henry H. C.	2	2-2-04	Cochrane	A.J.L.D.	Sibd. a
3134	Burke, Irwin B.	4	1-5-03	Roake	J.F. McK.	Port c
3135	Bursall, John E.	2	24-2-04	Cochrane	C.S.F.	Sibd. c
3136	Burt, Edward J. E.	5	5-12-02	Duncan	A.R.M.	Sibd. a

Fig.11. BRNC 'Blue Book' showing cadets 'Admiralty numbers'.

At first sight, being known by a number might be thought impersonal. In fact the reverse is true. This was neatly brought out by C.S. Forester in his novel *Hornblower and the Atropos*. Lieutenant John Jones, *Hornblower's* First Lieutenant, the bearer of an extremely common name, regarded himself as being personalised at the Admiralty by

being ‘John Jones the ninth’.<sup>10</sup> The fact that cadets at Dartmouth had numbers actually allowed a degree of individual identity and management, but once cadets left Dartmouth, they did not have numbers and they disappeared into the anonymous un-numbered mass of officers.<sup>11</sup> The appearance of individual management was maintained, for example the calling notices for the sub lieutenant’s courses listed officers by name.<sup>12</sup> However, the reality was that their actual career management by the Admiralty was dispassionate and detached, even disinterested.

### Career management after Dartmouth

The management of officers’ careers was entirely paper based. They were managed out of a ledger (see figs 10 and 11) throughout the period covered by this thesis.

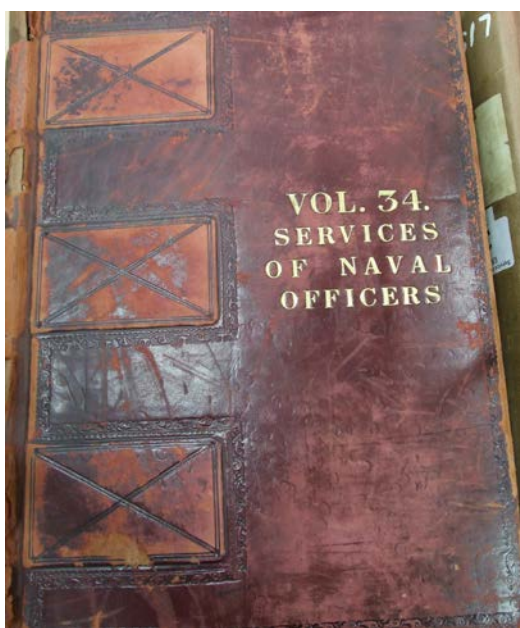


Fig.12. An Officer’s ledger. This was a working ledger, not a historical record (author’s collection).

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<sup>10</sup> C.S. Forester, *Hornblower and the ‘Atropos’*, (London: Michael Joseph, 1956) p. 96.

<sup>11</sup> Royal Naval officers did not have numbers until the 1960s, long after most armed forces in the world.

<sup>12</sup> For example see AFO 3248/23 ‘Acting Sub-Lieutenants – Courses’ listing by name each Sub-Lieutenant and giving the dates he was to attend each course and giving ‘joining instructions’.

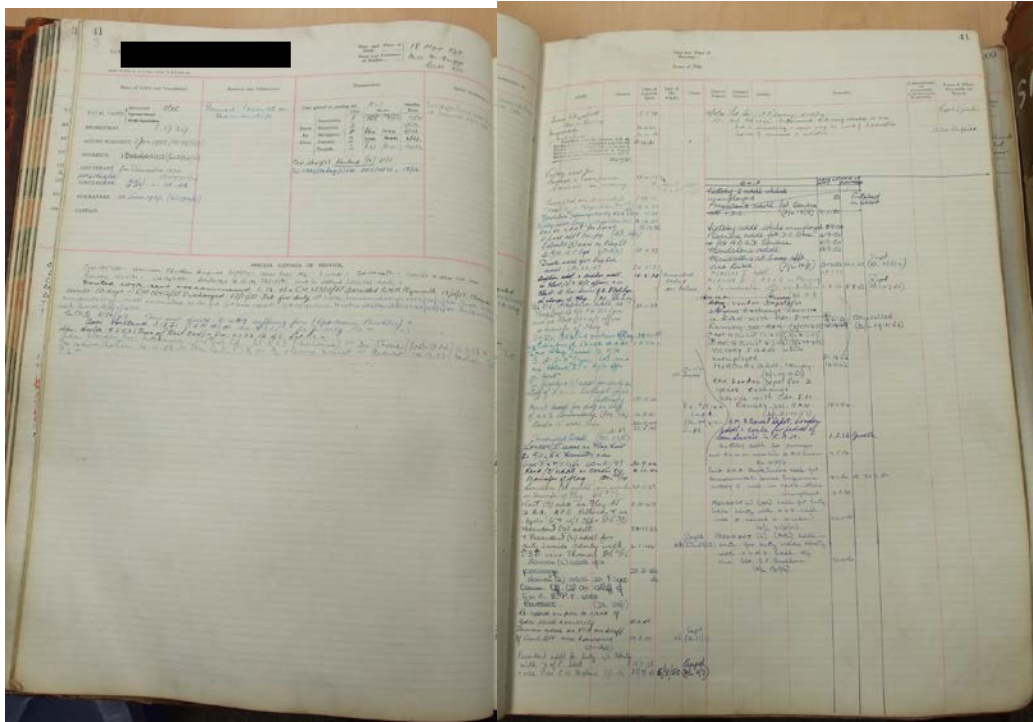


Fig. 13. Two pages of an officers ledger. Left and right pages both numbered the same, but the numbering was arbitrary, bearing no relation to age, seniority or alphabetical order. (author's collection).

Day to day management was on a record card which in size was roughly equivalent to a modern A4 in landscape (see Fig. 9). While the ledger contained information such as father's occupation, the record card contained more immediately useful information; as well as key dates (promotions, award of watchkeeping certificate) they recorded course preferences, attendances and appointments, including, on attached continuation sheets, abstracted text and latterly, marks from confidential reports on Form S206. The cards were not numbered, the only way they could have been filed was alphabetically by name.

Mechanical systems for the management of personnel records; specifically 'Hollerith' machines produced by the eponymous company (which later became International Business Machines, and later still IBM) were widely used in business etc by the 1930s. Hollerith had formed an eponymous company as early as 1886 renting out tabulating machines derived from those originally devised for the US census.<sup>13</sup> The Hollerith system used a card, punched with holes which could then be sorted and read by a machine.

<sup>13</sup> Anon. '1100100 and counting' *The Economist* June 11-17, 2011 p. 66. (The number in the title is 100 expressed as a binary number).

It is not that the Admiralty was ignorant of such systems. Even within the Admiralty, NID 25, the Royal Navy's cryptographic intelligence centre (known as Room 40 from its accommodation in the Old Admiralty Building<sup>14</sup>) used mechanical tabulating systems during the First World War. However, this may reflect what Friedman describes as 'stove piping' or management compartmentalisation.<sup>15</sup> By the interwar period such machines were widely used. Sefton Delmer, the Berlin correspondent of the 'Daily Express' when he visited the headquarters of the NSDAP (Nazi Party) in Munich in the infamous *Braune Haus* in 1931 visited the statistics department 'with its rows of files and Hollerith punch-card machines which could tell you instantly how the party was doing anywhere'.<sup>16</sup> Even the Royal Dockyards used them to manage civilian personnel,<sup>17</sup> but the navy did not start to use similar systems to manage service personnel until the 1940s; personnel management was apparently not seen as important enough. Then the Royal Navy's transfer of its records to Hollerith cards during 1941 was bedevilled by interference from other government departments (particularly in the person of Lord Beaverbrook), procurement of sub-standard cards, and (a taste of things to come) poor data entry, which led the Head of Naval Branch to minute that:

There is no likelihood of a repetition; a wholesale change of system of this kind could not take place more than once in an official lifetime (it could not; a second dose would be lethal).<sup>18</sup>

Thus officers were not only indentured workers bound to the service financially (if they left before the age of 45, they did so without any pension rights),<sup>19</sup> they were treated as a 'lump of labour'. Little effort was made to manage them centrally at an individual level. If and when they had specialised, their specialist school would to a variable degree look after them (particularly gunnery officers), but until then their career was managed disinterestedly by the civilians of the CW (Commission and

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<sup>14</sup> Keith Jeffery, *MI6: The History of the Secret Intelligence Service, 1909 -1949*, (London: Bloomsbury, 2011) p. 209.

<sup>15</sup> Norman Friedman, *Network-Centric Warfare: How Navies Learned to Fight Smarter Through Three World Wars*, (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 2009) p. 27, 267.

<sup>16</sup> Nicholas Rankin, *Churchill's Wizards: The British Genius for Deception 1914-1945*, (London : Faber and Faber 2008) p. 274.

<sup>17</sup> C.I. Hamilton, *The Making of the Modern Admiralty: British Naval Policy-Making 1805-1927*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011) p. 301.

<sup>18</sup> ADM 116/4609. *Un-referenced minute by George Dunn 'Head of Naval Branch;' dated 2 April 1942.*

<sup>19</sup> Admittedly, with the noticeably shorter expectation of life in the period, consideration of pensions did not assume the importance they have now.



Warrant) section of the Admiralty albeit nominally under the Second Sea Lord who had overall responsibility for all personnel matters.<sup>20</sup>

Officers felt, and were encouraged to feel, that how they performed on their sub lieutenant's courses mattered for their subsequent careers, that a benevolent hierarchical navy made future career decisions based on them. Memoirs and interviews with officers repeatedly make the point that getting a first class pass was a pre-requisite for specialist training and for career advancement being a 'five-oner' – getting five first class passes was a passport to success.<sup>21</sup> The reality was completely different. Of the 1920 cohort of entrants whose records were examined for this thesis, six ultimately achieved flag rank (i.e. became admirals of whatever level). Only two of those had achieved five first class passes as sub lieutenants, and one an average of all third class passes having failed two of the course examinations at his first attempt!<sup>22</sup> Of the remaining 'five-oners', only two achieved the rank of captain, and one was passed over for promotion as a lieutenant commander. The academic distinction of being a 'five-oner' was not a predictor of future achievement (almost no-one, apart from Richmond, noticed that it was not). However, it remained a firm belief among naval officers that it was, because nobody appears to have completed the validation which would now be regarded as an essential part of any educational process. In fact Richmond had recognised that it was no predictor of performance (writing in November 1918) 'examinations are no criterion of an officer's capacity – witness Beatty, Keyes & Tyrwhitt, who muster *one* [*sic*] first-class certificate between them' and had questioned classifying junior officers, including altering their seniority (albeit minimally), on the basis of examination results.<sup>23</sup> The latter was the only tangible result of examination success; those who achieved first class passes were given an advance of seniority, which was termed 'marks for former service'.

The truth was that the navy was not interested in an individual officer's development; as long as the process produced a lieutenant with a watchkeeping certificate, the system was satisfied, but it went through the motions of appearing to value its officers as individuals.

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<sup>20</sup> ADM 1/16506 *Posts in Various Establishments held by Naval Officers. Division of responsibility between CE and CW in dealing with appointments.*

<sup>21</sup> Interview with Admiral O'Brien 22 April 2008.

<sup>22</sup> 2SLPersrec.

<sup>23</sup> Arthur J. Marder, *Portrait of an Admiral: The Life and Papers of Sir Herbert Richmond*, (London; Johnathan Cape, 1952) p. 327.

## Personnel administration and appointing<sup>24</sup>

The Second Sea Lord was a member of the Board of Admiralty and was additionally 'Chief of Naval Personnel'. In December 1919 the post of Second Sea Lord was held a full admiral, but later by a vice admiral.<sup>25</sup> He was supported by his secretary<sup>26</sup> a paymaster commander and had two Naval Assistants, both captains – one designated as '*Extra Naval Assistant ... for engineering personnel duties*' – who comprised his entire uniformed staff (apart from the mobilisation section of five officers<sup>27</sup> and the Department of the Director of Naval Recruiting with a further two) and oversaw all officers appointments and promotions.<sup>28</sup> While officers' personnel management came under the nominal direction of the Second Sea Lord, it would be a mistake to see officers as being administered by a uniformed department, i.e. by other naval officers. For the first half of the period covered by this thesis, junior officers up to and including non-specialist lieutenant commanders were appointed and their careers entirely managed by the Commission and Warrant (CW) section of the Admiralty, which was made up of civil servants.<sup>29</sup> In fact the appointing of all officers was undertaken by the CW branch, 'The general rule should be that appointments of Naval Officers should be issued by C.W. Branch'.<sup>30</sup> Not only that, but an officer's formal letter of appointment was signed by the Permanent Secretary, a civil servant, not by a naval officer.<sup>31</sup> Contemporary Navy Lists do not show a single uniformed officer working in the CW section which maintained an individual's personal records, and would collate their confidential reports, correspondence about them and (if the officers chose to tell them) their marital status etc. As they became more senior and if they became specialists, there was more involvement by the Naval Assistant to the Second Sea Lord (for commanders) and the Naval Secretary or the relevant school respectively, but for junior

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<sup>24</sup> Officers were (and are) 'appointed' to a new 'appointment' or post, unlike the other two services, whose officers are posted. Other ranks in the other two services are also posted, but naval ratings are 'drafted' to a new job.

<sup>25</sup> Obviously indicative of the importance of the post being downgraded.

<sup>26</sup> Nowadays the equivalent post is designated 'Executive Assistant'.

<sup>27</sup> This was to become the 'Manning Department' in 1930, reflecting broader responsibilities for manpower, see AFO 575/30 *Mobilisation Department, Admiralty – Change of Title*.

<sup>28</sup> The Navy List (London: HMSO, January 1920, corrected to 18<sup>th</sup> December 1919) p. 1812.

<sup>29</sup> ADM 198/37 lists the civilian personnel of the CW section and their areas of responsibility.

<sup>30</sup> ADM 1/16506. *Posts and Various Establishments held by Naval Officers. Division of Responsibility between CE and CW branches in dealing with appointments* Memorandum dated 25 June 1935.

<sup>31</sup> ADM 198/37 sets out the format to be used for officer's appointment letters.

officers their careers were managed entirely by the CW division.<sup>32</sup> The Naval Secretary, an appointment held by a rear admiral reporting to the First Sea Lord, administered the selection (by the First Sea Lord and First Lord) and appointing of flag and general officers (admirals and marine generals), who would thus also oversee the senior captains/colonels who were to be considered for flag/general rank.

Thus junior officers' career management was by civil servants who decided where they would be appointed:

In pursuit of one's first appointment as a sub-lieutenant everybody was allowed unofficially to wait on a civil servant at the Admiralty called Mr Dye. Although it was accepted that one had to go without question wherever one was sent, I was permitted to ask politely whether I could, perhaps, be appointed to a small ship, if possible a destroyer, on the China station. Mr Dye smiled kindly and said, let's see what can be done. So, a fortnight later, when I received an appointment to a very large home-based battleship, HMS *Nelson*, I could only bite my lip.<sup>33</sup>

It would have been a brave, even foolhardy, young officer who questioned an appointment, and it would probably have been a pointless exercise anyway. This made for an arbitrary personnel management by people, who however experienced, had no direct knowledge of the naval service and appointed officers according to their perception of the needs of the service which were paramount, at all ranks, even if this was to the individuals personal detriment. Indeed 'when a junior ...that junior officers never got appointed to a station or class of ship they wished to go to. It had always seemed that the Admiralty went out of their way to prevent an officer going where he wished.' According to his biographer, Admiral Oliver who was Second Sea Lord from September 1920 to August 1924 remedied 'this stupid system' and thereby 'produced a new and better attitude towards the Admiralty.' However '[h]is example [w]as not always ... followed by his successors'.<sup>34</sup> Regrettably this is not borne out by the facts; rather, the opposite happened. Under Admiral Oliver when he was Second Sea Lord an AWO stated 'Officers cannot, as a general rule, be permitted to select or decline appointments'. The stated reason was so as not to be unfair to officers who 'as a matter of principle, never decline an appointment at whatever personal or private

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<sup>32</sup> ADM 1/16506 *Posts in Various Establishments held by Naval Officers. Division of responsibility between CE and CW in dealing with appointments.*

<sup>33</sup> Charles Owen, *Plain Yarns from the Fleet: The Spirit of the Royal Navy during its Twentieth-Century Heyday*, (Stroud: Sutton Publishing, 1997) p. 51.

<sup>34</sup> Admiral Sir William James, *A Great Seaman: The Life of Admiral of the Fleet Sir Henry F. Oliver GCB, KCMG, MVO LLD*, (London: HF & G Witherby Ltd, 1956) p. 172.



inconvenience'.<sup>35</sup> The suspicion must be that while any change was wishful thinking, the view expressed by Oliver's biographer that this militated against morale was correct.

Civil servants, however well meaning and experienced, inevitably could only understand the aspirations, desires and needs of junior officers very much at second hand. As one naval officer in a memoir wrote of Admiralty civil servants:

Experience of sea affairs cannot be gained from books and documents, even by gentlemen of advanced academic qualifications. Neither can much about naval warfare be learnt in Whitehall offices, electric trains to Purley or an annual holiday at Burnham-on-Crouch.<sup>36</sup>

There were modifications and adaptations. While the actual appointments of specialist officers when lieutenants and lieutenant commanders were administered by the CW section, 'the individual schools [i.e. the specialist schools like HMS *Excellent*, the gunnery school] nominated Lieut.Cdrs [*sic*] for appointments and the Admiralty personnel department usually rubber-stamped their choice 'because they [the specialist schools] knew the individuals better'.<sup>37</sup> However, this latter assertion was patently incorrect, the CW section maintained the official personal file on an officer, not the school. To prove the point, the author of the cited article, a gunnery officer, was informed by the gunnery school that he was to be re-appointed directly from a ship in Malta to Singapore because 'as a bachelor' he would be amenable to such a move. He was informed of this while celebrating his wife giving birth to their fourth child.<sup>38</sup> Nonetheless, this did give the schools a degree of patronage, and the ability to ensure that the officers perceived as being high fliers would receive appointments likely to advance their careers. The reality was that with the paper based personnel management systems that were in use throughout the interwar period and the limited numbers of uniformed staff meant that appointing administered by civil servants, who however well meaning and experienced inevitably could not understand the aspirations, desires and needs of junior officers. The system can only have been at best have been perceived as impersonal and unfeeling, but the crude personnel management methods did not permit anything better.

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<sup>35</sup> AFO 1607/20 *Appointments – Officers*.

<sup>36</sup> Alastair Mars DSO, DSC and bar, *Court Martial*, (London: Frederick Muller, 1954) p. 140.

<sup>37</sup> Anon 'A Fate Worse than Death' *The Naval Review* Vol 99, No 2 (May 2011) pp.139-42.

<sup>38</sup> While a marriage allowance was not payable until very late between the wars, an allowance for dependent children was; officers made sure that the Admiralty knew if they had legitimate children.

## Promotion

Promotion up to the rank of lieutenant commander was automatic, dependent on time served. Apart from the 'marks for former service' already mentioned, almost nothing altered that progression. Failure to progress to confirmed sub lieutenant was almost unknown, unsurprisingly in view of the financial penalty to the boy's parents. Failure on sub lieutenants' courses was rare, and a second failure after a re-sit almost unknown. Progression to lieutenant was slightly variable, being dependent on the award of the all important watchkeeping ticket. Once a lieutenant, promotion to lieutenant commander was automatic after eight years. Of the officers whose careers were examined for this thesis, two were not promoted to lieutenant commander eight years after becoming a lieutenant. One of those had been deprived of two years seniority as a punishment by court-martial, the other had resigned his commission and left the navy a few weeks after he had been due to be promoted.<sup>39</sup> Thus, whatever the perceptions, a lieutenant commander was in reality nothing but a senior lieutenant. Subsequent promotions were by selection and will be looked at in greater detail in the second part of this thesis, because the changes to the way they were administered were to have a major bearing on the development of the officer corps as the Second World War approached.

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<sup>39</sup> 2SLPersRec.

**TO THE NADIR AND BACK: THE EXECUTIVE BRANCH OF THE  
ROYAL NAVY 1918-1939**

**PART TWO**

**TO THE NADIR AND BACK: THE NAVAL OFFICER BETWEEN  
THE TWO WORLD WARS**



## Chapter 1

### **Declining to the Nadir: Admirals Wemyss, Beatty and Madden and their policies regarding the officer corps.**

The 1920s were economically and socially a bleak period in British history.<sup>1</sup> A short post-war economic boom was followed by a down turn and significant government cutbacks. After the ‘war to end wars’ not only did the government not see a need for a large navy, it could not afford one anyway. Thus the 1920s saw major cuts both in its number of ships, of infrastructure (for example the closure of the not long completed Royal dockyard at Rosyth<sup>2</sup> ) and personnel, which latter have attracted the soubriquet, the ‘Geddes’ axe’ from the name of the man tasked with being the executioner.<sup>3</sup> The manner and extent of the personnel reductions will be described in some detail in the next chapter as will the almost continuous series of pay cuts that, uniquely, the naval officer corps was subject to through the 1920s and into the 1930s. Taken together these were the major proximate cause of the decline in officer morale. This chapter looks at the broader policy issues including commissioning from the lower deck that followed in the immediate aftermath of the First World War and into the 1920s.

At the end of 1917, Vice Admiral Rosslyn Wemyss was Deputy Chief of the Naval Staff (DCNS) when Jellicoe was peremptorily relieved of his appointments as First Sea Lord and Chief of the Naval Staff on Christmas Eve 1917 by the First Lord, Sir Eric Geddes.<sup>4</sup> The debate about the machinations that led up to this sacking is better left for others, but as Jellicoe had not been long in office, it would appear that no succession planning had taken place, and certainly the usual source of advice, the retiring First Sea Lord, was, in the circumstances, probably not consulted. Jellicoe’s most likely successor in the ordinary course of events would have been Beatty, but to

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<sup>1</sup> Probably the best social history of this period is Richard Overy, *The Morbid Age: Britain Between the Wars*, (London: Allen Lane, 2009) but also see Roy Hattersley, *Borrowed Time: The Story of Britain Between the Wars*, (London: Little, Brown, 2007) and D.J. Taylor, *Bright Young People: The Rise and Fall of a Generation 1918-1940*, (London: Chatto & Windus, 2007).

<sup>2</sup> Jamie A. Buntin, ‘The 1925 Reduction of HM Dockyard Rosyth to “Care and Maintenance”’, Unpublished MA Dissertation, Greenwich Maritime Institute, 2008.

<sup>3</sup> ADM 167/64.C.P.-2919 *Reduction of Public Expenditure: Memorandum by the Chancellor of the Exchequer dated 9 May 1921* initiated the process.

<sup>4</sup> C.I. Hamilton, *The Making of the Modern Admiralty: British Naval Policy-Making 1805-1927*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011) p. 260. Geddes had not long before been a Vice Admiral – the only naval rank he held – subordinate to Jellicoe as Controller of the Navy, having been recruited directly by Lloyd-George. He then went on to forge and wield his eponymous axe.

relieve the latter as Commander in Chief of the Grand Fleet at very short notice while hostilities continued would have been, at best, unwise.

The upshot was that Wemyss was appointed First Sea Lord with the acting rank of Admiral.<sup>5</sup> He was in a difficult position from the start, he was junior to Admiral Beatty, and Beatty was determined to become First Sea Lord once the war had ended. Roskill sets out the way in which Wemyss was sidelined and eventually persuaded or pressurised to retire a year after the end of the war.<sup>6</sup> Roskill believes that Wemyss was an efficient and effective First Sea Lord and Marder describes him as having:

buoyancy, charm, invariable courtesy, incomparable tact ... an officer of good judgement and common sense, and one who in times of crisis never got rattled or even worried.<sup>7</sup>

However, there is no doubt that his was a difficult task with the Northcliffe press against him and Beatty sitting in Scapa Flow who was impatient and ambitious to be First Sea Lord as soon as possible. Thus, when Wemyss resigned, he was succeeded in November 1919 by Admiral of the Fleet Earl Beatty.

Almost alone of the British First World War leaders, Beatty's reputation has survived almost intact. Even very recent publications remain close to the earlier hagiographical biographies,<sup>8</sup> referring to his 'youthful vigour and offensive spirit'<sup>9</sup> and his 'legendary' status,<sup>10</sup> while acknowledging some of his more obvious faults,<sup>11</sup> not least of which was 'remarkable' vanity.<sup>12</sup> His performance as a wartime commander is beyond the scope of this thesis except as it is indicative of his subsequent performance as First Sea Lord. However, it is difficult to see him as a reborn Nelson<sup>13</sup> when it is considered that he had had command of the battle cruiser squadron from January 1913 and yet at the Battle of the Dogger Bank in 1915 his captains were not yet sufficiently

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<sup>5</sup> James Goldrick, 'Wemyss, Rosslyn Erskine, Baron Wester Wemyss (1864-1933)' *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford University Press, 2004) accessed on line 2 Jan 2012.

<sup>6</sup> Stephen Roskill, *Naval Policy Between the Wars: The Period of Anglo-American Antagonism 1919 – 1929*, (New York: Walker and Company, 1968 ) pp. 41–3.

<sup>7</sup> Arthur J. Marder, *From the Dreadnought to Scapa Flow – The Royal Navy in the Fisher Era, 1904-1919 : Victory and Aftermath*, (London: Oxford University Press, 1970) p. 4.

<sup>8</sup> Stephen Roskill, *Admiral of the Fleet Earl Beatty, the Last Naval Hero: An Intimate Biography*, (London: Collins, 1980).

<sup>9</sup> Sam Willis, *Fighting Ships 1850-1950*, (London: Quercus, 2008) p. 116.

<sup>10</sup> Joe Maiolo, *Cry Havoc: The Arms Race and the Second World War 1931-41*, (London: John Murray, 2010) p. 95.

<sup>11</sup> Andrew Lambert, *Admirals: The Naval Commanders who Made Britain Great*, (London: Faber and Faber, 2008) pp. 335-78.

<sup>12</sup> C.I. Hamilton, *The Making of the Modern Admiralty: British Naval Policy-Making 1805-1927*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011) p. 272.

‘in his mind’ that they continued to obey his last signal when his crippled flagship fell astern. This allowed the fleeing German battle cruisers to escape. Fisher summed up the episode succinctly ‘Any fool can obey orders’.<sup>14</sup> More worrying, for someone who was to be head of the service nearly eight years, he had obvious favourites and was blinkered about the inadequacies of some subordinates, such as Seymour, who had been his flag-lieutenant at sea.<sup>15</sup>

### The Admiralty Board during the 1920s

Historically, the Admiralty Board had run what would now be called the operational side of the navy and the Navy Board administered it and the Royal dockyards etc. The two functions were merged by the Naval Civil Departments Bill of 1832 into the single Admiralty Board.<sup>16</sup> As already mentioned, changes under the aegis of Geddes as First Lord were to in part revert to the earlier administrative structure, with its attendant failings. The Admiralty Board retained primacy after the changes. Since 1832 it had been made up of three distinct groupings: politicians, naval officers and civil servants. The actual numbers and relative proportions of each varied, and this was reflected in the personalities and dynamics of the board at any given time. The key political component was the First Lord of Admiralty, essentially the Secretary of State for the Royal Navy.<sup>17</sup> The First Lord had a seat in the cabinet and gave political direction. Incumbents varied in the degree to which they imposed their will on the Board and the Admiralty.<sup>18</sup> During the period this included not only material matters, but also in matters of discipline, redundancies and commissioning of officers from the lower deck.<sup>19</sup> At one end of the spectrum was Geddes, who having actually been a uniformed member of the Board, became First Lord and played a large part in the sacking of his erstwhile superior, Jellicoe. At the other extreme was Alexander who was First Lord from June 1929 to August 1931 and thus presided over what Roskill describes as ‘perhaps the weakest

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<sup>13</sup> Stephen Roskill, *Admiral of the Fleet Earl Beatty* p. 116.

<sup>14</sup> Lord Fisher, *Memories*, (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1919) p. 38.

<sup>15</sup> Andrew Gordon, *The Rules of the Game: Jutland and British Naval Command*, (London: John Murray, 1996) p. 97.

<sup>16</sup> BR 1875 (previously CB 3013), *Naval Staff Monograph (Historical): The Naval Staff of the Admiralty. Its Work and Development*, pp. 3-4.

<sup>17</sup> The Parliamentary and Financial Secretary of the Admiralty, the other political appointee, did not become a board member until 1929.

<sup>18</sup> While Churchill on many occasions involved himself in purely operational matters, other occupants of the post did not.

<sup>19</sup> Christopher M. Bell, ‘The King’s English and the Security of the Empire: Class, Social Mobility, and Democratization in the British Naval Officer Corps, 1918-1939’, *Journal of British Studies* 48 (July 2009) pp. 695-716.

Board of Admiralty of all time'<sup>20</sup> and was later again First Lord in Churchill's wartime cabinet when he must be regarded as having been weak.<sup>21</sup>

The First Sea Lord (previously the First Naval Lord) was the professional head of the navy and as the Chief of the Naval Staff, its operational commander. His role was obviously critical for the service, and from the personnel point of view again there was a spectrum, ranging from Beatty who, as will be shown, appears almost to have been disinterested in personnel (particularly the officers), through Field, whose approach was reformist but detached to Chatfield who was very much a 'hands on people person'. The other 'uniformed' members of the Board were the Second and Third Sea Lords, the Deputy Chief of the Naval Staff and the Assistant Chief of the Naval Staff. In fact, until Chatfield became First Sea Lord, naval members of the Board did not wear uniform, even when they visited ships or establishments, and were even on a different pay scale to the rest of the Navy. The mechanism and untoward effects of this will be described and discussed.

The civil servants, and particularly the Permanent Secretary (who became a full member of the Board in October 1921), were in post far longer than any other member. Indeed, the 'permanent secretary' after becoming a full member of the Board, was its only enduring member. The political members were there at the disposal of the Prime Minister, and the uniformed members were normally on the Board for a specific term.<sup>22</sup> However, Sir Oswyn Murray was appointed as Permanent Secretary in August 1917, and retired in July 1936. While he was nominally the secretary, he provided the continuity and administrative support to the Board, and as will be seen, his 'advice' to the Board sometimes went beyond a strictly administrative role, and – specifically after the Invergordon mutiny – strayed into areas of naval discipline, which reflected his increasing power and influence, not least because of his financial control of the Admiralty.<sup>23</sup> It was not the role of civil servants to initiate policy, so as the unchanging (over years) members of the Board, they and their supporting secretariat can be regarded as providing inertia or resistance to change. They will be seen in many instances to have been the conservative element on the Board and in the Admiralty. They also provided what might be termed the institutional memory of the Admiralty, indeed in some

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<sup>20</sup> Stephen Roskill, *Naval Policy between the Wars: The Period of Reluctant Rearmament 1930 -1939*, (London: Collins, 1976) p. 80.

<sup>21</sup> For example, he was never privy to the existence of 'Ultra'.

<sup>22</sup> Subject of course to politicians, as Jellicoe had found.



respects of the navy as a whole. An example to be mentioned later in this thesis arose when there was discussion as to whether to give redundant officers a pension or a lump sum payment. The writer of a memorandum, in giving his opinion, looked back to a redundancy programme that had been conducted in the 1870s. The civil service is a recurring feature through the thesis, and while it worked in general to the benefit of the service, its innate conservatism will be seen to have been in some respects detrimental to the officer corps.

### The First Sea Lords

Wemyss was not only a stopgap as First Sea Lord, but Beatty had effectively set up a shadow Naval Staff in the form of Grand Fleet Committees. In some cases he ensured that 'his' men were, like John the Baptist,<sup>24</sup> sent ahead of him to the Admiralty, such as Captain Herbert Richmond, who left the Grand Fleet to become the Director of Training and Staff Duties (DTSD), relieving Admiral Ley who was unwell.<sup>25</sup>

Despite the output of Beatty's 'Grand Fleet Committees' which should have allowed him to arrive in office with many prepared proposals, his time as First Sea Lord was marked by inertia regarding education and training matters. His major battles were political/material and such personnel matters as were dealt with by his Board were largely reactive, in particular redundancies, pay cuts and the introduction of the separate engineering branch. Otherwise there were no initiatives or significant changes on personnel matters (although in 1927 he did standardise officers' cap badges; until that time subordinate officers cap badges were smaller than those of other officers).<sup>26</sup>

Beatty had significant political battles to fight as the retrenchment after the Great War took hold. There are differing views on how successful he was, at one extreme was the view that 'He would hold the post of First Sea Lord for eight years, ... and it would be here, rather than at sea, that he demonstrated true greatness as an admiral',<sup>27</sup> (which rather begs the question as how good he was at sea). Others felt he was less effective, particularly dealing with the civil service and the Treasury. The 'ability of Admiralty

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<sup>23</sup> C.I. Hamilton, *The Making of the Modern Admiralty*, p. 297.

<sup>24</sup> 'He it is, who is coming after me is preferred before me ...' BR 401 *The Holy Bible* John 1 v 27.

<sup>25</sup> Arthur J. Marder, *Portrait of an Admiral: The Life and Papers of Sir Herbert Richmond*, (London: Jonathan Cape, 1952) p. 303.

<sup>26</sup> AFO 1061/27 *Uniform - Cap Badges for Subordinate Officers*.

<sup>27</sup> Andrew Lambert, *Admirals*, p. 366.

civil servants to dictate naval policy' contributed to the gulf that increasingly developed between the service and the Admiralty, represented in their eyes by the Admiralty Board.<sup>28</sup> This was to have serious consequences long after Beatty had left the post of First Sea Lord. Whatever the truth, he appears to have had little interest in personnel matters. Indeed, worse, the characteristic feature of the Beatty and the Madden era in personnel terms was an apparent wish to put the clock back to the pre-war era, or charitably, to resist any change. This was particularly displayed when it came to officer entry, education and training.

However, having initially opposed its introduction, he apparently did fight hard for a marriage allowance, albeit unsuccessfully. Tellingly, in view of what follows in this chapter, Roskill says 'when the struggle over the marriage allowance was in progress sea going officers commonly expressed the view that Admiral Beatty, having married an extremely wealthy wife, did not view the problems of less favoured individuals sympathetically.'<sup>29</sup> Already there was evidence of detachment of the Admiralty from the Fleet, indeed the whole of the naval service, and in particular, its officer corps. Apart from an initial post-war pay rise, the succeeding years were characterised by a steady succession of 'bad news' for officers, with even sensible actions and decisions being so badly handled in terms of the way they were promulgated that their effect was negative.<sup>30</sup> The descent to the nadir started at the time that Beatty became First Sea Lord or soon after. Various points on that descent will be explored, including some policies which did not come to fruition, but which were indicative of Admiralty thinking.

A feature of Beatty's time as First Sea Lord were his extensive efforts to review the Battle of Jutland and, it would appear, to put his own actions commanding the battle cruisers in as favourable a light as possible. The 'Jutland Controversy' rumbled on until at least 1927,<sup>31</sup> and continued to be debated until the end of the century.<sup>32</sup> This is not

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<sup>28</sup> C.I. Hamilton, *The Making of the Modern Admiralty* pp.279, 297-9.

<sup>29</sup> Stephen Roskill, *Naval Policy Between the Wars: The period of Anglo-American Antagonism 1919-1929*, p. 449.

<sup>30</sup> The removal of the engineers from the executive branch will be seen to have been the right decision at the time, but handled so badly as to embitter an entire branch, and the 'Lucia' mutiny, which will also be described but in a later chapter, was undoubtedly badly handled in PR terms.

<sup>31</sup> Stephen Roskill, *Admiral of the Fleet Earl Beatty*, pp. 322-39; Rear-Admiral J.E.T. Harper, *The Truth About Jutland*, (London: John Murray, 1927).

<sup>32</sup> James Alexander Yates 'The Jutland controversy: a case study in intra-service politics, with particular reference to the presentation of the Battlecruiser Fleet's training, conduct and command.' Unpublished PhD Thesis University of Hull, 1998.

the place to rehearse the arguments themselves but what is important is that there were major differences between very senior officers was widely known in the service, and indeed beyond. The effect was to effectively shut down any discussion of the battle within the service to the extent that cadets at Dartmouth were taught nothing about it. Of greater concern was the almost invisible, but very real split between ‘Jellicoe’ and ‘Beatty’ supporters. Officers under training were first exposed to any teaching on the Battle of Jutland only in 1929, after Beatty had retired, with the inclusion of two lectures during the ‘Introductory War Course’ for sub lieutenants at Greenwich.<sup>33</sup> Further, because the debate, if such it can be called, was seen as a Beatty/Jellicoe dispute, officers were careful even in how Admiral Jellicoe was addressed, for example when HMS *Renown* was on the Royal Tour to the Far East in 1920, HRH Prince of Wales and ‘fifteen Jutland Officers’ held a dinner in Melbourne to celebrate the fourth anniversary of the battle, and sent a personal telegram to (then) Viscount Jellicoe that they had drunk his health, but were careful to mention that they had also drunk Admiral Beatty’s health.<sup>34</sup> Such a dispute or debate going on at the top of the service cannot but have had a further detrimental effect on morale. Overall, the man who was famously reported at that battle after two battlecruisers had exploded that not only was there ‘something wrong with our bloody ships’ but to have added *sotto voce* ‘and our bloody system’<sup>35</sup> did nothing to improve the system, at least as far as its officers were concerned.

Beatty was succeeded by Admiral Madden 30 July 1927. Beatty’s succession planning was that Madden should in turn be succeeded by Keyes in 1929.<sup>36</sup> His reason for choosing Madden:

was probably not unconnected with the fact that [he] had been Chief of Staff to Jellicoe during his time in command of the Grand Fleet (1914-1926) and thereafter second-in-command of that fleet; and Beatty was anxious to do all he could to heal the schism which had developed, largely as a result of the controversy over the battle of Jutland, between his own followers and Jellicoe’s.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> AFO 2280/29 *Educational Course for Acting Sub-Lieutenant – Syllabus*.

<sup>34</sup> Diary of (then) Lieutenant-Commander A. Willis (private collection).

<sup>35</sup> Andrew Lambert, *Admirals* p. 360.

<sup>36</sup> Paul G. Halpern (ed.), *The Keyes Papers: Selections from the Private and Official Correspondence of Admiral of the Fleet Baron Keyes of Zeebrugge 1919-1939*, (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1980) p. 251.

<sup>37</sup> Stephen Roskill, *Naval Policy Between the Wars: The Period of Anglo-American Antagonism 1919-1929*, p. 46.

As mentioned earlier when the question of Jellicoe's sacking was discussed, the normal practice was for the First Sea Lord to recommend the name of his relief to the First Lord.<sup>38</sup> Beatty himself had been appointed when already an Admiral of the Fleet, (with seniority of 3 April 1919) having been promoted while in post as Commander in Chief Grand Fleet in the aftermath of victory. At the time he was due to retire there were five Admirals of the Fleet (in order of seniority), himself, Wemyss (his predecessor), Madden, Gough-Calthorpe and de Robeck.<sup>39</sup> However, most First Sea Lords were usually promoted Admiral of the Fleet in post or on retirement, as with Wemyss; it was unusual to hold that rank before taking up the post, so realistically it was the ten Admirals on the Navy List who were likely to be considered. Of those, Admirals Oliver, Brock, Goodenough, Keyes and Sinclair on the basis of past performance were entirely capable of filling the post. Having himself been preferred (by Churchill) for a senior command, that of the Battle Cruiser Squadron, over the heads of more senior officers,<sup>40</sup> picking a successor from further down the Navy List would have been unlikely to have concerned him. Instead, Madden, the next most senior Admiral of the Fleet after himself and Wemyss was chosen. The fact that Madden had not served in the Admiralty since 1907 and had been on half pay – i.e. unemployed - as an Admiral since 1922 and as an Admiral of the Fleet since 1924 cannot be regarded as making him an up to date contender for high office. Why Beatty made the recommendation he did cannot be at this distance be ascertained; it was, at best, an odd choice.<sup>41</sup>

On taking up the appointment Madden had either been very badly briefed by Beatty or was naïve to the point of folly regarding the chairmanship of the Chiefs of Staff Committee. This committee was constituted so that it was normally chaired by the Prime Minister. If he was absent, the chairmanship devolved on one of the heads of service. Beatty had filled that role. Prior to his retirement, he had agreed with the Prime Minister that the chairmanship should rotate, and should pass to the Chief of the Air Staff, Trenchard. Unfortunately Madden would not accept that he should sit on a committee chaired by Trenchard because Trenchard was junior to him. He only gave way after taking the matter to the Prime Minister.<sup>42</sup> Regrettably, in a closed bureaucracy such as the Admiralty, picking a fight in that manner so early in an appointment and

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<sup>38</sup> The appointment then had to be approved by the Sovereign, as with all flag appointments.

<sup>39</sup> *The Navy List* (London: HMSO, December 1926). This date was selected as being the one likely to be close to when the decision about Beatty's successor would have been made.

<sup>40</sup> Stephen Roskill, *Admiral of the Fleet Earl Beatty* p. 58.

<sup>41</sup> Although Keyes had recommended the appointment to Beatty, see Paul G. Halpern (ed.), *The Keyes Papers*, p.186.

losing it would damage Madden's standing for a long time, if not irrevocably. Roskill is slightly more circumspect, saying that 'his personality, unlike Beatty's, was not of the type that impressed itself on everyone who came within his orbit'.<sup>43</sup> Roskill sums up Madden's time as First Sea Lord as being:

not distinguished by any important developments in the fields of material or personnel, and his personal outlook was very conservative on nearly every issue. Yet ... with a Labour Government committed to economy in the fighting services in power, it is difficult to see how any First Sea Lord could have done more.<sup>44</sup>

Madden was, at best, an ineffectual First Sea Lord. He did little for officers; he oversaw more redundancies and pay cuts but introduced no new policies, and, with one exception, no significant changes in officer education, training or career management during his period in office but did. In fairness, study of the Navy Lists shows that during his tenure of office, the Naval Assistant to the Second Sea Lord was established as head of the Second Sea Lord's 'Office for Appointments &c'.<sup>45</sup> This office was the earliest manifestation of a proper management structure for officers, but as initially established with just three officers, it could do little for individuals. That apart, essentially Madden continued the personnel policies, or rather lack of them, of his predecessor. His years were wasted years, but for some reason he has escaped the obloquy that fell to his successor. Thus the Beatty and Madden years were, for the officer corps, years of neglect, even malign neglect. It is difficult to see how officer morale, and their perceptions of the service can have been even maintained during his period of office.

### Discipline: Mutinies

As discipline is an important component of this thesis, the mutinies that took place in the aftermath of the First World War should be mentioned, if only to be put into context. Rowe has convincingly shown that there were significant undercurrents of indiscipline in the Royal Navy during the First World War,<sup>46</sup> and in some respects the underlying causes she identified continued after the war. There were a series of mutinies which were not confined to the navy, they were widespread among the allied forces.

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<sup>42</sup> Stephen Roskill, *Hankey: Man of Secrets: Volume 11 1919-1931*, (London: Collins, 1972) pp. 445-6.

<sup>43</sup> Stephen Roskill, *Naval Policy Between the Wars: The Period of Anglo-American Antagonism 1919-1929*, p. 46.

<sup>44</sup> Stephen Roskill, *Naval Policy Between the Wars: The Period of Reluctant Rearmament 1930-1939*, p. 69.

<sup>45</sup> C.I. Hamilton, *The Making of the Modern Admiralty* p . 281.

They included mutinies in the French Navy,<sup>47</sup> in HMAS *Australia* as well as of British Army units and 6<sup>th</sup> Battalion Royal Marines.<sup>48, 49</sup> There were mutinies in ships at Rosyth and Port Edgar on the Forth among sailors of the First Destroyer Flotilla and in HMS *Vindictive* then at Copenhagen,<sup>50</sup> and in the Mediterranean. The common feature of these mutinies was a feeling that the war was over, and the participants wanted to go home. In many cases, such as the mutiny in HMS *Europa* in May 1919 in the Mediterranean all of the fifty seven stokers and seventy six seamen who mutinied were ‘demobilisable or time expired’.<sup>51</sup> The mutinies cannot be taken as indicative of anything more serious. In particular senior officers were well aware of the underlying problem, and, in at least one case, anticipating problems, had recommended preventive remedies before the event.<sup>52</sup>

### Personnel matters: Officer Education and Training

Officer education had stopped almost totally during the First World War (apart from those cadets still at Osborne) and training was significantly cut back. For Special Entry cadets, 16-25 weeks training before being sent to the fleet ‘was found to be quite adequate’ instead of the planned eighteen months, indeed they were better prepared than those Dartmouth cadets who had gone straight to sea without any naval training.<sup>53</sup> However once at sea, such was the shortage of officers, even cadets were employed as officers, and anything other than ‘on the job’ training virtually ceased.<sup>54</sup> In 1917, it was recognised that a large group of midshipmen now needed to be examined if they were to qualify to be lieutenants.<sup>55</sup> The short term solution adopted was that some of the

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<sup>46</sup> Laura Rowe, ‘At the sign of the foul anchor: Discipline and Morale in the Royal Navy during the First World War’ Unpublished PhD Thesis, Kings College, London, 2008.

<sup>47</sup> Phillipe Masson, ‘The French Naval Mutinies 1919’ in Christopher M. Bell, Bruce A. Elleman (eds) *Naval Mutinies of the Twentieth Century: An International Perspective* (London: Frank Cass, 2003) pp.106-22.

<sup>48</sup> David Stevens ‘The HMAS *Australia* Mutiny 1919’ in Christopher M. Bell, Bruce A. Elleman (eds) *Naval Mutinies of the Twentieth Century: An International Perspective* (London: Frank Cass, 2003) pp.123-44.

<sup>49</sup> Stephen Roskill. *Naval Policy Between the Wars: The Period of Anglo-American Antagonism 1919-1929*. p. 142.

<sup>50</sup> Roskill makes no mention of these.

<sup>51</sup> Paul Halpern (ed.), *The Mediterranean Fleet, 1919-1929* (Farnham: Ashgate/Navy Records Society, 2011) p.75.

<sup>52</sup> Paul Halpern (ed.), *The Mediterranean Fleet, 1919-1929* p.75, fn 2.

<sup>53</sup> John H. Beattie, *The Churchill Scheme: The Royal Navy Special Entry Cadet Scheme 1913 – 1955*, (Private publication, 2010) p. 29.

<sup>54</sup> Richard Hallam and Mark Beynon (eds), *Scrimgeour’s Small Scribbling Diary 1914 – 1916: The Truly Astonishing Wartime Diary and Letters of an Edwardian Gentleman, Naval Officer, Boy and Son*, (London: Conway, 2009) p. 33.

<sup>55</sup> AWO 1410/17 *Examination of Midshipmen for the rank of Lieutenant*.

training requirements were formally suspended for the duration of hostilities to allow them to be promoted.<sup>56</sup> At the end of the war the Admiralty was obviously conscious that its junior officer's education had suffered and instituted a course of two terms duration at Cambridge University (various colleges) whose:

primary object ... is to bring all the Officers, who have missed very different amounts of their education, up to the level requisite for following [*sic*] the subsequent short course for the rank of Lieutenant ...

The final examination will not include the Optional Subjects [*sic*], but lecturers will report generally on the work of the Officers, bringing any special cases to the notice of the Board of the Admiralty.<sup>57</sup>

The course was primarily intended to complete their education in 'Mathematics, Navigation, Physics, Electricity and Mechanics' but there were in addition a series of optional courses divided into two sections, essentially Humanities and Science. Officers could choose one of a plethora of courses in each section, ranging from English literature to modern history and the history of astronomy to 'Savages Past and Present' (which from the contents of the published syllabus would probably now be titled 'Evolution and Anthropology'). It was a very liberal syllabus; for example the first optional course listed was 'English Literature':

Novels and Novelists. From Richardson, Smollett, Fielding, Sterne to the present day.

Poets and Poetry. From Sidney and Spenser to Masfield and Sassoon.

Drama and Dramatists. From Christopher Marlowe to Bernard Shaw.<sup>58</sup>

It will be remembered that Sassoon was to become regarded as one of the leading anti-war poets and George Bernard Shaw was an ardent socialist and liberal thinker. However, even a liberal course such as this was not universally well received; Kipling was moved to write:

"OH, SHOW *me how a rose can shut and be a bud again!*" [*sic*]  
Nay, watch my Lords of the Admiralty, for they have the work in train,  
They have taken the men that were careless lads at Dartmouth in 'Fourteen  
And entered them at landward schools as though no war had been.

...<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>56</sup> AWO 3176/17 *Midshipmen's Certificates (Form E190)* There is an example at Appendix D of an individuals training documentation annotated to show that his training was suspended.

<sup>57</sup> AWO 929/19 *Course at Cambridge for Acting Lieutenants and Sub-Lieutenants*. This AWO originated from the 'CW' section, without mention of 'DTSD', i.e. Richmond, who one might have been expected to be involved. However, Barry Hunt ascribes the origins of the course to Richmond, but gives no supporting reference, see Barry D. Hunt, *Sailor-Scholar: Admiral Sir Herbert Richmond 1871-1946*, (Waterloo, Ontario: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1982) p.96.

<sup>58</sup> AWO 929/19 *Course at Cambridge for Acting Lieutenants and Sub-Lieutenants* .

<sup>59</sup> Rudyard Kipling *The Scholars* 1919. (<http://www.poetryloverspage.com/poets/kipling/scholars.html> [accessed 29 August 2012])

He goes on in his inimitable style to suggest that they had been educated by war, and that going back to school was unnecessary.

Officers who attended the course were examined at the end of the two terms and their results were graded, First, Second, Third, Pass or fail. The first course, which finished in June 1919 was attended by 370 officers. The results were published in an order of merit, 93 (25%) of those attending were awarded First Class certificates.<sup>60</sup> There were further courses finishing in March 1920 (148 officers),<sup>61</sup> August 1920 (147 officers),<sup>62</sup> March 1921 (108 officers),<sup>63</sup> and August 1922 (149 officers).<sup>64</sup> Then the courses ceased, having served their stated purpose, to complete the education of those young officers whose education had been curtailed by the war. This was an innovative manner of addressing the problem, and actually appears to have inspired the only innovation in officer education and training for most of the 1920s. After the Cambridge course ceased, the sub lieutenants' courses included a new course at the Royal Naval College, Greenwich of two terms comprising, mathematics, applied mechanics, physics, chemistry, English, History and French; obviously derived from the Cambridge course that it replaced. There was a further change in 1929. Now added to the Greenwich course was an 'Introductory War Course' comprising a lecture a week for the two terms. Thus this course (or more properly a module) comprised 23 lectures, which (with Beatty now safely retired) included two on the Battle of Jutland.<sup>65</sup>

Thus from the end of the Cambridge course and the introduction of the Greenwich course until the barest glimmering of change described above in 1929, officer education and training throughout the 1920s ossified. It was largely unchanged and unchanging; the syllabuses for the various phases of education and training did not change from 1921 for a decade.

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<sup>60</sup> AWO 2855/19 *Cambridge Course – Results.*

<sup>61</sup> AWO 1370/20 *Cambridge Course – Results.*

<sup>62</sup> AWO 2959/20 *Cambridge Course – Results.*

<sup>63</sup> AWO 915/21 *Cambridge Course – Results.*

<sup>64</sup> AWO 2591/22 *Cambridge Course – Results.*

<sup>65</sup> AFO 2280/29 *Educational Course for Acting Sub-Lieutenants.*



## Personnel matters: becoming an officer from the lower deck<sup>66</sup>

Despite the fact that during the period under consideration that it produced remarkably few officers, commissioning from the lower deck is again considered at some length because of its ultimate importance.

After the war, as the fleet was reduced in size there was an obvious need to reduce the number of officers. Preparations for demobilisation commenced as early as July 1918.<sup>67</sup> Despite this, in September of that year the Admiralty made ‘improvements with regard to the promotion and conditions of service of commissioned warrant officers and warrant officers of the Naval Service’ stating that ‘the number of Officers promoted to commissioned rank will in future be 8 per cent of the total numbers....this is double that allowed before the war’. It further allowed promotion to commander (a selective promotion for general list officers) ‘the number allowed will be 1 per cent of the total’.<sup>68</sup> A later AWO laid down that half of these promotions i.e. to 4 % of the total officer corps, would be reserved for younger officers.<sup>69</sup> This was a more significant change than it might at first appear. One of the problems with the Mate system had been that candidates were selected when older, and therefore ran out of time before they could achieve higher rank.

The AWO also set out that warrant officers would become ‘commissioned warrant officers’,<sup>70</sup> after ten years, but that this could, as previously, be ‘granted earlier at the discretion of the Admiralty for war, or other distinguished service.’ It set out the process and future promotion for commissioned warrant officers, viz; by examination for lieutenant, followed by promotion by selection, with promotion to lieutenant commander after eight years, as with general list officers. The same AWO announced the promotion of thirty one executive warrant officers to lieutenant.

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<sup>66</sup> Much information in this section is drawn from the file in the National Archive ADM 116/1734. Some key documents contained within it are undated and are obviously not correctly temporally ordered. In places what follows represents the author’s interpretation of the correct sequence of the documents.

<sup>67</sup> AWO 2325/18 *Demobilisation of Personnel of the Naval Service on Cessation of Hostilities – Outline of Principles*.

<sup>68</sup> AWO 2945/18 *Commissioned Warrant and Warrant Officers – Promotion etc.*

<sup>69</sup> AWO 182/19 *Commissioned Warrant Officers – Promotion to Lieutenant*.

<sup>70</sup> An odd description, Warrant Officers held their rank by virtue of an Admiralty Warrant, Commissioned Officers by authority of the King’s Commission. Presumably the title actually meant Commissioned former warrant officers.

Once the post-war demobilisation was under way, arrangements for lieutenant commanders promoted from warrant officer to be promoted commander on retirement were announced,<sup>71</sup> but there was a change of tone later in the year, when it was announced that ‘Lieutenant Commanders ... who have been promoted from warrant rank are not eligible for the rank of Commander on reverting to the retired list’.<sup>72</sup> As there cannot have been very many officers who fell into this category, it cannot have produced significant financial savings, but must have occasioned ill-feeling as, while it deprived those few officers of the increased pension to which they would otherwise have been entitled, the rest of the officer corps would have seen and noted this mean spirited action. In retrospect, this marks the point at which executive branch promotion from the lower deck effectively ceased for fifteen years, but the process by which this happened is worthy of examination.

In a letter dated 26 February 1918,<sup>73</sup> Rear Admiral W.E. Goodenough, then Rear Admiral, Second Battle Squadron (RA2BS), wrote to ‘The Commander – in – Chief, H.M. Ships and Vessels, GRAND FLEET’ (the full title of the post then held by Admiral Beatty) forwarding a report by a ‘Committee on the training of midshipman’, which had been set up by Beatty in November 1917. As well as addressing the concern that there was a shortage of officers, the committee attempted to look longer term. The report was not signed by two members; Engineer Commander W. R. Parnall of HMS *Queen Elizabeth* who disagreed with some of the recommendations regarding engineering training and Captain H.W. Richmond, commanding officer of HMS *Conqueror* who submitted a sixteen page minority report which Admiral Beatty then forwarded with the (shorter) report itself to the Secretary of the Admiralty for consideration by the Board.

The bulk of the majority report is not relevant to this chapter. However, it noted that ‘much more can be made of the excellent material on the lower deck’ and effectively recommended two streams of promotion, firstly for the younger man who had the potential to reach the highest ranks, the second for older ‘with some limitations’. The Committee felt that the former should be withdrawn from the lower

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<sup>71</sup> AWO 283/19 *Lieutenant Commanders promoted from Warrant Rank – Promotion to Commander on Retirement.*

<sup>72</sup> AWO 1253/19 *Lieutenant Commanders Promoted from Warrant Rank – Rank of Commander on Retirement.*

<sup>73</sup> ADM 116/1734 *Report on examination of boys for early advancement. Proposal to consider the best of the candidates for Commissions &c.*

deck and sea service for twelve months for 'general education' and then sit the Special Entry examination. With regard to the older group, they recommended that more lieutenants' commissions should be given to warrant officers.

The members of the committee were serving at sea and had served at sea for much of the war. It is difficult to conceive that they would have made such recommendations if the quality of the officers promoted from the lower deck under the Mates scheme was in any way wanting. However, Captain Richmond disagreed with almost every recommendation of the majority report. His major thrusts were concerning the importance of general education, the need to separate engineering from the general list, his preference for 'Special Entry' as a source of officers and the undesirability of lower deck commissions. As to the latter, his criticism of the majority report in large part attacked arguments not actually made in that report. While he accepted that there would be some boys of 'exceptional attainments, capable, if given opportunity, of being developed', he felt the percentage to be small 'perhaps one or two per thousand' and concluded that 'The principal supply from the lower deck should be by the Mate system'.

Roskill makes no mention of the Richmond minority report, concentrating on the majority recommendation, stating 'However the Second Sea Lord, Vice-Admiral H.L. Heath, **would have none of it**, [author's emphasis] declaring that "to be a good officer it is necessary to be a gentleman"'. Roskill continued:

In spite of this douche of cold water, Admiral Ley [then Director of Training and Staff Duties] persisted, and a year later he submitted a detailed scheme to allow suitable lower deck candidates to join the 'Special Entry Cadets'.<sup>74</sup>

This very selective quote by Admiral Heath totally misrepresents his actual position set out in a memorandum dated 16 January 1918 (quoted here at some length):

However, the proposition is now seriously put forward that boys from training ships should pass to the quarter deck [i.e. become officers], by Naval Cadet, Midshipman, etc, etc.

I can see no harm in this proposal; it is but a development of promotion through Mate.

I am absolutely against the proposal to make the boys go through and remain on the lower deck until he is 18 ½. ... If these boys are expected to become good officers, the sooner they are separated the better. Nor do I see the

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<sup>74</sup> Stephen Roskill, *Naval Policy between the Wars: The Period of Anglo-American Antagonism 1919-1929* p.121.

need for a separate training establishment ... they should mix with the others as soon as possible.

The plan is proposed as a “War Measure” ... [it] must be adopted as a permanency ... these boys should replace a number of [Special Entry cadets].

Finally, I must enter a word of warning on the danger of extending these entrants too far. To be a good officer, it is necessary also to be a gentleman. We have the example of the French Navy and others to warn us against too rapid a lowering of the officer class.<sup>75</sup>

He went on to say that the matter needed ‘careful consideration’ and should not be rushed, but concluded that ‘the approval of the principle should be made public.’

At the time for such as Admiral Heath, a product of the Victorian era, being a gentleman implied a system of values, not of birth. These included cheerful submission to superiors; self-respect; independence of character; kindness and protection of the weak; readiness to forgive offence; desire to conciliate the differences of others; and unflinching truthfulness. Roskill must have known this, and his selective quotation is misleading, as can be seen when the sentence is put in its original context. Unfortunately, his tendentious interpretation has been repeated many times, and regrettably is now accepted as fact. At this distance in time, it can only be speculation to wonder why Roskill makes no mention of Richmond’s remarks that only one to two per thousand ratings would be suitable to be officers and thereby shifted the ‘blame’ for opposing lower deck commissioning onto Heath.

Admiral Ley accepted the Second Sea Lord’s views, and set out proposals to take further opinions on practical aspects. On 24 January Captain G. R. Mansell MVO commanding at Royal Naval College Keyham (then the college for Special Entry cadets) wrote confidentially to Admiral Ley following a visit to Keyham by one Chief Instructor Parrish who had apparently briefed him regarding a proposal to grant 6 cadetships to lower deck boys; specifically with regard to how and where they should be trained. The substance of Mansell’s letter is a fascinating insight:

I presume that the entering of the 6 lower deck boys, being a new and democratic measure, will be widely mentioned in the papers, and if they are to come here that will also be emphasized [*sic*] – that is certainly not going to help the lecturer in his task.

One may call people snobs for not sending their boys here as special entry if the other boys come as well ...

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<sup>75</sup>ADM 116/1734 *Report on examination of boys for early advancement.*

... one of our difficulties has been to stop [the cadets] going about with girls not of their own class – we have practically no cases of it now, but should the Lower Deck boys come, the ground is cut from under our feet, if the Special Entry Cadet says the girl was introduced by the Lower Deck Cadet.<sup>76</sup>

However, despite Roskill's stating that Ley then took the matter forward over a year, he was succeeded in April 1918 as Director of Training and Staff Duties (DTSD) by Captain Herbert Richmond. Indeed it would appear that Ley was relieved because he had 'broken down in health & won't return to the Training Division',<sup>77</sup> and despite Roskill's assertion, scrutiny of Navy Lists shows Rear Admiral Ley to be without an appointment and therefore presumably on half-pay after relinquishing the post as DTSD.<sup>78</sup> The author has been unable to find the 'detailed scheme' apparently submitted by Admiral Ley, and finds it hard to believe that he would have continued work on it and submitted it after his relief as Director of Training and Staff duties, particularly if unwell.

As Director of Training and Staff Duties Richmond was now in the enviable position of being the Admiralty officer responsible for overseeing the staffing of both Goodenough's paper and his own - staffing being the process in a headquarters such as the Admiralty by which a staff officer researches the background to the submission and drafts his superior's response. Richmond did so 25 April, submitting a resume of the position, insisting that educational standards should not be lowered and with one addition that any boys put up for commissions would have 'guarantees that the expenses would be afforded'. As both Osborne/Dartmouth and Special Entry cadets were funded by their parents, this would be a significant potential additional hurdle for those from the lower deck. Either the necessary funding would have to be found within a naval budget that would inevitably be subject to post-war reductions, or from elsewhere. Presumably Richmond was not expecting the Boy Seaman's families to fund their offspring.

The First Lord (Sir Eric Geddes) commented on the report without expressing a view on lower deck commissions, nor did the First Sea Lord (Wemyss). There followed a letter dated 10 June 1918 which was classified 'SECRET'. (Fig. 14) This was distributed to most if not all Commanding Flag Officers 10 June 'BY COMMAND OF

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<sup>76</sup> ADM 116/1734 *Report on examination of boys for early advancement.* .

<sup>77</sup> Arthur J. Marder, *Portrait of an Admiral: The Life and Papers of Sir Herbert Richmond*, (London: Johnathan Cape, 1952) p. 303.

<sup>78</sup> He lived until 1946.

THEIR LORDSHIPS',<sup>79</sup> (but not apparently distributed within the Admiralty; specifically DTSD is not mentioned on the distribution list (the list of addressees) on the letter itself). The letter referred to '7 Ordinary Seamen and boys' having come before the Special Entry Cadet interview committee. All were adjudged to have failed 'but the two best were selected to take the competitive examination'. The letter expressed concern that 'much dissatisfaction is bound to ensue if all candidates from this source are rejected. The good faith of the Admiralty will be called in question'. The letter went on to note that none of the candidates knew any foreign language or Latin<sup>80</sup> and requested that Flag Officers should 'bring to the personal and confidential notice ... the imperative necessity of using the greatest discretion in forwarding the names of candidates.'

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<sup>79</sup>ADM 116/1734 *Report on examination of boys for early advancement*. Shown at Fig.14.

<sup>80</sup> The question of Latin is discussed in an earlier chapter.

10th June, 1918.

C. W.

S E C R E T

I am to acquaint you that 7 Ordinary Seamen and Boys from the Fleet have recently come before the Interviewing Committee for "Special Entry" Naval Cadetships.

2. The Committee, after very careful deliberation, and with every desire to discover reasons for selecting one or more candidates, were unable to consider any of them really suitable, but the two best have been selected to take the competitive examination.

3. As the acceptance of candidates for Cadetships from the Lower Deck is an entirely new procedure, and is doubtless watched with anxious interest by the Lower Deck and its supporters, much dissatisfaction is bound to ensue if all candidates from this source are rejected. The good faith of the Admiralty will be called in question.

4. Flag Officers are, therefore, requested to bring to the personal and confidential notice of the Captains serving under them the imperative necessity of using the greatest discretion in forwarding the names of candidates. In the first place, it is essential, as much for their own sakes as for that of their prospective messmates, that the boys should be of such a class that they can at least readily assimilate themselves to their new social and Service surroundings. In the second place, they should possess sufficient educational qualifications to ensure a reasonable chance of passing the examination. This is particularly necessary in the case of knowledge of a foreign language,

5. None of the seven candidates referred to had, until a very short time before the interview, received any instruction in or had any knowledge of a foreign language, or of Latin. Captains should realize that the very object of nominations from the Lower Deck is frustrated if unsuitable candidates are recommended, who must inevitably fail either on interview or examination, and the greatest care should be exercised in putting forward recommendations.

BY COMMAND OF THEIR LORDSHIPS.

*Charles Walker*Distribution:-

C. in C. The Nore	V.A.C. Battle Cruiser Force
do Portsmouth	R.A.C. 1st Batt. Cru. Squad.
do Devonport	R.A.C. 2nd Batt. Cru. Squad.
V. A. East Coast of England.	R.A.C. 2nd Light Cru. Squad.
C. in C. Coast of Ireland.	R.A.C. 3rd Light Cru. Squad.
do Coast of Scotland.	R.A.C. 6th Light Cru. Squad.
do Grand Fleet	V.A. Light Cruiser Force.
A. C. 1st Battle Squadron.	R.A.C. 2nd Cruiser Squad.
V.A.C. 2nd do	Cdre. Commanding, 4th Light Cru. Squad.
V.A.C. 4th do	do 7th do
V.A.C. 5th do	V.A. Dover Patrol. A. C. Aircraft.
Cdre. 1st Lt. Br. Sqdn.	S.N.O. Harwich. Commodore (F).
	R.A.C. Harwich Force.

Fig. 14. Letter from ADM 116/1734

Since the letter twice in five paragraphs suggested that recipients should think very carefully before putting lower deck candidates forward for commissioning, it is

difficult to escape the conclusion that their Lordships were indicating that they did not wish it to happen. While it emanates from the CW section and was signed by a civil servant (no rank is appended to the signature) it is difficult to know who was the author of the letter. It does not reflect the previously recorded views of Admiral Heath, the Second Sea Lord. It was apparently sent at the direction of the Board, but as Heath had already stated his views (see above), it was presumably written and sent by either or both the First Lord and First Sea Lord.

Richmond in a diary entry dated 6 July 1918,<sup>81</sup> i.e. well after the letter referred to above, records ‘the Goodenough report which I sent in with my remarks and request for decision in April, is still undealt with’.<sup>82</sup> Richmond returned to the matter in a minute to the First Sea Lord in August, noting that ‘some boys have been sent up for interview, and some have sat for the examination for entrance to Keyham’ he asked for a settled policy on lower deck commissioning. A stinging rebuke by the First Sea Lord followed; Richmond was told that ‘the policy has already been laid down and a confidential order issued to flag officers on the subject. I suggest that D.T.S.D. obtain the relevant papers’. This would not only be a public humiliation suggesting that a senior officer was not doing his job properly, but also possibly unfair as he appears to have been excluded from the distribution of the letter sent to Flag Officers.<sup>83</sup> The Second Sea Lord Admiral Heath may not himself have been in agreement with the letter as he subsequently spelt out his final policy on the matter, which was significantly different from his earlier position:

Our future policy on this matter is to place no obstacles in the way of really [*sic*] suitable candidates, but on the other hand to afford no special facilities or encouragement.<sup>84</sup>

He noted that of fifteen candidates, only two had succeeded in becoming midshipmen, one had passed out 3<sup>rd</sup> from Keyham, and one 35<sup>th</sup>. A memorandum by the

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<sup>81</sup> Arthur J Marder, *Portrait of an Admiral* p. 314.

<sup>82</sup> He was not the only one to remark on the inefficiency of the Admiralty during this period. Chatfield (a later First Sea Lord) writing of his period as Fourth Sea Lord 1919-1920 said ‘Once it left an office, a paper might disappear into the limbo. Some clerk in some department might shelve it for three or four months. I found a paper of some importance which had been a year going round and was still unsettled’. See Admiral of the Fleet the Lord Chatfield PC GCB OM etc, *The Navy and Defence*, (London: William Heinmann Ltd, 1942) p.186.

<sup>83</sup> Unfortunately the files in the National Archive do not comprise complete naval ‘packs’. Not only are the minute sheets in most cases missing, but the original cover which would have given the original distribution. Thus it can only be inferred that Richmond was not sent the papers in the first place.

<sup>84</sup> ADM 116/1734 *Report on examination of boys for early advancement.*



First Lord then drew the various comments together and while no formal decision is recorded, appears to have closed the matter.

While the pressures of a shortage of officers in the latter part of the war had been a problem, after the armistice the problem was how to deal with a surplus as the fleet contracted. Nonetheless it is difficult to escape the conclusion that there were those who had set their faces against lower deck commissions. Roskill in referring to the Mates scheme in the 1920s describes it as ‘unlamented’, but by whom he does not say.<sup>85</sup> The figures suggest that, after the end of the war, the more appropriate term for what would appear to have been an effective scheme, might be ‘unused’. The whole issue of promotion from the lower deck was effectively dead until 1930. Roskill’s interpretation of this whole episode is, at best, selective and unreliable, at worst totally misleading. His opinion of the scheme should be viewed in that context.

While Admiral of the Fleet Earl Beatty relieved Wemyss as First Sea Lord 1 November 1919 this appears to have led to no change in policy, surprisingly as it was Beatty had set up the Goodenough committee, and forwarded its report (and Richmond’s minority report) to the Admiralty in the first place.

#### The Special Entry or Dartmouth debate

The ‘Special Entry’ scheme, as was described earlier, came into existence shortly before the First World War. While, during the war the officers the scheme produced were accepted in the service, once the war was over there was a debate as to which entry scheme produced the better officer. Richmond in his minority report discussed earlier recommended that ‘the public schools should be the main source of supply [of officer cadets] and that no further entries should be made through Osborne and Dartmouth’.<sup>86</sup> The debate continued unresolved throughout the period, largely because there was no readily available way of determining which were better. Nor would there be any way of doing so for very many years until representative groups could be compared later after a significant period of service or at the end of their careers. As with any debate when there could not be a ready answer, arguments tended to be tendentious and even prejudiced. A good example was that of Roger Keyes, who in 1922 as Deputy Chief of

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<sup>85</sup> Stephen Roskill, *Naval Policy between the Wars: The Period of Reluctant Rearmament 1930-1939*, (London: Collins) 1976, p.191.

the Naval Staff argued or rather set out a series of unsubstantiated facts. He felt that Dartmouth now gave ‘a sound public school education’ accepting that the ‘actual naval training is very small’ while ‘no doubt a considerably more expensive method of obtaining Officers than through the Public Schools’ because it was ‘very doubtful ... if the right type of boys can be obtained from [public schools]’. In any event he felt that ‘the direct entries now at sea appear ... to have been largely from schools which cannot possibly be regarded as Public Schools’.<sup>87</sup> This is echoed, albeit writing at a much later date by Chatfield (who at the time Keyes was writing was Assistant Chief of the Naval Staff, ACNS), who was also of the opinion that the Dartmouth system was better than the ‘Direct entry’ system. His opinion is important, because he was to be First Sea Lord for most of the 1930s. Writing in 1942 Chatfield expressed his views on entry to Dartmouth:

There has of course always been some political objection to [Dartmouth], as, it was then considered, the “privileged classes” had special opportunities at the State expense to train their sons as naval officers. I do not think that can be strongly argued now, for the entry is so very open; as long as a lad can speak the English language and is likely to be a leader, as opposed to a mere brainy lad, he has a proper chance of being selected to go to Dartmouth.<sup>88</sup>

This rather ignored the fact that except in very rare circumstances, his parents would still have to pay the fees which, as has been shown, were broadly similar to those of a public school. Like the Ritz hotel, Dartmouth was apparently open to all.<sup>89</sup>

Despite the expansion of the Special Entry scheme in the latter part of his time as First Sea Lord, Chatfield remained of the opinion that the Dartmouth system produced a better officer. In a rather tendentious argument he wrote:

Comparing the Dartmouth and public school entries...by taking a volunteer at thirteen and a half years of age, who has to pass the excellent interview board ... you have a fair chance of obtaining some of the country’s most intelligent lads and training them to a service career ... His life at sea, with all its daily responsibilities in boats or on watch, will soon give him the open independent character for which the sailor is well known.

In contrast the special entry cadet, whose training at sea was nearly identical to the Dartmouth cadet:

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<sup>86</sup> ADM 116/1734 *Report on examination of boys for early advancement*.

<sup>87</sup> ADM 167/86 Minute 2398/22 dated 3.4.22 initialled ‘RK’.

<sup>88</sup> Admiral of the Fleet Lord Chatfield PC GCB OM Etc, *The Navy and Defence*, (London & Toronto: William Heinmann, 1942) p.252.

grows up at his school a more independent individual, and finds it sometimes difficult at first, to submerge his individuality in the ship's life.<sup>90</sup>

It is difficult to entirely understand his reasoning; he writes admiringly of 'an open independent character' while then decrying 'independent individual[s]'. A further stage of Chatfield's reasoning is telling, suggesting that his was a social rather than professional judgement:

actually few public school cadets come from famous public schools, certainly not more than ten per cent; they mainly come from the smaller and less well known, though also excellent and the grammar schools.

Until 1919 the schools contributing numerically the most cadets to the 'Special Entry' were Haileybury, Eton, Charterhouse, Bedford, Dulwich, Malvern, Rugby, Repton and Wellington.<sup>91</sup> This changed after the war. A paper taken by the Admiralty Board in 1932 is probably Chatfield's source, and is much as he suggests. The cadets largely came from 'minor' public schools, whose fees would have been lower than those better known.<sup>92</sup> However, and most interestingly, the same paper also gives cadets' fathers occupation. A significant proportion is recorded as being the sons of navy or army officers. Cadets from the famous or 'major' public schools tended to be sons of professionals or those in 'trade'. It is difficult to escape the conclusion that Chatfield was either being selective to be tendentious, or believed that officer stock did not breed true and must oft times be refreshed with the blood of the upper or moneyed classes. Such evidence as there was, did not accord with his view. As early as 1918 Goodenough's committee majority report said 'the Osborne-Dartmouth boys compare unfavourably with the public school boys', and Richmond in his otherwise largely dissenting minority report, said 'It is not disputed that the Public School trained boys prove as good as those from Dartmouth. Many opinions have been given that they are better.'<sup>93</sup>

Despite this, there were those such as Keyes quoted above who wished to cease the Special Entry scheme in the immediate aftermath of the war. Whether the arguments

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<sup>89</sup> Christopher M. Bell, 'The King's English and the Security of the Empire: Class, Social Mobility, and Democratization in the British Naval Officer Corps, 1918-1939' *Journal of British Studies* 48 (July 2009) pp. 695-716.

<sup>90</sup> Admiral of the Fleet Lord Chatfield PC GCB OM Etc, *The Navy and Defence*, p.253.

<sup>91</sup> Almost a roll call of what Chatfield would probably have regarded as the 'famous' public schools, see Lieutenant W.S. Galpin R.N., *From Public School to Navy. An account of the special entry scheme* (Plymouth: Underhill, 1919) pp. 119-22.

<sup>92</sup> ADM 116/2896 Appendix B to enclosure to Board Secretary's memorandum for the Board of Admiralty 17<sup>th</sup> February 1932.

put forward that the Dartmouth stream was more certain to produce the required numbers were tendentious or a realistic or not, financial pressures to close Dartmouth and instead recruit all officers at an older age led to a full examination by a committee headed by Vice Admiral Stanley of the costs of running Dartmouth which concluded that it offered value for money.<sup>94</sup>

Over a decade later when the Captain of Dartmouth sought the opinion of ships Commanding Officers responsible for the next stage of training, the majority view was that the direct entry cadets performed better as midshipmen, which in the view of one direct entry cadet was not surprising,<sup>95</sup> as entry, by the Civil Service examination was sought after and very highly competitive:

As midshipmen, my experience is that the special entry cadets have more initiative and confidence than Dartmouth cadets ... The Dartmouth system does tend to produce an unimaginative type ... imbued with the idea that the Navy is perfect in all respects & that to criticise is 'not done' and not necessary.<sup>96</sup>

In reality, with the personnel management tools then available, the debate could not then be resolved. By the end of the Second World War, retrospective examination of the performance of the two cadet streams, measured by their performance against the navy's own criteria, selective promotion, would be possible. A statistical assessment has been carried out, based on the personnel records of officers and the results are presented in the conclusion to this thesis.

### Engineering officers

The Royal Navy immediately prior to the First World War recognised engineering as being a part of the executive branch. It followed that engineering officers trained after the Fisher-Selborne reforms would have had the same training as other executive officers up until becoming a lieutenant and could therefore aspire to command a ship when, as commanders or captains, they left their specialist duties. While they were soon to cease to be members of the executive branch and thus no concern of this thesis, the manner of their going is illustrative of the poor management of the officer corps which

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<sup>93</sup> ADM 116/1734. *Report on examination of boys for early advancement.*

<sup>94</sup> *Report of the Committee on the Cost of Training Cadets at Dartmouth College [sic]* 28 January 1922 (Britannia Archive, BRNC).

<sup>95</sup> Interview Captain SMW Farquharson-Roberts OBE April 2008.

<sup>96</sup> Undated letter by Lieutenant Commander E. Tyndale Cooper in Captain Royal Naval College Dartmouth miscellaneous correspondence pack containing responses from Fleet for feed back on cadets performance at sea 1932. (Britannia Archive, BRNC).

inevitably contributed to the decline in morale which was the major feature of the descent to the nadir of the executive branch and indeed of the whole service.

The Goodenough committee whose recommendations on commissioning from the lower deck were discussed earlier also made recommendations with regard to engineering training, in particular early specialisation. They recommended that officers who chose to specialise as engineers would not receive the full training (i.e. as executive officers) given to the officers who did not elect to be engineers. Taken to its logical conclusion, engineering would become a separate branch, which is what eventually happened. It will be remembered that the engineering officer on the committee, Commander Parnall, was unable to sign the report, an early indicator of the feelings that the changes that were to follow were to cause. Richmond in his minority report and subsequently when he had moved to the Admiralty as DTSD argued that cadets and midshipmen were being taught too much engineering 'The war has disclosed – so far as I know – no cases in which an intimate knowledge of engineering has proved essential or its lack has led to a mishap. Thus there is prima facie evidence that too much time has been devoted to the subject'.<sup>97</sup>

The stage had been set for major changes in the career path for engineers. The first stage of the splitting off of engineers was announced in 1918. Those who specialised as sub lieutenants would 'forego all future right of reversion to deck duties and of military command.' Crucially those who had 'obtained one year's experience as a Lieutenant' and then opted for engineering training would:

on attaining between 7½ and 9 years [*sic*] seniority as Lieutenants, they will be allowed the option of reverting to deck duties. ... If he does not exercise the option to revert to deck duties he will from that time give up military command and remain as an Officer (E) throughout his service career.<sup>98</sup>

An underlying problem which does not seem to have been noticed until quite late on was becoming evident. The qualifying examination in engineering for midshipmen was now voluntary. In May 1920, twenty five midshipmen elected to take the examination. None achieved a first class pass and six failed the examination.<sup>99</sup> The conclusion that has to be drawn is that there were insufficient young men joining the

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<sup>97</sup> ADM 116/1734. *Report on examination of boys for early advancement.*

<sup>98</sup> AWO 4047/18 *Engineering – Officers specialising in.*

<sup>99</sup> AWO 2706/20 *Midshipmen – Examination for Rank of Lieutenant, May 1920- Voluntary (E) – Results.*

navy as officers who wanted to be engineers, and that many of those with an interest in engineering were not good enough to be so.

A further AFO re-iterated the then current position; midshipmen who had done: one-third or one-eighth of their time as Midshipmen on (E) may volunteer to specialize definitely in (E) ... Midshipmen who volunteered to do one-third of their time as Midshipmen on (E) are not automatically appointed to specialize definitely in (E).<sup>100</sup>

The next development was in 1922. Because 'there is a definite distinction between those who are to be trained in the science of naval war and strategical and tactical methods of fighting and those who deal with the design, upkeep and maintenance of engineering ... final separation of the branches is essential'.<sup>101</sup> The completely revised scheme of training, career path and promotion for engineering officers was set out – training would now take place at Royal Naval College Keyham, which until then had trained Special Entry cadets. Interestingly, the matter of pay was dealt with very near the end of what was an unusually long AWO. Officers would become eligible for the new engineering pay scale either on being appointed to the advanced engineering course, or on award of their Engine Room Watchkeeping Certificates. This would be a significant pay rise; in 1924 the daily pay of a sub-lieutenant (E) was £0.13s.0d (£237.5s.0d annually) compared with £0.10s.0d (£182.10s.0d annually) for an executive sub lieutenant, and this differential was maintained on subsequent promotions.<sup>102</sup>

While the change in the officers' structure was implemented almost immediately, a second change was also to take place '[f]rom 1927 onwards, the torpedo specialist Officers will be relieved gradually from their present responsibilities in connection with the electrical equipment'.<sup>103</sup> Up until this time responsibility for electrical equipment including upkeep and maintenance etc had fallen to the (T) branch of the Executive. The AWO continued:

My Lords are of the opinion that the time has arrived for arranging gradually to transfer the duties of the maintenance of the electrical installations of H.M. Ships from the Torpedo Specialists to the Engineering Branch. The maintenance

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<sup>100</sup> AWO 3495/20 *Engineering – Officers Specializing in.*

<sup>101</sup> AWO 3333/22 *Engineering – New Scheme of Training for Specialisation of Officers.*

<sup>102</sup> AFO 1701/24 *Officers' pay in 1924 – Revision of Rates.*

<sup>103</sup> AWO 334/22 *Officers' Torpedo and Electrical Duties – Future Organisation.*

of the electrical machinery is a similar function to that of other machinery on board ship and as such it is properly not the province of the Executive Officer.<sup>104</sup>

The culmination of this series of changes came in November 1925, still known to this day as ‘The Great Betrayal’.<sup>105</sup> This went much further than any previous change, and re-drew the officer structure. From henceforth the term ‘Executive Officer’, would only include officers and warrant officers and ‘Officers promoted therefrom’.<sup>106</sup> It went on to withdraw both the right to succeed to command of a ship that heretofore had been expressly permitted, but now even the right of Engineer officers to exercise military command. From henceforward they could only give orders to their own officers and ratings.

The AFO continued that ‘It has also been decided that all (E) Officers of the rank of Midshipman and upwards are in future to wear the purple distinction cloth ... A more distinctive shade of purple is to be used’. The distinction cloth was worn between the gold rings used to indicate rank, thus an Engineer Officer would be identified as such and as being separate from the Executive branch structure. Engineer midshipmen would now wear a purple rather than a white patch on their uniform collar.<sup>107</sup>

The effect of the split, subsequently spelt out in Kings Regulations and Admiralty Instructions, was that engineer officers had no authority beyond engine room personnel. It went on to withdraw both the right to succeed to command of a ship that had been expressly permitted,<sup>108</sup> and the right of engineer officers to exercise military command. They could only give orders to their own officers and ratings. In the words of the Kings Regulations of 1926:

Officers other than Executive officers are to have command over the subordinates of their own department, but no non-Executive officer is to assume command, either afloat or ashore, of the officers and men of other classes<sup>109</sup>

By 1925 there were actually few remaining officers who were qualified to exercise command at sea, but the change now implemented meant that the situation

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<sup>104</sup> The ‘L’ branch was not finally fully established until 1944 implementing the Phillips committee report. See Patrick A. Moore, *The Greenie: The History of Warfare Technology in the Royal Navy*, (Stroud: Spellmount, 2011) p. 144 et seq.

<sup>105</sup> Vice Admiral Sir Louis Le Bailly *From Fisher to the Falklands* (London: Institute of Marine Engineers, 1991) p.31.

<sup>106</sup> AFO 3241/25 *Classification of Officers and Position of the Different Classes with regard to Military Command – Titles and Uniform of Engineer Officers*.

<sup>107</sup> See Appendix A.

<sup>108</sup> KR & AI Article 171.

could arise when command at sea could, as a result of action casualties, devolve on a warrant officer, placing him in command of an engineer officer, nominally well his senior. That this was not a theoretical concern is well illustrated by Le Bailly's experience in 1939 when he was serving in HMS *Hood* as an Engineer officer:

Damage control ... spawned a more comprehensive organisation...Essentially technical, it should have been under the direction of an engineer ... [but] no (E) officer could give orders to shipwrights or sailors... [s]o the first lieutenant [an Executive Officer] whose knowledge of pumping, flooding, shoring, the cross connecting of damaged fire or hydraulic mains and the running of emergency electrical leads could have been written on a postage stamp, had perforce to become the damage control supremo, all orders being issued over his name.<sup>110</sup>

There was a social change which in adding insult to injury compounded the sense of betrayal. The London club, the United Services, (known as 'The Senior') withdrew the right of engineer officers to even join the club.<sup>111</sup> Engineering officers were apparently unfit to mingle socially with executive officers, although the justification was that this was because they were now 'non-combatant'. Some executive officers resigned from the club in protest.<sup>112</sup>

This end to Fisher's concept of a General List was handled badly and could even be construed as vindictive. The separation of engineering from the executive branch is a typical example of the navy's management style throughout the 1920s. In retrospect, it was the right decision, not because engineers did not make good executive officers (that appears never to have been questioned) but rather the executive stream did not produce sufficient engineers of the quality necessary. Absolutely crucially, potential officers joining the navy did not want to do engineering part time, borne out by the numbers applying to do it as a specialisation, and those that did showed little aptitude for it. The decision to pay engineers substantially more than executive officers was an implicit recognition that to get the officers of the calibre the navy needed, the navy would have to pay them more. Thus, while it was the right decision, it was implemented in a manner to occasion the most ill will. Regrettably, it was far from being the only occasion during

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<sup>109</sup> KR & AI 1926 Vol 1 para 172.2.

<sup>110</sup> Vice-Admiral Sir Louis Le Bailly KBE, CB, OBE, DL, C Eng, F Inst Mech E, MI Mar E, F Inst Pet, *The man around the engine: Life Below The Waterline*, (Emsworth; Kenneth Mason: 1990) p 51.

<sup>111</sup> Minutes Y013 and Y016 1929 of the United Services Club.

<sup>112</sup> The other London clubs with military membership did not follow suit. As their minutes show, at the Annual General Meeting of the Naval and Military Club (known as 'The In and Out' from its conspicuously marked gates on Piccadilly) held on 2 June 1924 the Chairman (interestingly it was Admiral Wemyss who had been First Sea Lord at the start of the 'great betrayal') said 'It is ... not right to blackball candidates [for membership] because they happen to belong to any particular branch of the Service.' He repeated the remark at the same meeting the following year.



the 1920s when the Admiralty failed to communicate with the broader service which was a major contributing factor to the extremely poor morale of the executive officer corps by the early 1930s.

### Officer Training

After the turmoil of the ‘Geddes axe’, the popular term for the officer redundancy programme, in personnel terms the 1920s for the Royal Navy were, at first sight, relatively quiet. For Dartmouth it was a ‘Golden Age’ of ‘halcyon days’.<sup>113</sup> Indicative of the unchanging nature of this period, the orders for sub lieutenants’ courses from 1923<sup>114</sup> to 1931<sup>115</sup> are almost identically worded (although latterly the officers were instructed to bring with them white plimsolls<sup>116</sup>) as were the published training syllabuses.<sup>117</sup>

After the First World War first HMS *Carnarvon* then HMS *Temeraire* was employed as the cadets training ‘cruiser’.<sup>118</sup> (In fact the latter was not a cruiser, she was an 18,600 ton battleship of the *Bellerophon* class completed in 1907). The cruiser would undertake twenty-seven week cruises, spending ‘about one-third of the working days’ at sea. The first stated requirement was that the cruise was ‘To avoid hot weather’ as part of a very proscriptive set of regulations and syllabus of training to be undertaken which was issued, during which ‘no opportunity should be missed in the ordinary routine of the ship to let the cadets perform officers’ duties under supervision.’<sup>119</sup>

The summer cruise for 1920 departed from Portsmouth 1 June, returning 7 December after stopping at twenty one ports in the United Kingdom, Scandinavia and (in October and November) the Mediterranean. By 1921 HMS *Temeraire* had been succeeded by HMS *Thunderer* (an Orion class ‘super-Dreadnought’ of 1911) as the ‘Training Cruiser’. She continued as cadet training ship for both Special Entry cadets

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<sup>113</sup> Dr Jane Harrold and Dr Richard Porter, *Britannia Royal Naval College Dartmouth: An Illustrated History*, (Dartmouth: Richard Webb, 2005) p. 72.

<sup>114</sup> AFO 2363/23 *Acting Sub-Lieutenants - Courses*.

<sup>115</sup> AFO 2247/31 *Acting Sub-Lieutenants’ Courses - REPORT*.

<sup>116</sup> In modern parlance, ‘trainers’.

<sup>117</sup> Compare AFO 1857/ 24 *Dartmouth cadets – training at sea after passing out* with AFO 1723/30 *Midshipmen – syllabuses of instruction afloat*. The differing titles cover almost identical text.

<sup>118</sup> AWO 1255/19 *Special Entry Cadets – Training Cruiser - Syllabus of Instruction*.

<sup>119</sup> AWO 3632/19 *Cadet Training Cruiser- Regulations, Routine of Instruction and Syllabus*.

who after spending two terms in HMS *Antrim* would undertake a cruise in *Thunderer*, as did the Dartmouth cadets.<sup>120</sup>

However in April 1924, there was a curious change. Instead of the Dartmouth and Special entry cadets coming together on joining the training cruiser, the Dartmouth cadets were instead sent to ‘ships of the Atlantic and Mediterranean Fleets’.<sup>121</sup> In this AFO,<sup>122</sup> the Dartmouth cadets ‘on appointment to the sea-going ships, [would] become entitled to pay at the rate of 4s. per day, in lieu of the rate of 1s. a day now payable in the training ship ... Their parents or guardians will be required to provide, instead of the present private allowance of £50 a year, a private allowance of 1s. a day in order to bring the total amount up to 5s. a day, **the pay of a Midshipman** [authors emphasis].’ Not only would the cadets get a handsome pay rise, the parental contribution fell from £50 per annum to £18. 5s. This was an attempt to mitigate the disparity that existed between Dartmouth and Special Entry cadets arising from the different ages at which they were promoted to sub lieutenant. As the direct entry cadets remained in the training cruiser and despite the undertaking to do so, no ‘announcement [was] made as regards Special Entry Cadets’, at least not until 1926 (*vide infra*) they remained solely on the parental allowance. At first sight, this appears manifestly unfair. However, the latter were promoted sub lieutenant up to a year earlier than the Dartmouth cadets, and so it would appear that this was in reality a backdoor method of correcting the resulting disparity in pay.

A detailed syllabus for the Dartmouth cadets’ eight months at sea was published in July 1924, the object being to enable ‘Cadets on attaining the rating [*sic*] of Midshipman to take part in the work of a sea-going ship, and to be of some assistance to the Specialist and Divisional Officers.’<sup>123</sup> In June 1926 an equivalent syllabus was published for special entry cadets who continued to serve for one year in HMS *Thunderer* before ‘passing out as Midshipmen’.<sup>124</sup>

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<sup>120</sup> AWO 3080/21 *Special Entry Cadets – Training and Advancement*; AWO 3448/21 *Dartmouth Cadets – Training in H.M.S. “Thunderer”*.

<sup>121</sup> AFO 813/24 *Cadets – Training etc., after leaving Dartmouth*.

<sup>122</sup> The AFO very unusually does not have numbered paragraphs.

<sup>123</sup> AFO 1857/24 *Dartmouth Cadets – Training at Sea after Passing Out*.

<sup>124</sup> AFO 1615/26 *Special Entry Cadets – Syllabus of Training in H.M.S. “Thunderer.”*

The Dartmouth cadet syllabus was re-issued in 1927.<sup>125</sup> It was essentially unchanged, and like its predecessor was rigid and very proscriptive. It laid down in detail matters that were to be learnt. The following extract from the signals sub-section of the seamanship section gives the flavour of the whole syllabus:

Signal manual, 1920:-

Plates 1,2,3,5 and 6, omitting double bow line and double quarter line.

Defs. 5,6,7,10,12,23,24...48, (omitting para.4,) [sic]

When HMS *Thunderer* paid off in 1926 and was sold she was not replaced by another ship.<sup>126</sup> Thereafter special entry cadets instead on entry did one year in HMS *Erebus*, (rather than at Keyham) a monitor which did not go to sea,<sup>127</sup> and were then rated [sic] midshipmen. In *Erebus* they were joined by ‘Cadets entered from Mercantile Marine Training Establishments’ i.e. Pangbourne, HMS *Conway* etc. The latter it will be remembered had already undergone far more maritime training than the Dartmouth cadets at the same stage, while the special entry cadets, coming from public schools had had none.<sup>128</sup> The syllabus was again extremely proscriptive.<sup>129</sup>

In summary therefore by 1930, there were three cadet streams. The first went to Dartmouth. They were educated at a public school run by the Royal Navy which gave a naval flavour, but minimal actual naval training. They then spent eight months at sea before becoming midshipmen. The second, smaller, stream was from the maritime public schools who had had a maritime education and basic training, who then underwent a year of training in a ship alongside before becoming midshipmen. They were trained alongside cadets from public schools who had had no maritime or naval training. The author has so far eschewed the use of naval slang, but the best term to describe the foregoing is a ‘proper potmess’,<sup>130</sup> which was ripe for reform.

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<sup>125</sup> AFO 930/27 *Dartmouth Cadets – Syllabus of Training Afloat*.

<sup>126</sup> Oscar Parkes *British Battleships Warrior 1860 to Vanguard 1950: A History of Design, Construction and Armament* (London: Leo Cooper, 1990) p. 528.

<sup>127</sup> Ian Buxton *Big Gun Monitors: The History of the Design, Construction and Operation of the Royal Navy’s Monitors* (Tynemouth: World Ship Society, 1978) p. 131.

<sup>128</sup> Although most would have had some military training in the cadet force that was a feature of most public schools.

<sup>129</sup> AFO 1901/30 *Special Entry Cadets and Cadets entered from Mercantile Marine Training Establishments – Syllabus of Training in H.M.S. “Erebus.”*

<sup>130</sup> See glossary.

## Conclusion

During Wemyss time in post as First Sea Lord, foreshortened as it was, there had been imaginative innovations. The Cambridge course in particular was an original, liberal and ultimately motivating innovation, and while it had been introduced as a special measure to make up for lost training, its educational value was recognised by the introduction of the sub lieutenants Greenwich course. However, almost nothing else was done to change anything significant about the education or training of officers during the periods of office of Beatty and Madden.

The next chapter deals with the post war redundancies, showing that not only were they badly conceived, worse, they were badly managed. Combined with the concomitant series of pay cuts, they were to push the officer corps to its nadir.

## **Chapter 2**

### **Declining to the Nadir: Admirals Wemyss, Beatty and Madden and the morale of the officer corps.**

The previous chapter looked the broad management of the executive officer corps of the Royal Navy from the end of the First World War until Admiral Field became First Sea Lord. Many of the changes described would actually have had little impact on the morale of the executive officer corps. The ratings who might have been commissioned would, by not becoming part of the officer corps, have remained unnoticed, and the engineers while embittered were financially better off, and no longer in the executive branch anyway. However, the way the changes to the engineering branch were handled was indicative of poor quality management characterised by the increasing detachment of the Admiralty from the Fleet, indeed the whole of the naval service, and in particular, its officer corps. Such an instance of bad management would have had an impact on the morale of the executive branch itself. However, it would have been as nothing alongside the concomitant mismanaged redundancies, a succession of cuts in pay, and disciplinary problems. This chapter looks at them all in some detail and concludes with a brief 'Herzberg' analysis of executive branch officer motivation and by implication their morale at the end of the 1920s.

The manner and extent of the personnel reductions will be described in some detail as will the almost continuous series of pay cuts that uniquely the naval officer corps was subject to through the 1920s and into the 1930s. However, it will be shown that the actual reduction in officer numbers was far less than the navy needed, and worse, little effort was made to reduce the numbers of officers being produced. The result was that after the post-war reductions had been made, the number of executive officers rose steadily to the point that by 1924 the navy had more lieutenant commanders than it had at the end of the First World War, and that the numbers continued to rise thereafter.

The employment situation in civilian life in the 1920s was, at best, unpromising for officers leaving the navy. Added to this pensions were neither preserved to retirement age nor portable, so that an officer leaving the navy before he was due a pension by time served, unless by one of the redundancy schemes, lost all accrued pension rights. Under these conditions, officers did not leave unless they had to or had a

particular ability to make a living in civilian life, such as (Lieutenant) Anthony Kimmins who left the navy at the turn of the decade for a successful career as an actor, director and broadcaster.<sup>1</sup> The mass of officers were effectively trapped in the service.

Apart from an initial post-war pay rise, the succeeding years were characterised by a steady succession of ‘bad news events’ for officers, with even sensible actions and decisions being so badly handled in terms of the way they were promulgated that a significant part of their effect was negative. The descent to the nadir started at the time that Beatty became First Sea Lord or soon after.

### Redundancies and Re-settlement

Before the First World War a serious shortfall in officer numbers had been anticipated as being likely by 1920.<sup>2</sup> After the war the various programmes introduced with the intention of increasing officer numbers, taken together with the fact that the navy had not sustained the heavy casualties anticipated before the war had left the Navy with far too many officers. The resultant problem was compounded because:

[t]oo many cadets were entered as permanent career officers. Fisher and the Naval Staff thought there would be a huge shortage of Lieutenants by 1920. ... Far too many permanent officers were entered by the ‘New Scheme’ and the 700 additional by the Special Entry system to make up the numbers.<sup>3</sup>

The consequent reduction in numbers has attracted the soubriquet ‘The Geddes Axe’.<sup>4</sup> However, the reductions carried out at the behest of Sir Eric Geddes were far from the whole of the officer redundancy story. A committee (the ‘Reconstruction Committee’) charged among other responsibilities with reducing numbers was hampered by not knowing how large the post war Fleet would be, but decided on ‘a provisional scheme based on a reduction of personnel of twenty percent on the pre-war total’.<sup>5</sup> In October 1919 a ‘Conference’, actually a small committee of three headed by the Accountant General of the Navy with one additional co-opted member, reported

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<sup>1</sup> Joy Packer, *Pack and Follow: One Person's Adventures in Four Different Worlds*, (London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1945) p. 93.

<sup>2</sup> Robert L. Davison, *The Challenges of Command: The Royal Navy's Executive Branch Officers, 1880-1919*, (Farnham: Ashgate, 2011) pp. 105-6.

<sup>3</sup> John H Beattie, *The Churchill Scheme: The Royal Navy Special Entry Cadet Scheme 1913-1955*, ([not given]: Private Publication, 2010) p. 11.

<sup>4</sup> At the time the term described the entire range of cuts in public spending, see Harold Perkin, *The Rise of Professional Society: England since 1880*, (London: Routledge, 2002) p. 230.

<sup>5</sup> Stephen Roskill, *Naval Policy Between the Wars: The Period of Anglo-American Antagonism 1919-1929*, (New York: Walker and Company 1968) p.104.

what it saw as the numerical surpluses by rank and branch and made proposals to reduce them.<sup>6</sup>

Captains	95
Commanders	189
Lieutenant-Commanders/Lieutenants	283
Sub-Lieutenants/Mates/Midshipmen	398
Cadets	347

Also included were ‘about’ 800 warrant officers.<sup>7</sup>

This report is notable for its apparent precision as to numbers. Regrettably the implied accuracy of the manpower forecasts was not borne out by experience throughout the 1920s. This was repeated across the whole Service; the reduction in numbers of ratings by approximately 12,000 between 1927 and 1933 was largely by reducing recruiting which, as a result, made for a largely long service navy. This was to lead to a marked shortage of trained ratings by 1936 as the long service men (i.e. those who had served a full 22 years, the long service engagement) came to the end of their time in service.<sup>8</sup>

The Board then submitted this report and its proposed redundancy recommendations to the Treasury.<sup>9</sup> According to Roskill it had ‘no effect on clearing the lists,’ possibly because it does not appear to have been widely publicised, if indeed it was implemented. There was no AWO concerning this scheme, which would have been the normal way to promulgate such a matter. The proposed mechanism for making officers redundant led to correspondence between the Admiralty and the Treasury. The latter apparently preferred giving redundant officers a gratuity, a ‘one off’ payment whereas the Admiralty preferred a pension, however meagre. The debate is interesting as it illustrates the ‘institutional memory’ of the Admiralty civil servants who served continuously for many years in the Admiralty. A personal letter by Sir Vincent Baddeley, First Principal Secretary at the Admiralty dated 11 February 1920 to Sir George Barstow at the Treasury apologised for not including the ‘full estimate’ of the costs in an earlier submission. It is an interesting letter, because it casts back to 1873

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<sup>6</sup> ADM 116/1888 *Reduction of Lists: Report of conference dated 14 October 1919.*

<sup>7</sup> This is misquoted in John H Beattie, *The Churchill Scheme: The Royal Naval Special Entry Cadet Scheme 1913-1955*, (Private publication: 2010) p. 38 who appears to conflate the numbers of sub lieutenants/mates/midshipmen/cadets and warrant officers.

<sup>8</sup> AFO 2960/33 *Seaman Complements.*

<sup>9</sup> Stephen Roskill, *Naval Policy Between the Wars: The Period of Anglo-American Antagonism 1919-1929*, p.124.

when surplus officers were given a pension.<sup>10</sup> He went on to mention a retirement scheme in 1909 for ‘clearing the senior Lieutenant-Commanders’, and argued against giving a lump sum as ‘[o]ur experience in the past has been that if you give a Naval Officer a large lump sum gratuity he pretty soon loses it and comes back on our compassionate fund.’<sup>11</sup>

The only immediately contemporaneous effort made to reduce officer numbers was an offer for a ‘limited number of Junior Officers’ to transfer to the Royal Air Force College without having to pay fees.<sup>12</sup>

The Board re-convened the conference which then produced a further and more detailed report which the Board agreed.<sup>13</sup> After gaining Treasury approval, a redundancy scheme for cadets and midshipmen went ahead while approval was awaited for the proposal regarding the rest of the officer corps. Cadets, or rather their parents or guardians, were sent a letter by the Board Secretary (Oswyn Murray) offering them a gratuity of £300 ‘in consideration of any expense’ incurred in starting their sons ‘on another career path’.<sup>14</sup> The letter continued to state that if there were insufficient numbers of volunteers, compulsory redundancies would follow. The factors which would be used to choose those to be retained were ‘physique, bearing, character etc (summed up as Officer like qualities) as well as to the marks obtained in ... examination.’<sup>15</sup> The letter went on to say that for such midshipmen ‘no withdrawal grant would be payable.’<sup>16</sup> A similar letter was sent to parents/guardians of midshipmen, whose parent or guardian was offered £400. Put simply, the proposal put to parents was ‘we’ll pay you if you take your son out now, if we choose to throw him out, you will get nothing’. This hardly seems to have been designed to retain the brightest and the best; cadets were effectively being encouraged to leave. The letter was followed by an AWO setting out the offer.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> See John Beeler, ‘‘Fit for Service Abroad’: Promotion, Retirement and Royal Navy Officers, 1830-1890’ *The Mariner’s Mirror* Vol 81 (August 1993) pp. 300-312 for a discussion of earlier redundancy programmes.

<sup>11</sup> ADM 116/1888.

<sup>12</sup> AWO 3417/19 *Junior Officers – Transfer of a Limited Number to the Royal Air Force*.

<sup>13</sup> ADM116/1888 *Board Minute 1174 of 11 March 1920*.

<sup>14</sup> AWO 906/20 *Midshipmen, R.N. – Grant for Voluntary Withdrawals – REPORT*.

<sup>15</sup> This is the only definition, such as it is, in any document that the author has been able to find of ‘Officer Like Qualities’.

<sup>16</sup> ADM 116/1888 *O Murray letter 1 March 1920*.

<sup>17</sup> AWO 906/20 *Midshipmen, R.N. – Grant for Voluntary Withdrawals- REPORT*.



One of those officers whose records were studied for this thesis was a cadet at Dartmouth.<sup>18</sup> His father, in need of money because of a failed orange growing enterprise in South Africa took the offered money.<sup>19</sup> The elder sister of the cadet, acting *in loco parentis* on behalf of her brother (being under twenty one years of age, he was a minor) then sought Admiralty concurrence that Dartmouth could be considered as the equivalent of a public school, and that being so, her brother applied for the competitive ‘Special Entry’. He was successful and re-entered the navy and was by far the first of his term mates to be appointed in command, (as an S/M specialist), and was the first to be promoted to commander, that is to say, by any measure he was an above average officer. In fact he was not alone; eight others re-entered the navy via the ‘Special Entry’ scheme despite having been made redundant from Dartmouth.<sup>20</sup> Of the remainder ‘many joined the army’ and six ex-Dartmouth cadets became generals, one was to be a distinguished scientist (Lord Blackett<sup>21</sup>) and one became an MP.<sup>22</sup> If these were the discards by an effective system, one can only wonder as to the quality of those the navy selected to retain.

With Treasury approval forthcoming, the scheme for rest of the officer corps up to captain was announced. Those aged thirty six and below would receive a gratuity based on rank and seniority, those over thirty six would receive ‘retired pay’ i.e. a pension.<sup>23</sup> The Board minute covering this runs to four lines of print. The Board then turned its attention to captains, specifically how to deal with a surplus of fifty three Captains; the minute is a page long.<sup>24</sup> No agreement was reached with the Treasury on the proposals. The Board’s stated concern was that these officers had risen to the top because they were the best of their generation, and some of those they were expected to make redundant – the more junior captains – had had no chance to prove themselves in rank.<sup>25</sup> A ‘CONFERENCE on the reduction of the lists of FLAG OFFICERS, CAPTAINS and COMMANDERS’ was chaired by Vice Admiral Sir Henry Oliver (Second Sea Lord from September 1920 to August 1924). This conference made a

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<sup>18</sup> His records were seen in addition to the quinquennial cohorts.

<sup>19</sup> 2SL Pers Rec; Interview with ‘Rhymer’.

<sup>20</sup> John H Beattie *The Churchill Scheme: The Royal Naval Special Entry Cadet Scheme 1913-1955* (Private publication: 2010) p. 38.

<sup>21</sup> Before being ennobled, he was to return – as a civilian – to naval service in 1942. See David Edgerton, *Britain’s War Machine: Weapons, Resources and Experts in the Second World War*, (London: Penguin, 2012) p. 145.

<sup>22</sup> John H Beattie, *The Churchill Scheme: The Royal Naval Special Entry Cadet Scheme 1913-1955*, (Private publication: 2010) p. 39.

<sup>23</sup> AWO 1056/20 *Surplus of Officers – Special Terms of Retirement*.

<sup>24</sup> ADM 116/1888 *Board minute 1267 of 13 October 1920*.

detailed and exhaustive report to the Board, which included surprisingly detailed manpower projections.<sup>26</sup> Among other matters it discussed whether senior officers should be designated as not suitable for capital ship commands (an early precursor of the hated post Second World War 'Post and General List' - better known as the 'wet and dry lists' - or even the present Sea Command Selection Board). In view of the relationship between rank and command which is discussed in detail in a later chapter, this is an interesting early recognition that some officers who were deemed fit to hold higher rank were at the same time considered not to be suitable for command.

The key recommendations were about career structure, which in a service where posts were held for limited time (usually about two years) and a captain would serve eleven years in rank and either be promoted or transfer to the retired list,<sup>27</sup> would be of vital importance in the late 1930s. The first recommendation the conference made was that '25 promotions to the rank of Captain should be made annually'<sup>28</sup> and its second:

[f]or the efficiency of the Fleet, the Captains' List must be reduced and some compulsory scheme is the only feasible method'.

Further recommendations were concerned with instituting a just scheme, and then went on to recommend '[t]hat 50 promotions to the rank of Commander be made annually'. Returning to reductions the conference felt that a compulsory retirement programme was 'impracticable, and would be unjust.' and recommended a voluntary scheme and that each half year a number of Commanders to be selected 'for promotion to Captain, provided they elect to retire immediately on promotion with the half pay of a Captain - £593.2.6.'<sup>29</sup> This latter was to address the question of officers who were seen to be above average, but for whom there was no employment in their next higher rank.

The sub-committee charged with reducing the captains list by one third was chaired by the then Rear Admiral Chatfield (later to be First Sea Lord). The committee examined the records of all of the officers, numbering between three and four hundred, obtained special reports on them from their current superiors and then selected about 120 to recommend to the Board to be made redundant. Chatfield described this as 'a

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<sup>25</sup> Some may even have been on half pay since promotion.

<sup>26</sup> ADM 116/1888 'CONFERENCE on the reduction of the lists of *FLAG OFFICERS, CAPTAINS and COMMANDERS*'.

<sup>27</sup> Known as 'up or out'.

<sup>28</sup> As about 120 cadets were entered annually, that would mean each would have a 20% of eventually being a captain.

distasteful and difficult task. On the Captains' list we each had many friends, who had to be ruthlessly thrown out if they were inferior in general capacity to others'.<sup>30</sup>

Contemporary accounts often suggest that consideration was given to whether officers had private means, and were thus able to live without their naval pay being selected ahead of those who depended on their naval pay. In particular, rumours abounded that the then Lieutenant Louis Mountbatten had originally been selected on these grounds, but had been retained after pressure from the Royal family.<sup>31</sup> Mountbatten himself 'would never say',<sup>32</sup> and Chatfield was adamant that '[t]here was not a single case of any officer being axed in preference to any other except from the standpoint of Service ability.'<sup>33</sup>

The Board considered the recommendations on 24 October 1921 in detail and accepted them. It confirmed the minutes of the meeting on 1 November and forwarded them to the Treasury.<sup>34</sup>

The selection of officers to be made redundant was unbalanced and poorly managed; planning was initially based purely on numbers by rank alone and not by service need. In July 1920 an AFO was issued stating that 'no further retirements ... can be allowed in the case of Commissioned Officers below the rank of Commander who have specialised in ... Gunnery, Torpedo, Navigation, signals and W/T, Submarines.'<sup>35</sup>

It is extremely difficult to see how the redundancy programme could have been managed equitably in view of the poor quality of personnel management tools available. How cadet and midshipman redundancies were managed has already been described. For those officers who were commissioned (i.e. Sub lieutenants and above) when the redundancy programme started, 'special' S206's were called for.

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<sup>29</sup> Selective promotions then were announced at the end of December and the end of June, the 'half yearly' promotion list.

<sup>30</sup> Admiral of the Fleet Lord Chatfield PC GCB OM Etc, *The Navy and Defence: the Autobiography of Admiral of the Fleet Lord Chatfield*, (London: William Heinemann 1942) p.199.

<sup>31</sup> Philip Ziegler, *Mountbatten: The Official Biography*, (London: William Collins 1985) pp. 73-4.

<sup>32</sup> Richard Hough, *Mountbatten: Hero of our time*, (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson 1980) p. 43.

<sup>33</sup> Admiral of the Fleet Lord Chatfield PC GCB OM Etc, *The Navy and Defence: the autobiography of Admiral of the Fleet Lord Chatfield*, (London: William Heinemann 1942) p.199.

<sup>34</sup> ADM 116/1888 *Board Minutes 1407 24 October 1921 and 1414 1 November 1921*.

<sup>35</sup> AWO 1849/20 *Special Retirement Scheme – Specialist Officers*.

**Instructions for filling up this form.**

*Paragraph (a)* Any special duties outside the Officer's ordinary duties should be inserted, such as action stations of non-executive Officers.

*Paragraphs (b), (c), (d), (e), (g), (h), (i), (j) and (o)* Replies to be:—"Exceptional," "Above average," "Average," or "Below average."

*Paragraph (m)* Reply to be "Satisfactory" or "Unsatisfactory."  
NOTE.—If conduct is reported as "Unsatisfactory," a separate sheet is to be attached stating in what respect it is unsatisfactory, and what disciplinary action has been taken in consequence.

If disciplinary action has not been taken, the reason for not doing so is to be stated.

*Paragraph (n)* The above note under paragraph (m) applies also to the case of an Officer being reported as "not of temperate habits."

*Paragraph (r)* Replies to be "Yes" or "No."

The attention of Commanding Officers is directed to the necessity of Form S. 450, Officers' certificate, being in general agreement with the Commanding Officer's opinion of the Officer as expressed in the Confidential Report Form S. 206.

Fig.15. Instructions for completing form S206. 'Exceptional' was very rarely used, leaving little latitude for a reporting officer. (Author's collection)

It will be remembered that these were confidential reports on an officer raised at regular intervals or for particular circumstances such as this. To illustrate how limited was the information that allowed one officer to be compared with another was, taken

with the minimal record keeping, an example of a roughly contemporary S206 on a sub lieutenant is shown. Fig. 15 shows the instructions for its completion, an officer could be graded 'Exceptional' 'Above Average' 'Average' or 'Below Average' for a series of attributes, the highest grade was rarely used.<sup>36</sup> Figs.16, 17 and 18 show the report itself.<sup>37</sup> Thus it can be seen that any decision whether or not to make an officer redundant could only be based on minimal information.<sup>38</sup> While the deliberations of the committee(s) that made the decisions have not survived,<sup>39</sup> the probability must be that the decisions were based on the special S206s, that is to say that the recommendation made by the officer's current commanding officer will have been followed unless there was some reason to modify it, such as might have been the case with the future Lord Mountbatten. This cannot have made for a well ordered redundancy programme.

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<sup>36</sup> Study of 2SL records for the cohort study revealed three uses of 'Exceptional'.

<sup>37</sup> It will be seen that this form was revised in 1924. Those revisions were minimal.

<sup>38</sup> The officer whose report is shown retired having achieved flag rank. The records of those made redundant do not appear to have been retained.

<sup>39</sup> If indeed they were recorded; the deliberations of promotion boards which would have had a similar structure and organisation were and are destroyed once their decisions are approved by the Naval Secretary.

CONFIDENTIAL.

S. 206. (Revised—March, 1924.)

Authority—King's Regulations and Admiralty Instructions, Article 1851.

### Report on Officer below the rank of Lieutenant-Commander.

(A separate form to be used for each Officer.)

Name in full John Willson Musgrave  
 (Surname in block letters.)  
 Rank Sub-Lieutenant Date of joining 24<sup>th</sup> April 1924.  
 Seniority 15<sup>th</sup> May 1923. Date of discharge Still serving  
 (If not discharged, "Still serving" to be inserted).

Port Division (in the case of Warrant Officers and above) \_\_\_\_\_

Period in respect of which this report is rendered:—

From 24<sup>th</sup> April 1924 To 31<sup>st</sup> Dec 1924.

Name of H.M. Ship H.M.S. WIVERN

Occasion on which the report is rendered:— Annual Report.

#### SECTION I.

In Ships commanded by Captains, this section is to be completed by the Executive Officer in the case of Officers of the Executive Branch, and by the Head of the Branch or Department in the case of Officers of other Branches.

In vessels commanded by Officers below the rank of Captain, the Commanding Officer is himself to complete Section I, consulting Heads of Branches or Departments as necessary.

The reporting Officer is to give his opinion of the Officer under the following headings or the information required:—

- (a) Capacity in which the Officer has been employed. Torpedo Control Correspondence Officer
- (b) Professional ability, having regard to the standing of the Officer. average
- (c) Industry. above average
- (d) Interest shewn in his duties. average
- (e) Zeal and energy. average
- (f) Tact. is inclined to blunder
- (g) Judgment. below average
- (h) Qualities as an Officer:—
  - (i) His command of, and control over, subordinates. average
  - (ii) His obedience to command, and attitude towards his superiors. average

C.W. 1772/24.

[5067] 28951 D75 4/24 4062 G & S 124

Fig. 16. First page of a S206 to show how officers were marked. (Author's collection, 2SLPersRec)



- (i) **Initiative** (i.e., his power of making a decision and accepting responsibility when required to act on his own initiative).
- (j) **Reliability** (i.e., the dependance which can be placed on him to carry out his duties correctly without special or extra supervision).
- (k) Any special qualifications or merits, or any defects not provided for above.

below average

average

He tries hard & has made considerable improvement. He lacks "ginger".

Signature and rank of Reporting Officer

Date

SECTION II.

Report by Commanding Officer.

- (l) State whether the report in Section I is concurred in. If not concurred in, the Commanding Officer is to notify the items in which he does not concur and assess them himself below.
- (m) General conduct.
- (n) If **not** of temperate habits, to be so stated here.
- (o) In the case of a Commissioned Officer of the Executive Branch, the Commanding Officer's opinion of his seamanlike qualities and of his ability and trustworthiness as Officer of the Watch at Sea :—
  - (i) Seamanlike qualities.
  - (ii) Officer of the Watch qualities.
- (p) Is the Officer considered suitable to specialise and, if so, in what capacity.

Satisfactory

below average

average

not at present

Fig.17. Second page of S206 showing the end of the first section, completed by the officer's head of department and the start of the second by his commanding officer. (Author's collection, 2SLPersRec).

(g) The Commanding Officer's general opinion is to be stated here with any remarks of use in indicating the Officer's special characteristics and qualities.

The following points are suggested for consideration:—

Leadership, influence with Officers and men, personality, temperament, physical and social qualities.

*Is a good wassmate of his  
on my belt with the men.  
Plays most games & is  
good at rugby. A good  
Comedian.*

(r) Is the Officer recommended for promotion:—

(i) In the ordinary course.

(ii) Specially.

*Yes*  
*No*

This report should be shewn to the Officer reported on whenever practicable. If circumstances prevent this being done, the reason is to be stated here. It should not be shewn to anyone but the Officer to whom it refers.

Signature and rank of  
Commanding Officer }

*Harcourt J. Comdr*

Date

*31<sup>st</sup> December 1924*

Remarks of Flag or Senior Officer:—

Signature and Rank

*Haslewood, Mias. Captin D.S.3. H.M.S.*

Date

*9. 1. 24.*

Fig. 18. Last page of S206. Whether being a 'good comedian' was a useful attribute for a naval officer is possibly debatable. (Author's collection, 2SLPersRec).



Another indication that the selection process was flawed is afforded by a brief study of the 'Senior Officers War Course'. By this time Richmond had been sacked from the Admiralty by the then First Lord, Geddes 'having managed to offend too many people' (he actually left the Admiralty before Beatty arrived).<sup>40</sup> Beatty promoted him to rear admiral and he was appointed to the Royal Naval College at Greenwich to establish the 'Senior Officers War Course'. Richmond and Beatty intended that this course for young captains was for those seen as the future leaders of the service. Either the method of selecting officers, both as students and staff for the course was woefully inadequate, or, alternatively, the selection of those to be made redundant was, because in 1921 of twenty four students and staff, nineteen were made redundant.<sup>41</sup> Whatever the cause, it was indicative of the poor personnel management that bedevilled the whole redundancy programme, and will have contributed to the bad feeling the whole process engendered.

#### Management of those 'surplus to requirements'

The first support given to those regarded as 'surplus to requirements' was a message from the King who had served in the Royal Navy before ascending the throne. He wrote:

I have learned with great regret that the necessary reduction of the Royal Navy entails the retirement during this year of a large number of Officers and Men who took part in the labours and perils of the War ....

As their King I desire to express to them my high appreciation of their devoted service, and deep sympathy with them in the enforced termination of their careers in the Navy; that life so dear to them, as it was to me.

GEORGE, R.I.<sup>42</sup>

In this more cynical age it is important to realise that at the time such a message, and its style and wording, so unlike that of other Admiralty Weekly and/or Fleet Orders, will have been much appreciated by those who were considered to be 'surplus' and indeed by those who were not. There were to be no other internally promulgated notices of appreciation from the First Lord or other member of the government or Admiralty Board.

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<sup>40</sup> C.I. Hamilton, *The Making of the Modern Admiralty: British Naval Policy-Making 1805-1927*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011) p. 267.

<sup>41</sup> Arthur J Marder, *Portrait of an Admiral: The Life and Papers of Sir Herbert Richmond*, (London: Jonathan Cape 1952) p.27, confirmed by scrutiny of the Navy List.

What follows covers the totality of the published support offered by the Admiralty to officers being made redundant. Support, such as it was, fell into three main areas, academic, i.e. going to university, agricultural, transfer either to military/para-military organisations or emigration, the latter usually combined with agriculture. There was additionally one other route; junior executive officers were ‘invited’ to transfer to the engineering branch, which was in shortage.<sup>43</sup>

Those officers who had ‘been through the Cambridge Course’ were allowed to count the time spent there as ‘two terms of residence for University purposes, if they decide to study for a degree at Cambridge after retirement.’ However, it was left to the individual officer to make ‘their own arrangements with the Cambridge authorities’.<sup>44</sup> London University went further, actually offering eased entry terms to degree courses,<sup>45</sup> and Bristol University offered to ‘waive the usual regulations concerning matriculation’ for surplus officers (as well as the requirement that first year undergraduates ‘must reside in a Hall of Residence’).<sup>46</sup> It will be remembered that ex-Dartmouth cadets would not have sat the School Certificate normally then necessary for matriculation.

Offers of transfer for a ‘limited number’ of sub lieutenants to transfer to the ‘Naval Service of the Union of South Africa’ were announced.<sup>47</sup> A variety of other arrangements were made. The Agricultural College at Cirencester arranged a ‘special one year’s Course in Agriculture for Officers of his Majesty’s Services who are being retired from the Services on reduction of establishment’.<sup>48</sup> Similar training was offered at the agricultural colleges at Hounslow and Catterick.<sup>49</sup> The Indian Forest Service sought to recruit ‘about 40’ probationers of an educational standard ‘such as would ordinarily enable them to pursue a course of study at a University and obtain a degree’.<sup>50</sup> The Royal Colonial Institute declared itself as being ‘prepared to afford the fullest information to Officers, who may contemplate migrating to, or engaging in

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<sup>42</sup> AWO1970/22 *Reduction of personnel – Message from H.M. The King.*

<sup>43</sup> AWO 2896/22 *Sub-Lieutenants and Acting Sub-Lieutenants – invited to volunteer for (E).*

<sup>44</sup> AWO 1809/22 *Retired Officers who have been through the Cambridge Course – Facilities for Further Study at Cambridge.*

<sup>45</sup> AWO 2114/22 *Officers Retiring under Special Scheme – Facilities for Study at London University.*

<sup>46</sup> AWO 2970/22 *Surplus Officers – Facilities for Study at the University of Bristol.*

<sup>47</sup> AWO 1900/22 *Union of South Africa – Naval Appointments.*

<sup>48</sup> AWO 2336/22 *Surplus Officers - Course in Agriculture.*

<sup>49</sup> AWO 2589/22 *Surplus Officers – Agricultural Training and Openings; AFO 2893/22 Surplus Officers and Ratings Discharged under Reduction Scheme – Agricultural Training.*

<sup>50</sup> AWO 1853/20 *Indian Forest Service.*

enterprises in, any part of the British Empire after retirement’,<sup>51</sup> a ‘Committee of retired Naval Officers, who are engaged in farming in ... the Cape Province South Africa’ offered information and advice on ‘the prospects for land settlement’<sup>52</sup>.

The fact that an entire AWO was devoted to ‘two or three vacancies’ in the ‘Chinese Maritime Customs Service’ suggests that there were concerns regarding the employment prospects for retiring officers,<sup>53</sup> and at the end of 1922, the Admiralty Board sought for further sources of employment, asking that ‘Officers, who hear of any appointment or opportunities of employment ... suitable for retired Officers, would communicate details of the same *direct [sic]* to the Secretary of the Admiralty’ the head of the Admiralty civil service.<sup>54</sup> Coming as it did in December 1922, taken with its tenor, rather suggests some worries as to the success of surplus officers at finding employment. In February 1923 a long AWO set out information obtained ‘from the Overseas Settlement Office’ regarding opportunities in parts of the Empire (Canada, Australia, New Zealand and Rhodesia) which appear to have been exclusively agricultural.<sup>55</sup> Also in 1923, the Royal Air Force again offered short service commissions to surplus officers.<sup>56</sup>

The foregoing is the entire published support given by the Admiralty to those of its officers being made redundant from the Service. Its inadequacy was probably a significant contributor to the bitterness engendered by the ‘Geddes Axe’, and cannot but have impinged poorly on the morale of remaining officers, not least because they would have been all too well aware of the difficulty of finding any employment in the then current economic climate.<sup>57</sup> An eminent commentator writing in 1938 summed up the effects of the redundancy on the officers:

the Governments of Great Britain ... “axed” many naval officers who became garage-owners, poultry-keepers or farmers until they went bankrupt, as mostly they did.<sup>58</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> AWO 2337/22 *Surplus Officers – Information obtainable from the Royal Colonial Institute.*

<sup>52</sup> AWO 2523/22 *Surplus Officers – Information as to Land Settlement in a Certain District in South Africa.*

<sup>53</sup> AWO 2894/22 *Surplus Junior Executive Officers – Vacancies in the Chinese Maritime Customs Service.*

<sup>54</sup> AWO 3335/22 *Retired Officers – Reports as to Opportunities of Employment.*

<sup>55</sup> AWO 443/23 *Surplus Officers and Men – Openings within the Empire Overseas.*

<sup>56</sup> AWO 173/23 *Royal Air Force – Offer of Short Service Commissions to Surplus Junior Naval, Marine and Army Officers.*

<sup>57</sup> Lawrence James, *The Middle Class: A History*, (London: Abacus, 2006) p. 412.

<sup>58</sup> Philip Gibbs, *Across the Frontiers*, (London: Michael Joseph 1938) p.19.

The Geddes 'axe' was not the end of redundancies. It is obvious that the subject was sensitive as, when a committee was appointed 'to consider the policy to be pursued in future with regard to the Executive lists of the Royal Navy', it was noted that it 'appears to have given rise to misapprehension', and the Fleet was told that 'it is ... quite incorrect to suppose that the Committee has been appointed with a view to the reduction of lists'.<sup>59</sup> That AFO was issued in January 1926. It was unfortunate that at the end of that year, eight days before Christmas, a voluntary scheme of early retirement for lieutenant commanders was announced.<sup>60</sup> This stated that '[o]wing to the existing surplus on the Lieutenant-Commanders List, and the certainty that, unless that surplus is removed, long periods of unemployment will be necessary for the more senior officers'. Such periods of unemployment would of course be periods on unemployed pay or half pay.

Additionally the excess of lieutenant commanders would mean that each officer's chances of promotion were reduced because there was only a set number of promotions each six months to commander, making for increasing numbers of 'passed over' officers; those who had gone over zone for promotion and thus were not routinely considered for promotion. This will have had a contributed to a cumulative negative effect on the morale of the officer corps.

Another effort to encourage voluntary retirement came in May 1929. This time there was an added inducement which had not been offered on previous occasions. Now 'Officers serving abroad who are allowed to retire under this Order will be granted full pay up to date of arrival in England, and will also be granted free passage home, provided they return home by a direct route without delay.'<sup>61</sup> The implication, not actually stated in the notices promulgating the earlier rounds, was that officers made redundant under previous programmes, including the 'Geddes axe', if serving abroad when made redundant, would have had to pay for their own passage home, and would no longer be paid during their passage home.

This did not produce the required effect, and in February 1931 a further attempt was made stating that:

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<sup>59</sup> AFO 5/26 *Committee on the List of Executive Officers of the Royal Navy.*

<sup>60</sup> AFO 3431/26 *Lieutenant-Commanders, R.N. – Special Terms of Retirement.*

<sup>61</sup> AFO 1036/29 *Lieutenant-Commanders, R.N. – Special Terms of Retirement.*

A substantial surplus exists at present of Lieutenants and Lieutenant-Commanders on the executive Lists. This surplus will increase still further during the next two years.

2. The surplus is almost entirely confined to the Lieutenants of seniority 1923, and the Lieutenant-Commanders of seniorities 1923 to 1931.

... the number of each seniority to be allowed to retire under this scheme will be limited to roughly one-sixth of the total number of that seniority.<sup>62</sup>

Such lieutenants and the more junior lieutenant commanders would have been cadets/midshipmen/sub lieutenants in the aftermath of the war. The navy was discovering that the 'Geddes Axe' had not bitten deep enough. The root of the problem which successive First Sea Lords did not address and which was to bedevil the management of the officer corps from the end of the First World War well into the 1930s was the time it took to produce a trained officer. Officer education and training was directed at producing a trained lieutenant, and then relied on opportunity and chance to pick out those who would progress further.<sup>63</sup> A cadet having been selected at age twelve and a half, entered Dartmouth (or Osborne until it closed) at thirteen and then progressed through midshipman and sub lieutenant until promotion to lieutenant on gaining his bridge watchkeeping certificate and his commanding officers recommendation at about the age of twenty one or two. Thus decisions had to be made on the future size of the officer corps *at least* a decade in advance. Fig. 19 is a graphical illustration of the problem.

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<sup>62</sup> AFO 289/31 *Lieutenants and Lieutenant-Commanders, R.N. – Special Terms of Retirement.*

<sup>63</sup> Andrew Lambert, *Admirals: The Naval Commanders who Made Britain Great*, (London: Faber and Faber) 2008, pp.160-1.

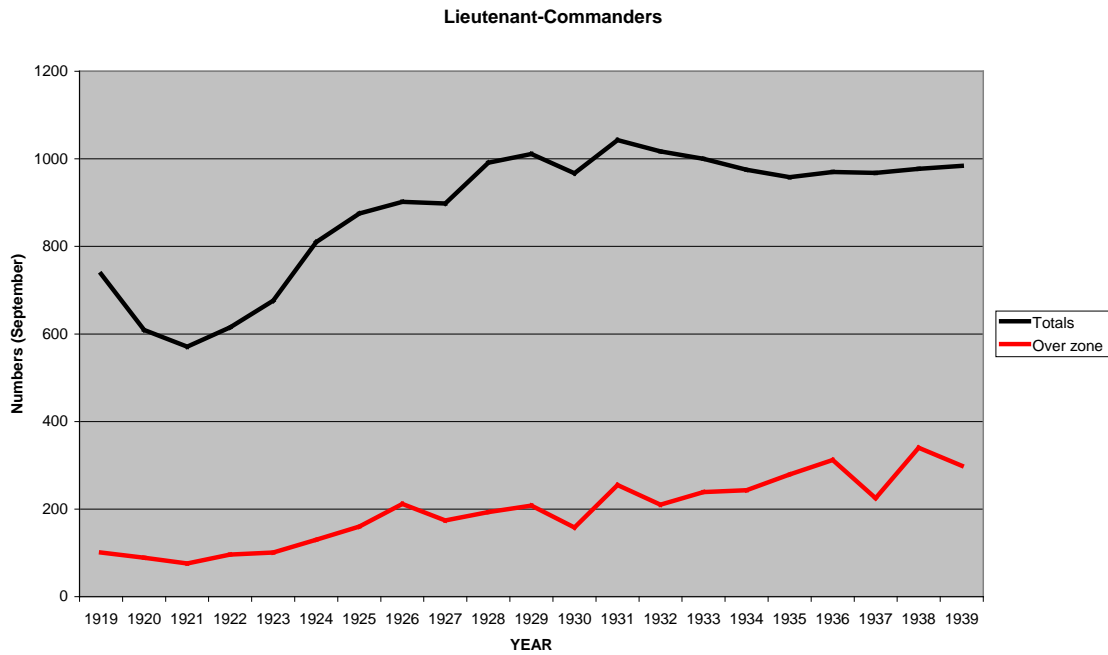


Fig.19.Total numbers of executive branch lieutenant commanders each September (upper line) and those ‘over zone’ i.e. passed over for promotion to commander (lower line) (Source: Navy List) Note: Numbers fluctuated month on month due to retirements and timed promotion from lieutenant. September was chosen as being mid way between the two selective ‘half yearly’ promotions to commander in June and December.

The ‘Geddes Axe’ radically reduced the numbers of lieutenant commanders from 1919 – 1921. It can be seen that thereafter numbers steadily rose, despite the radical reductions in the size of the fleet, and that by 1925 there were more lieutenant commanders than there had been at the end of the war. It must not be forgotten that promotion to lieutenant-commander was automatic at eight years seniority in rank, lieutenant-commanders were senior lieutenants, nothing more or less. The lieutenants promoted lieutenant commander in 1925 would have entered Dartmouth as cadets in about 1909-10. As can be seen the numbers of lieutenant commanders went on rising to reach a peak in 1931 at which point the number appeared to roughly stabilise, which means that inflow at the cadet end of the pipeline matched the outflow from lieutenant commander by either promotion or compulsory retirement at the age of forty five.

Despite the Geddes axe, the Admiralty made no apparent effort to reduce the intake of officer cadets. In 1920, 119 cadets became midshipmen, in 1925, 121 did so and in 1930, when there was still pressure to reduce officer numbers 138 did so. There appears to have been a temporary reduction of some 15% in cadet numbers 1929, but the output, in terms of numbers of midshipman would not be significantly affected for

some years.<sup>64</sup> It seems extraordinary that little or no effort was made to reduce the production of officers, as there was an obvious and continuing surplus leading to repeated pleas for volunteers to retire. Put simply the ‘Geddes Axe’ – and indeed subsequent efforts to reduce officer numbers – made no attempt to turn off the tap, all that happened, to continue the analogy, was that a couple of buckets of water were discarded. Interestingly, this was almost exactly the same mistake as had been made in 1847 when the Admiralty had been faced with an excess of captains.<sup>65</sup>

The surplus had a further untoward effect. Every six months a pre-determined number of lieutenant commanders were selected for promotion to commander. With a fixed number of promotions and a rising number of lieutenant commanders, the result was a steady rise in the number of ‘passed over’ or ‘over zone’ lieutenant commanders. These were officers who had effectively been told publicly that they were not going to be promoted.<sup>66</sup> It can be seen from Fig. 19 that by 1931 more than one in five serving executive lieutenant commanders had been passed over, and the proportion was increasing.

There is one possibility that should be mentioned, if only to be discarded as improbable. The failure to reduce officer numbers did mean that the shortfall at the beginning of the Second World War was less than it might have been. However, it would be fanciful to suppose that this was part of a devious plan by Beatty and Madden to maintain the numbers of officers in the service against the risk of a future war. None of the ADM series of documents examined for this thesis which cover the redundancy programmes even hint at such foresight.

The cumulative effect on morale would have gone beyond the mere fact of a redundancy programme. While the successive programmes after the ‘Geddes axe’ were voluntary, there were officers who had applied to leave who, because they were in a shortage specialisation, were not allowed to go. There must be a probability that they would feel embittered and (whether justified or not), would feel that any chance they had of promotion would be adversely affected by their having applied to go. This would

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<sup>64</sup> Commander Charles N. Robinson and H.M. Ross (eds), *Brassey's Naval and Shipping Annual 1930*, (London: Brassey's, 1930) p.21

<sup>65</sup> John Beeler, ‘‘Fit for Service Abroad’’: Promotion, Retirement and Royal Navy Officers, 1830-1890’, *The Mariner's Mirror* Vol 81 (August 1993),pp. 300-312.

be as well as being unlikely to be particularly highly motivated to the service anyway. In support of this contention, examination of the personnel records show the case of one officer who applied to leave three times, and ended his career as a passed over lieutenant commander.<sup>67</sup>

The failure of the Admiralty under Beatty and then Madden to address this problem was to mean that there were far more lieutenant commanders than there was useful employment for them. This gradually impacted on officer morale through the 1920s. Not only did it have the effect of demoralising the individual, the presence of a class of officer who saw themselves as serving out their time until they could retire on a pension can only have been demoralising for the rest of the officer corps. The redundancy programmes did not achieve their purpose to reduce the size of the navy in terms of personnel, except in the short term. In terms of managing officer numbers, the Beatty and Madden administrations failed. The effects of this failure to deal with a manifest problem will be described in the next chapter.

### Pay and Allowances<sup>68</sup>

During this period, each of the three Armed Services set their own pay rates, and administered them within their budget. As will be seen, naval officers were subject to repeated pay cuts through the 1920s, naval ratings were not, and army officers only had their pay cut once between the wars.<sup>69</sup> That said, because the services were much more separated than they are today, naval officers were probably in the main unaware of army pay rates except of course those who had relatives in the army.<sup>70</sup> It must be remembered that there was very little professional or even social contact between the services in this period, except for Fleet Air Arm officers and those serving ashore in bases such as Malta that had army garrisons.

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<sup>66</sup> There were provisions for over zone promotions and a few took place during the later 1930s and many more during the Second World War. However, during the 1920s and early 1930s, the chances of over zone promotion were to all intents and purposes non-existent and the officer corps knew it.

<sup>67</sup> 2SLPersRec.

<sup>68</sup> Through this period, the British currency, based on the pound sterling (abbreviated to '£'), was divided into 20 shillings (abbreviated to 's') and each shilling into twelve pence (confusingly abbreviated to 'd').<sup>68</sup> Equivalents to modern currency, where given, are intended to be descriptive; no allowance for inflation et cetera has been made.

<sup>69</sup> Anthony Clayton, *The British Army Officer: Leading the Army from 1660 to the Present*, (London: Pearson, 2007) p. 195.

<sup>70</sup> Royal Marine officer's ranks while nominally army, were aligned to naval ranks, as was their pay.



Pay for all naval personnel was paid as a basic salary by rank or rate and by seniority in that rank or rate, expressed as a daily rate of pay. There were in addition a bewildering number of additional allowances of varying vintages, as was noted in 1921 by the Geddes Committee on National expenditure, payable 'to both Officers and men for every kind of duty which can be called special even down to 2/- per week for playing the harmonium, or 1d per day for charge of the library',<sup>71</sup> a system that continued until the advent of the 'Military Salary' in 1970s. Some allowances were related to qualifications, some to undertaking a given duty, with a different allowance payable for undertaking a duty dependent on being specially qualified to do so or not. The vast majority of these various allowances will not be mentioned but the question of officer's marriage allowance, payable on marriage and thereafter will be discussed in some detail because the failure of the navy to institute one for officers was of continuing concern with a negative impact on morale throughout almost the entire period under consideration.

An officer could be placed on reduced pay if he was for any reason unemployable, or if there was, at a given time, no employment for him. This was either half pay or unemployed pay for which there were separate scales. In the former category fell those fortunate enough to be admirals of the fleet. Uniquely they did not transfer to the retired list, remaining on the active list for the remainder of their life. If there was no appointment for them, they were placed on half pay rather than retired pay,<sup>72</sup> although there were some instances of half pay being used as a substitute for a pension for more junior officers. Half pay was also used for those who were medically unfit, although its application was variable and scrutiny of personal records suggests that would only happen when there was a perception of culpability, for example there are cases of officers with venereal disease being placed on half pay, but not for other forms of illness.<sup>73</sup> It was not uncommon, particularly earlier in the period, for an officer to be on half pay while waiting to take up an appointment, 'It was then usual for a newly appointed Captain to spend at least a year on half-pay'.<sup>74</sup> This would be a significant financial hardship if he lived on his pay, as a captain would actually receive less than when he had been a lieutenant commander. Chatfield, who was to be First Sea Lord in

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<sup>71</sup> ADM 1/8614/188. *Unreferenced and undated memorandum.*

<sup>72</sup> As officers 'transfer[red] to the retired list' at the end of their service, they received 'retired pay'.

<sup>73</sup> 2SLPerRec.

the 1930s, spent three months on half pay in 1922 between appointments as an admiral.<sup>75</sup> Lastly, half pay could be used as a punishment. When the Admiralty Board relieved both the commanding and executive officers of their duties in the aftermath of the mutiny in HMS *Lucia* in 1931, to be described later, they were placed on half pay and received letters conveying ‘Their Lordships extreme displeasure’. See also Fig. 29. in part three for the case of one officer discharged administratively on half pay for passing dishonoured cheques, incurring ‘Their Lordships Displeasure’ and additionally being refused permission to leave under one of the redundancy schemes described earlier. There was one other extremely small group of officers who were on half pay, those serving on the Board of Admiralty. However, they were paid additionally as civil servants. This gave rise to an anomaly to be described below.

It was made plain to potential officers from their earliest contact with the Service that it was not a well paid occupation. Before they joined, they were told that ‘[a]n Officers pay as a Naval Cadet, Midshipman, and Sub-Lieutenant is not lavish enough to cover all his expenses, and his parents should be prepared to give him some assistance during that period ... until he reaches the rank of Lieutenant when he can support himself entirely.’<sup>76</sup> At that time (1937) a sub lieutenant was paid 9 shillings a day (45p) and a lieutenant on promotion 13 shillings and six pence (67.5p). They would then be paid incremental increases (in the case of lieutenants, after four and six years in rank) and then only if promoted. Officers were subject to a series of pay cuts between the wars, and these 1937 pay rates are less than the 1924 scale, which were for a sub lieutenant 10 shillings (50p) a day, for a lieutenant 17 shillings (85p) a day.

In 1919 the Admiralty Board had stated that they were ‘satisfied that the whole question of Navy pay; Officers and men, needs thorough and expeditious revision’. They appointed a Committee under Admiral Sir Martyn Jerram ‘to investigate the whole question’ but noted the reports of two of the Grand Fleet Committees established by Admiral Beatty ‘with a similar reference’.<sup>77</sup> The Board decided that ‘the increases now announced take the form of a bonus pending ... the completion of the investigations now in progress’. The bonus was substantial. Commissioned warrant

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<sup>74</sup> Admiral of the Fleet Lord Chatfield PC GCB OM Etc, *The Navy and Defence: the autobiography of Admiral of the Fleet Lord Chatfield*, (London: William Heinemann 1942) p.82.

<sup>75</sup> Admiral of the Fleet Lord Chatfield PC GCB OM Etc, *The Navy and Defence*, p.202.

<sup>76</sup> Anon, *How to become a Naval Officer and Life at the Royal Naval College Dartmouth*, (London: Gieves 1937) p14.

<sup>77</sup> Unfortunately the output of many of the Grand Fleet Committees is not available.

officers and mates received 4 shillings (20p) a day, lieutenants 4 shillings and sixpence, lieutenant commanders five shillings (25p), which was to be added to substantive pay from 1<sup>st</sup> February 1919 ‘and will be continued until the permanent rates can be settled.’<sup>78</sup> There appear to have been no further changes and this became the basis for what was described subsequently as the ‘1919 pay scale’.<sup>79</sup>

During the 1920s nationally there was significant financial deflation, but ‘[t]here was a common perception that the middle classes had suffered most from wartime inflation’.<sup>80</sup> A noted economist has stated that this was particular marked in the immediate aftermath of the war; the weakness of prices leading to pressure for wage reductions, a major proximate cause of the general strike of 1926.<sup>81</sup> Officers (but not ratings, except for that in September 1931) were subject to a series of pay cuts consequent on the deflation throughout the 1920s. The method used of calculating the cost of living appeared to be biased towards the concerns ‘of weekly wage earners’ to the detriment of naval officers whose outgoings would differ significantly.<sup>82</sup>

The first pay cut came in 1924, and it was apparent that the Admiralty was aware of some misconceptions and spelt out in some detail the reason for the cut:

In 1919, when new rates of pay were fixed it was decided that 20 per cent, of those rates should be considered as due to the high cost of living and should be subject after five years to revision either upwards or downwards, according as the cost of living rose or fell [*sic*]. ... if the cost of living had fallen to the 1914 level, the full 20 per cent would be deducted.

The excess cost of living has actually fallen by approximately 27<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> per cent., and consequently, the reduction to be made is 27<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> per cent. of 20 per cent., or approximately 5<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> per cent of total rates of pay.<sup>83</sup>

Looking at the detailed pay scales, to give an example, a lieutenant earning £310/5s per year would be paid £292 per annum following the ‘revision’. At almost the same time however civil servants were given a pay increase because of a *rise* in the cost

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<sup>78</sup> AWO 407a/19 *Bonus to Naval Officers and Men*.

<sup>79</sup> Cmd 270 *Statement showing the recommendations of the Committee in regard to the pay, half pay, retired pay and allowances of Officers of the Royal Navy and Royal Marines with the decisions of the Government thereon*. (London: HMSO, 1919)

<sup>80</sup> Lawrence James, *The Middle Class* p. 451.

<sup>81</sup> Roger Bootle (email to author), *Re: Deflation*, 10 March 2009.

<sup>82</sup> Commander Charles N. Robinson, R.N. and H.M. Ross (eds), *Brassey's Naval and Shipping Annual 1932* (London: Brasseys, 1932) p.22.

<sup>83</sup> AFO 1701/24 *Officers Pay in 1924 – Revision of Rates*.

of living calculated over a slightly different period.<sup>84</sup> This meant that uniformed members of the Admiralty Board would have had their naval half pay reduced, but their civil service pay increased. This probably went unnoticed by the broader service, except for the readers of *Brassey's*.

To compound matters, new pay scales for those (officers and ratings) who entered after 5 October 1925 were introduced, setting a lower rate which was to be reviewed in 1927. Under this new scale a sub lieutenant's daily rate was reduced by 5%.<sup>85</sup> As rating recruitment was significantly reduced during the 1920s and the prospects for advancement (promotion) fell for ratings, a two tier service gradually developed in which two men of the same rate could be employed next to each other, one on the 1919 payscale, the other on the markedly lower 1925 payscale. This did not affect junior officers whose promotion was automatic, meaning that there were not officers of the same seniority on differing rates of pay. Thus differential pay did not arise as a problem for officers.

Later in the year the Admiralty issued another AFO reiterating the basis for the calculations of reductions based on the cost of living, but giving the formula used in greater detail than previously. It can only be hypothesised that this was thought to be necessary because of concerns expressed, else why repeat what had already been promulgated?<sup>86</sup>

In February 1927, a further pay cut was announced. The arcane reasoning bears examination:

The rates of pay, retired pay etc., ruling from 1<sup>st</sup> July, 1927, until 30<sup>th</sup> June 1930, will accordingly be, approximately, 80 per cent. plus  $\frac{74}{107} \frac{1}{2}$  of 20 per cent. of the standard rates *i.e.* 93.77 per cent. of the standard rates.<sup>87</sup>

This was a cut of 6% on top of the 5 $\frac{1}{2}$  per cent imposed in 1924.<sup>88</sup> After the initial short AFO already cited, a more detailed AFO followed.<sup>89</sup> Until this later AFO which spelt out that 20% of their salary at any given time was to be considered variable. Officers might have been forgiven for assuming there was a fixed 20% of their pay as

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<sup>84</sup> Alex. Richardson & Archibald Hurd (eds), *Brassey's Naval and Shipping Annual 1925*, (London: Brasseys, 1925) p.157.

<sup>85</sup> AFO 2858/25 *Officers' Pay – Revised Rates for New Entrants*.

<sup>86</sup> AFO 3433/25 *Officers Emoluments – Revision on Account of Variation in the Cost of Living*.

<sup>87</sup> Note the fine disregard for the rule not to mix fractions and percentages.

<sup>88</sup> AFO 261/27 *Officers Emoluments – Revision on Account of Variation in the Cost of Living*.

originally set in 1919 that could be cut, not 20% of each settlement. Nothing promulgated previously had indicated to the contrary. This must have left officers with a feeling of mistrust in the Admiralty and must have impacted on morale.

Despite the previous statement that the pay rates would be in force until 30 June 1930, in 1929 a further pay cut was announced. This was calculated on the same basis as before, but was to apply for only 12 months rather than tri-annually as previously. The cut should have been 8% less the already imposed 6%, but 'H.M. Government has decided, however, after full consideration of the circumstances, that the reduction from standard rates shall be limited to 7 per cent. ... in place of the present 6 per cent'.<sup>90</sup> A fuller AFO detailing the actual rates of pay followed.<sup>91</sup>

While subsequent pay cuts were after the Beatty/Madden era, what followed was a continuation of the same process, and thus are best dealt with here. In February 1931, the Admiralty Board announced that the Government had decided that the full 1929 8% cut should be applied after all.<sup>92</sup> The detailed revised pay rates were then promulgated in May 1931.<sup>93</sup>

Thus when the 'Invergordon' pay cut came in September 1931, the generality of naval officers had already had their pay cut on four occasions since the post First World War 'bonus' as well as the 1925 reduction for new entrants. Most attention in the literature has been concentrated on the manifest unfairness of a blanket 1 shilling a day pay cut for ratings which fell disproportionately on junior ratings. However, the announcement about rating's pay made no mention of future revisions.<sup>94</sup> The officers' pay cut at the time of Invergordon has received little attention, as their pay cut was 'merely' of 11 percent, instead of the February 8 percent described above. Indeed some authors have suggested that the officers only suffered a lesser pay cut of '3.7 percent'<sup>95</sup> which ignores the pay cut earlier in the year, and the cuts in earlier years. Additionally the announcement of the latter cut went on to state that 'in future the rates are to be

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<sup>89</sup> AFO1400/27 *Officers' Emoluments – Revision on Account of Variation in the Cost of Living.*

<sup>90</sup> AFO 3085/29 *Officers Emoluments – Revision on Account of Variation in the Cost of Living.*

<sup>91</sup> AFO 1265/30 *Officers Emoluments – Revision on Account of Variation in the Cost of Living.*

<sup>92</sup> AFO 436/31 *Officers Emoluments – Revision on Account of Variation in the Cost of Living.*

<sup>93</sup> AFO 1119/31 *Officers Emoluments – Revision on Account of Variation in the Cost of Living.*

<sup>94</sup> AFO 2239/31 *Pay of Naval Ratings and Royal Marines – Revised Rates for Men at present in Receipt of pre-October 1925 – Rates – Allotments and Pensions.*

<sup>95</sup> Nicholas Tracy, 'Admiral Sir Charles E. Madden (1927-1930) and Admiral Sir Frederick L. Field (1930-1933)', in Malcolm H. Murfett (ed.), *The First Sea Lords: From Fisher to Mountbatten*, (Westport, CT: Praeger, 1995) p. 152.

subject to review six monthly, on 1<sup>st</sup> April and 1<sup>st</sup> October'.<sup>96</sup> While Invergordon marked the only pay cut for ratings in the period after the war, for the officers, it was yet another of a succession, with the promise of more to come. While no further pay cuts actually followed, officers had to wait until 1938 before they had a pay rise (although in 1935 the 'Invergordon' pay cut was reversed).<sup>97</sup>

### Allowances with particular regard to the marriage allowance

It has already been mentioned that additional allowances were many and various. Many allowances were paid for limited periods, for example 'Hard Lying Money' was payable to those serving in designated ships where living conditions were especially unpleasant. The key point with allowances was that in the main they were only paid while the officer or rating was employed on the duty to which they related. There were two areas of allowances that were of significant concern to many officers viz., specialist allowances, and marriage allowance.

### Specialist allowances

Specialist allowances were paid to officers with specialist training when employed on those duties. They included, for example flying pay and submarine pay. Cessation of payment when not employed on such duties was the norm; for example if an officer reverted to general service from submarine service, his submarine allowance would stop because, in reverting, he relinquished his specialist qualification and relevant annotation in the Navy List. However, until 1924 the allowances were not payable while attending a course such as the staff course because the officer concerned were not seen as being employed on their specialist duties while remaining qualified to do so.<sup>98</sup> This would be hardly likely to encourage officers to apply for such courses who, in effect, had to pay to attend them.

### Marriage allowance

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<sup>96</sup> AFO 2409/31 *Officers' Emoluments – Revision of, on account of need for Economy in National Expenditure.*

<sup>97</sup> AFO 2126/38 *R.N. & R.M. Officers – Revised Conditions of Service.*

<sup>98</sup> AFO 1381/25 *Submarine Officers and Naval Observers – Allowance while undergoing Staff Courses.*  
Note: this was backdated to 1924 and paid as a special allowance, not the full specialist allowance.

Marriage allowance fell into a different category. Officers in the Royal Navy did not get a marriage allowance and this was a continuing cause of dissatisfaction. The genesis of the problem was in 1919 when the basis of officers pay for all three Services was laid down, the aim being ‘to secure parity of remuneration in all three services.’ A difference arose because the Army and Air Force 1919 settlements had different rates of pay for married and single officers, but the navy had a single rate of pay ‘at a somewhat higher level than would have been possible if provision had been made for a separate marriage allowance.’<sup>99</sup> This difference was not quantified at the time or subsequently. While the Grand Fleet Committee which looked at pay had recommended that officers should receive a marriage allowance, the ‘Beatty Board’ initially did not support the recommendation.<sup>100</sup> Despite not being eligible for a marriage allowance, officers were entitled to a children’s allowance for each dependent child.<sup>101</sup> This was set in 1919 at £2 per month (higher rate, payable to lieutenants) and £1 per month (lower rate, more senior officers) in respect of a maximum of four legitimate children.

While officers in the Royal Navy were not entitled to a marriage allowance, ratings were, as were officers in Dominion navies, which at that time were divisions of the Royal Navy. Their rates of marriage allowance were promulgated by the AWO system, indeed the published scale in Canadian dollar was also given sterling for Canadians serving in HM Ships.<sup>102</sup> With the wide circulation of AWOs, at the very least, RN officers were likely have been aware of the difference.

Thereafter, the Admiralty tried repeatedly and unsuccessfully to get a marriage allowance for officers ‘but on each occasion was negatived’ [sic].<sup>103</sup> The first attempt in 1922 fell foul of the then Chancellor of the Exchequer, Mr W.S. Churchill, who refused to even put the Admiralty’s submission before Cabinet.<sup>104</sup> In 1924 at the direction of the First Sea Lord a committee chaired by Admiral Goodenough was established to ‘establish the views of the Officers on the Active Lists who will be affected by the

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<sup>99</sup> Cmd. 5746, *Statement Explanatory of the Scheme of Marriage allowance for R.N. and R.M. Officers*, (London : HMSO, May 1938).

<sup>100</sup> Stephen Roskill, *Naval Policy Between the Wars: The period of Anglo-American Antagonism 1919-1929*, p.118.

<sup>101</sup> AWO 332/19 *Children’s Allowance-Officers*.

<sup>102</sup> AWO 2718/19 *R.C.N. and R.N.C.V.R. [sic] –Bonus for Officers and Marriage Allowance for Officers and Men*.

<sup>103</sup> Cmd. 5746, *Statement Explanatory of the Scheme of Marriage allowance for R.N. and R.M. Officers*, (London: HMSO, May 1938).

<sup>104</sup> Stephen Roskill, *Naval Policy Between the Wars: The Period of Anglo-American Antagonism 1919-1929*, p. 337.

introduction of Marriage Allowance'.<sup>105</sup> The committee recommended that a marriage allowance be paid at 6/6d a day 'free of income tax and entirely a charge to public funds'.<sup>106</sup> This reflected the fact that the marriage allowance received by the Army and Air Force was tax free (but the supposed 'marriage element' of naval officers pay was part of their taxable pay). The proposal was then considered by a further committee which was directed to consider whether the 1919 pay scale did include a 'married element' and a variety of other issues such as whether marriage allowance continue to be paid if an officer was on half pay or on unemployed pay.<sup>107</sup> The proposal was submitted to the Treasury as part of the negotiations concerning the 1924 pay cut.<sup>108</sup> The treasury turned it down, again because the 1919 scales were held to contain a 'marriage element'.

As an indicator of the morale consequences of the failure to pay a marriage allowance, it would appear that officers were not complying with the requirement to notify the Admiralty on marriage. In 1930 an AFO was issued:

It has been brought to notice that the instructions in Article **932** [*sic*] of the King's Regulations and Admiralty Instructions which directs that an officer shall notify his marriage to the Admiralty within one month of its taking place have in many instances not been complied with.

2. These instructions are to be strictly observed.<sup>109</sup>

At first sight this may seem to be a petty bureaucratic matter, but it is evidence of a deeper malaise. Officers had to have their commanding officers' permission to marry, an officer's marriage would have been a significant social event for a ship's wardroom,<sup>110</sup> but officers were not then notifying the Admiralty that they were married. In a service which prided itself on a rigid even harsh discipline, the failure to notify the Admiralty of the event of marriage could well be construed as a minor act of rebellion. This must be taken, at the very least, as further evidence of poor morale.

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<sup>105</sup> ADM 167/69 *Board Minute 1916*.

<sup>106</sup> ADM 167/69 *Board Minute 1957*.

<sup>107</sup> ADM 167/69 *Board Minute 1977*.

<sup>108</sup> ADM 167/70 *Introduction of an allowance for married officers in the Royal Navy (initialled) N.F.O. 15 June 1924*.

<sup>109</sup> AFO 336/30 *Notification of Marriage*.

<sup>110</sup> And the whole ship, which would wear a garland at the foremast head on the day when any member of the ships company was marrying.



## Disciplinary Matters

What became known as ‘The Royal Oak Affair’ has been described as ‘a farce that was to bring a deep blush to the Navy’s face, a farce that became a tragedy for one promising officer, blighted the career of another, wrecked that of a third, smeared several others’.<sup>111</sup> It had far wider implications than a falling out between an admiral and his Flag Captain. It probably ended the aspirations of Sir Roger Keyes to be First Sea Lord, a somewhat different personality to Admiral Field who was thus to be First Sea Lord over the period of the Invergordon mutiny. The ‘affair’ (comprising as it does a series of incidents) is described solely for the illustrations of indications of officers’ morale.

Rear Admiral Collard had been newly promoted to be Rear Admiral First Battle Squadron and was to fly his flag in HMS *Royal Oak* as part of the Mediterranean Fleet. Very simply, he, his Flag Captain, Captain Dewar and the ship’s Executive Officer, Commander Daniel had a personality clash. Ordinarily, this would not matter, the more junior officers would grin and bear it, but Admiral Collard had a very short temper, and, as well as treating Captain Dewar contemptuously in front of his officers, made public utterances concerning the ship and famously, at a ball on board the ship in front of civilian guests of both sexes, the ship’s Royal Marine Bandmaster. The latter incident achieved notoriety throughout the service, becoming what might now be termed a catchphrase.<sup>112</sup>

Commander Daniel, having been ordered by the Admiral to give his reasons in writing for another incident, openly sought the counsel of his subordinates before submitting the required letter through his commanding officer, Captain Dewar. This was an extraordinary act in a tightly disciplined Service. The letter itself was at best disrespectful of a flag officer, but it had been forwarded by Captain Dewar who could easily have required it to be re-drafted before he did so. Instead of speedily acting to stifle the episode, the Commander in Chief, Admiral Keyes let matters fester to the point where he had to delay ‘the sailing of the Fleet for fifteen hours and ordered a Court of Inquiry which [found] the said Rear-Admiral, Captain and Commander gravely

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<sup>111</sup> Robert Glenton, *The Royal Oak Affair: The Saga of Admiral Collard and Bandmaster Barnacle*, (London: Leo Cooper 1991) p.17.

at fault.<sup>113</sup> The affair culminated in a very public Court Martial on board HMS *Eagle* at Gibraltar. The press had a field day, with Fleet Street cartoonists to the fore.<sup>114</sup> The matter was probably best summed up by the newspaper *The People* which said ‘It is to be hoped that the Navy generally will have learned ... how very unwise it is for all concerned to wash soiled linen in public.’<sup>115</sup>

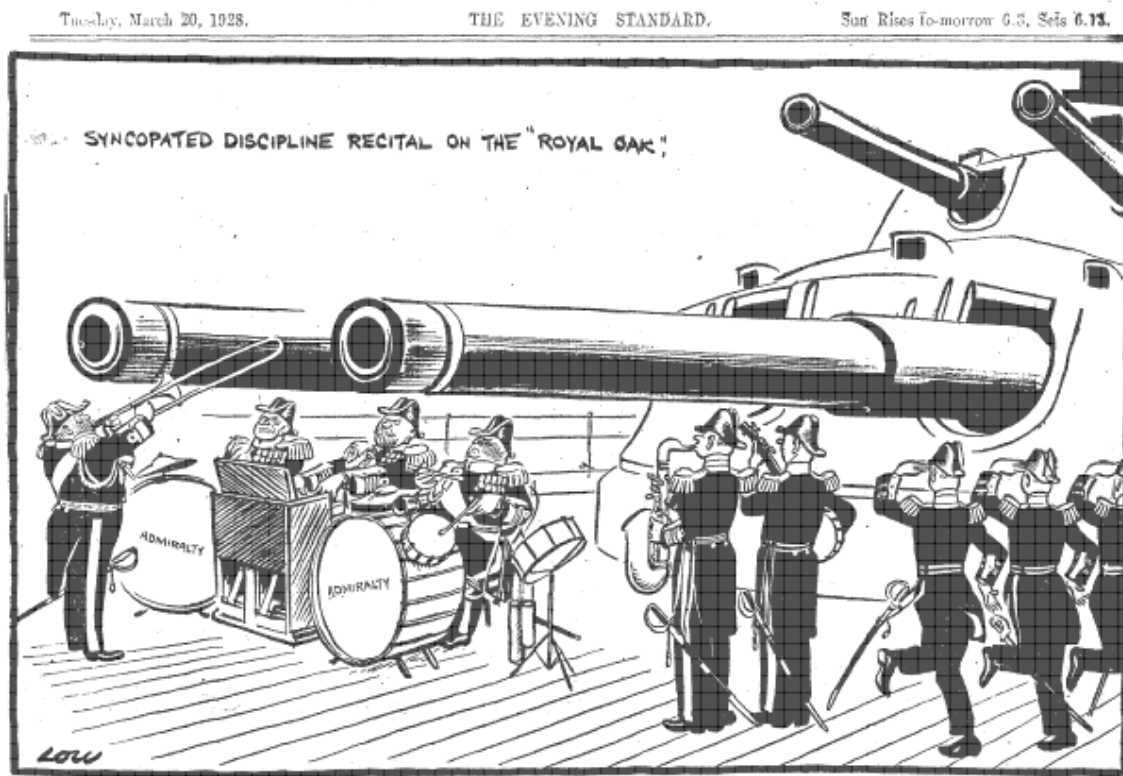


Fig. 20. Cartoon from the ‘*Evening Standard*’ 20 March 1928, published during the *Royal Oak* court martial

There are two points to be made, firstly that a captain and a commander, both on the verge of promotion (Dewar was later promoted Rear Admiral, but never flew his flag at sea) felt that the system served them so badly they stepped out of line, but far more importantly for the officer corps as a whole who saw the organisation, of which they were part, publicly humiliated from within the service.

<sup>112</sup> With fine disregard for the facts, apart from Collard’s use of a pejorative term, ‘Was the bandmaster a bugger, or was the bugger a bandmaster?’ Captain D.A.Farquharson-Roberts RM – personal communication.

<sup>113</sup> Paul G. Halpern (ed.), *The Keyes Papers: Selections from the Private and Official Correspondence of Admiral of the Fleet Baron Keyes of Zeebrugge 1919-1939*, (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1980) p. 245.

<sup>114</sup> The Low cartoon reproduced at Fig. 20. is a surprisingly accurate representation of the then full dress uniform. Up until 1923, regulations permitted, in some circumstances, a salute to be made with the left hand and some ludicrous pictures of it exist, perhaps Low had seen them.

<sup>115</sup> Robert Glenton, *The Royal Oak Affair* p.164.

## Photographs

There is a very small but telling indicator of officers' motivation; the matter of their photographs. In July 1929 an AFO was issued stating that 'In order to make the records more complete, the Admiralty are desirous of placing photographs of officers with their records' The AFO continued:

The cost of the photographs cannot be paid from public funds, but in the view of the advantages of the scheme and the small personal cost involved, the Board hope that officers will co-operate in making it a success.

The AFO was cancelled and replaced by another AFO in 1930. It was identically worded, except that it now concluded 'the Board hope that this request will meet with general compliance'.<sup>116</sup>

Examination of personal records of officers carried out for this thesis showed that there was only one record with an appended photograph prior to the Second World War. This level of compliance does not suggest that officers were very highly motivated towards the organisation if they would not pay for a photograph.

## An augury?

Midshipmen spent their sea training in the 'Training Cruisers' or in major fleet units. Training in destroyers was almost an afterthought, an annex or appendage to their training. This made no allowance for the very different experience gained from service in a small ship with far fewer other trainees.<sup>117</sup> In a foretaste of what was to come, the Admiralty in 1930 recognised the value of such training, ordering that if possible Midshipmen should 'undergo a period of three to four months training in destroyers during the year immediately preceding their last six months service as midshipmen'.<sup>118</sup> The order was prescriptive and overly detailed, but for the first time in an officers' training syllabus it was stated that they were not only 'to gain experience in the duties of officers' which they had been expected to do before but 'thereby ... develop character, sense of responsibility, leadership and self reliance'. This was expecting

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<sup>116</sup> AFO 30/133 *Photographs of R.N. Officers for attachment to Admiralty Record.*

<sup>117</sup> AWO 2582/19 *Midshipmen, R.N., in Destroyers – Employment and Training.*

rather a lot in three to four months, but marked the first steps towards the radical changes in officer training that were to follow under Field.

At the point when Admiral of the Fleet Sir Charles Madden left office, the officer corps of the Royal Navy had suffered continuing neglect. Their loyalty had been sorely tested, and it was to show over the next couple of years, in particular when to some extent, they ‘sat on their hands’<sup>119</sup> over the mutiny at Invergordon. It is appropriate here to re-examine the officer corps in terms of the Herzberg matrix referred to earlier:

#### Hygiene Factors

Pay and Benefits	Poor
Company Policy/ Administration	Poor
Relationships with co-workers	Good
Physical environment	Poor

#### Motivational Factors

Achievement	Poor (but good viewed historically)
Recognition	Poor
Work itself	Poor
Responsibility	Poor
Promotion	Poor
Growth	Poor

Fig. 21. Herzberg matrix at the end of the 1920s.

Fig. 21 cannot be said to be a good picture of any organisation, and must be regarded as the product of Beatty and Madden’s management. In part decisions were forced on the Admiralty by political and financial necessity, but many of the decisions taken were then implemented ineptly and even incompetently. Beatty and Madden left a poor legacy for their successor.

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<sup>118</sup> AFO 78/30 *Destroyer Training for Midshipmen – Syllabus*.

<sup>119</sup> Physical appendages, not their ratings!

## Chapter 3

### The Nadir and the Inflection: Admiral Field

This chapter describes the nadir of the fortunes of the Royal Navy's officer corps between the wars. It is not an exaggeration to describe it as a crisis. The mutiny at Invergordon was a temporal marker, but as will be shown the crisis was not about ratings pay which, because that precipitated the mutiny, is widely assumed to represent the totality of its causation. The real crisis was the culmination of the mismanagement of the officer corps under Beatty and Madden. Truly it can be said, with them safely retired, their chickens came home to roost in their successors' hen coop.

Admiral Sir Frederick Field succeeded Admiral Madden as First Sea Lord in July 1930 and is bracketed with him.<sup>1</sup> Madden was seen as being ineffectual and Field has attracted widespread opprobrium, particularly from Roskill, because of his ill health, his supposed professional and physical unfitness for his post and, in particular, the mutiny at Invergordon. Roskill regarded Field as, at best, a stopgap, describing him as 'the most colourless First Sea Lord'<sup>2</sup> of the inter war period and later in the second volume of his history of naval policy between the wars as being 'disastrous' and as presiding over one 'perhaps the weakest Board of Admiralty of all time'.<sup>3</sup> Roskill ascribed this to the (Labour) First Lord wanting to keep strong personalities off the Board of which he was head.<sup>4</sup> Le Bailly felt that there was a view that the 'Board of Admiralty [was] less than effective, if not patently incompetent'.<sup>5</sup>

Tracy gives a more balanced picture of Field, describing him as a man of 'great moral and physical courage'.<sup>6</sup> It has been suggested that he was almost certainly the second choice for the post after Keyes,<sup>7</sup> although he obviously had his supporters within

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<sup>1</sup> Nicholas Tracy 'Admiral Sir Charles E. Madden (1927-1930) and Admiral Sir Frederick L. Field (1930-1933)' in Malcolm H. Murfett (ed.), *The First Sea Lords: From Fisher to Mountbatten*, (Westport, CT: Prager, 1995).

<sup>2</sup> Stephen Roskill, *Naval Policy between the Wars: The Period of Anglo-American Antagonism 1919-1929*, (New York: Walker and Company, 1968), p.48.

<sup>3</sup> Stephen Roskill, *Naval Policy between the Wars: The Period of Reluctant Rearmament 1930 -1939*, (London: Collins, 1976) p. 80.

<sup>4</sup> Stephen Roskill, *Naval Policy Between the Wars: The Period of Reluctant Rearmament*, pp. 79-80.

<sup>5</sup> Vice Admiral Sir Louis Le Bailly, *From Fisher to the Falklands*, (London: Marine Management (Holdings) Ltd 1991) pp 49-50.

<sup>6</sup> Nicholas Tracy, 'Field, Sir Frederick Laurence (1871-1945),' *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford University Press, 2004 accessed on line 22 Dec 2011]

<sup>7</sup> Ultimately Admiral of the Fleet Sir Roger Keyes GCB KCVO DSO 1<sup>st</sup> Baron Keyes.

the service; Pound in 1929 refers to ‘the Fieldites’ in the context of his possibly becoming First Sea Lord.<sup>8</sup> The charismatic Admiral Sir Roger Keyes had been considered in 1927 and, as Commander in Chief Mediterranean (then the usual stepping stone on the way to being First Sea Lord), was undoubtedly being groomed to take up the position in 1930. However the very public ‘*Royal Oak* affair’ described in the previous chapter and possibly his rumoured favouritism towards fellow polo players<sup>9</sup> called his wider judgement into question.<sup>10</sup> Instead Madden was given an extension in post,<sup>11</sup> and then Field was chosen instead of Keyes.<sup>12</sup> Halpern in discussing the Keyes papers believes that ultimately Madden, who, as the incumbent First Sea Lord would have advised on his successor, expressed his preference for Field to succeed him.<sup>13</sup>



Fig.22. Admiral Field, according to Roskill, ‘the most colourless First Sea Lord’ of the inter war period (Field family papers)

<sup>8</sup> Robin Brodhurst, *Churchill’s Anchor: Admiral of the Fleet Sir Dudley Pound OM, GCB. GCVO*, (Barnsley: Leo Cooper, 2000) p. 74.

<sup>9</sup> Joy Packer, *Pack and Follow: One Person’s Adventures in Four Different Worlds*, (London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1945) p. 95; Paul G Halpern PhD (ed.), *The Keyes Papers: Selections from the Private and Official Correspondence of Admiral of the Fleet Baron Keyes of Zeebrugge Vol II 1919-1938*, (London: George Allen and Unwin/Navy Records Society, 1980) p.252.

<sup>10</sup> Paul G Halpern (ed.), *The Keyes Papers: Selections from the Private and Official Correspondence of Admiral of the Fleet Baron Keyes of Zeebrugge Vol II 1919-1938*, (London: George Allen and Unwin/Navy Records Society, 1980) p.122.

<sup>11</sup> Stephen Roskill, *Hankey, Man of Secrets: Volume II 1919-1931*, (London: Collins, 1972) p. 509.

<sup>12</sup> Possibly though others shared Richmond’s view that Keyes had ‘courage & independence ... though very little brains’ see Arthur J. Marder, *Portrait of an Admiral: The Life and Papers of Sir Herbert Richmond*, (London: Jonathan Cape, 1952) p. 293.

<sup>13</sup> Paul G Halpern PhD (ed.), *The Keyes Papers: Selections from the Private and Official Correspondence of Admiral of the Fleet Baron Keyes of Zeebrugge Vol II 1919-1938*, (London: George Allen and Unwin/Navy Records Society, 1980) p.251.

Roskill's judgement that Field's was the weakest Board of all time is unfair. Field's Second Sea Lord (Admiral Fuller) was undistinguished, but he was far from incompetent. Despite being relieved of his appointment early in the aftermath of the Invergordon mutiny,<sup>14</sup> he was offered, but declined the appointment as Flag Officer, Plymouth.<sup>15</sup> Field's Third Sea Lord was Rear Admiral Backhouse, later to be First Sea Lord and his Deputy Chief of Naval Staff was Frederic Dreyer, who whatever his other faults, cannot be reasonably described as weak.<sup>16</sup> That said, the Field Admiralty, if it is remembered at all, is remembered for two episodes of 'collective indiscipline' or mutinies that attracted widespread contemporary attention; firstly that in HMS *Lucia* and the far bigger and, in some ways, far more consequential mutiny at Invergordon. Roskill feels it would have been better for the navy if Field had resigned in the aftermath of the latter,<sup>17</sup> and effectively blames Field for everything that was wrong. In fact, even before the Invergordon mutiny Field had started to address some critically important personnel issues, particularly those surrounding the officer corps, which had been neglected under Beatty and Madden for more than a decade. Unfortunately, of all the proposed and actual reforms to training, both Chatfield (Field's successor as First Sea Lord) and Roskill concentrate to the exclusion of almost anything else on a widely popular proposal to (re)-introduce sail training for both officers and ratings.<sup>18</sup>

This author believes that the overdue reforms initiated by the 'Field' Admiralty were absolutely critical for the navy's fighting capability in the Second World War, and were the bedrock on which Chatfield, his successor as First Sea Lord, built. Field provided the necessary structural and administrative changes, but, as will be shown, did not fully address morale issues. However, his were reforms about people, particularly the officers. He completely revised their training and provided the framework for the rapid and enormous expansion of the officer corps of the Royal Navy that was a major feature of the Second World War.

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<sup>14</sup> Stephen Roskill, *Hankey, Man of Secrets: Vol II 1919-1931*, p. 557. Fuller served just over two years, when most between war Second Sea Lords served three years in post, see Stephen Roskill, *Naval Policy Between the Wars: The Period of Anglo-American Antagonism 1919-1929*, p. 570.

<sup>15</sup> J.H. Lloyd-Owen 'Fuller, Sir Cyril Thomas Moulden (1874-1942)' *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford University Press, 2004, accessed on line 2 Jan 2012).

<sup>16</sup> Retired as Admiral Sir Frederic Dreyer GBE KCB. He was an officer with a reputation for being strong willed and impetuous.

<sup>17</sup> In fact Field did offer the First Lord his resignation, but it was declined. It is of course possible that the First Lord felt that his office had more responsibility for provoking the mutiny.

<sup>18</sup> For a full, if somewhat tendentious, discussion of the issue, see Admiral of the Fleet Lord Chatfield, *It Might Happen Again: The Navy and Defence*, (London: William Heinemann, 1947) pp. 54-59.

While this chapter is titled after astronomical events, the affairs of men lack the precision of the stars in the heavens. There was no one single definitive inflection or turning point, some aspects were improving before the nadir (taken by Roskill as being the Invergordon mutiny, which, with the earlier *Lucia* mutiny, can be taken as a reasonable marker of the navy's lowest point between the two World Wars), some matters continued to worsen after it. The publication of the 1932 Naval Estimates also might reasonably be taken as the lowest point and because included in that statement to Parliament were some overdue reforms, could be taken as marking the inflection.

A purely chronological narrative covering the Field Admiralty would be confused and confusing. Thus what follows first describes the two mutinies and then their aftermath to define out the structural failings arising from the mismanagement of the officer corps and identify the aspects that were most in need of reform. In particular, reforms to commissioning from the lower deck and some aspects of officers' personnel administration predated the Invergordon mutiny, but are described after it to allow a coherent narrative. It will be shown that Field was a reformer from the start of his time in office but that the Invergordon mutiny, in particular, forced modification of some of intended reforms, in some cases for the better, and in one particular instance – commissioning from the lower deck – for the worse.

#### The mutiny in HMS *Lucia* and that of the Atlantic Fleet at Invergordon.

There were two significant mutinies in Field's term of office; that in HMS *Lucia* in January 1931 and of the Atlantic Fleet in September of the same year, the latter known as the 'Invergordon Mutiny.' A feature of these mutinies, particularly the former, is the degree to which the Admiralty Board was perceived to have given in to outside pressure, particularly political, but also what would now be termed media pressure to an extent that the officer corps saw themselves as being undermined. This had been a recurring feature of the period, as before either mutiny there had been episodes when officers' decisions had been over ruled due to political pressure. As an example, Edwards recounts a case of a sailor serving in HMS *Rodney* who was disgraced (demoted) as a punishment entirely within the provisions of the Naval Discipline Act. However, following a question being asked in the House of Commons the commanding officer had been 'forced to reinstate the man.'<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> Kenneth Edwards, *The Mutiny at Invergordon*, (London; Putnam, 1937) p. 163.



The mutiny that took place in HMS *Lucia* on 4 January 1931 is examined here in some detail because of its significant impact on wider naval officer morale.<sup>20</sup> While it received a lot of attention at the time, it has been subsequently overshadowed by the mutiny at Invergordon later in the year to the point that it is covered only by the introductory paragraph to the chapter on Invergordon in Roskill's history of the Royal Navy between the wars.<sup>21</sup> Nonetheless it warrants attention because there was widespread contemporary interest in the consequent disciplinary measures in the press and most importantly, pressure from the Trades Union movement on the then First Lord of the Admiralty, and resulting impact on the morale of the officer corps.

HMS *Lucia* had been a German prize taken in the First World War. She was a merchant ship displacing 6005 tons that had been converted in 1916 to be a submarine depot ship.<sup>22</sup> She was an old ship overdue for replacement, with poor facilities for the ship's company. Indeed scrapping her had been discussed by the Board of Admiralty ten years before the mutiny.<sup>23</sup> She was home ported in Plymouth and had a 'unique position in the Fleet' cruising 'twice a year with the Atlantic Fleet in addition to other absences from her Home Port'.<sup>24</sup> Despite this, service in her was classed as 'Home Service ... as if she was a harbour ship', and the ship's company were given leave accordingly unlike other submarine depot ships in which service was 'to be regarded as "sea-going service"'.<sup>25</sup>

HMS *Lucia* was, in the words of the Court of Enquiry held after the mutiny, 'definitely what is known as an "unhappy ship", at any rate as far as the seamen were concerned' and before the mutiny itself there had been significant disciplinary problems. The executive officer<sup>26</sup> had restricted the times when men could smoke for no apparent reason, which had given rise to a minor episode of 'collective indiscipline'.

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<sup>20</sup> Michael Farquharson-Roberts, 'The LUCIA Mutiny: A failure of the Royal Navy's Internal Communications', *RUSI Journal* (April 2009) pp. 104-107.

<sup>21</sup> Stephen Roskill, *Naval Policy Between the Wars: The Period of Reluctant Rearmament 1930-1939*, p. 89.

<sup>22</sup> Fred T. Jane, *Jane's Fighting Ships of World War I*, (London: Studio Editions 1990) p.90.

<sup>23</sup> ADM 167/64 Board decision 27495. She was to continue in service until the end of the Second World War.

<sup>24</sup> ADM 156/104 contains correspondence concerning the Court of Enquiry and the transcript of the Court's proceedings.

<sup>25</sup> AWO 2971/22 *Sea-going Service- H.M. Ships "Maidstone" and "Alecto"*.

<sup>26</sup> The executive officer is the senior executive branch officer below the commanding officer, i.e. the second in command. If of commanders rank, he would also be described as 'the Commander'. If the

More seriously, the previous autumn, the executive officer/first lieutenant had ordered that senior ratings [NCOs] should turn to for evening quarters, a muster of the ships company. A shipwright, a senior rating, submitted a request to see the Executive Officer stating that this was not done in any other ship in the Navy. The upshot was that he was punished for making a 'frivolous request' and suffered seven days loss of leave. When asked about this at the Court of Enquiry, the ship's Master at Arms (the senior rating responsible for ship's discipline) said that he had thought it a reasonable request. He also said that the treatment of the shipwright had caused 'discussion' among the senior ratings in the ship, who had thought it unjust. Significantly thereafter no member of the ship's company made any complaints or representations of any nature. As the Court of Enquiry recorded:

[t]he normal channel for the ventilation of their grievances being as they thought closed, the men affected no doubt began to consider by what methods their troubles could be remedied.

The mutiny took place on Sunday 4 January 1931. The ship had been delayed leaving dry dock and there was a significant amount of work to be undertaken by the ship's company to fit her for a forthcoming period at sea. To achieve this, shore leave had been restricted on four occasions over the preceding days. On the Sunday, it had apparently been the unstated intention of the first lieutenant for the ship's company to work until 1200 and then to be granted shore leave. This intention had not been communicated to the junior ratings, who, thinking they would be working for the entire Sunday, refused to turn to for work. The first lieutenant went to their mess, instructed them directly to turn to. As he left the mess a rating said 'You'll be lucky', and the refusal to work continued. The upshot was that 32 ratings were arrested.

The Court of Enquiry was convened 4 January 1931 and met for the first time 5 January, sitting until Monday 12 January. It submitted its findings to Flag Officer Plymouth in a letter dated 11 January 1931[*sic*]. The full transcript and findings of the Court were closed until the end of 2007.<sup>27</sup> It was chaired by Captain M.K. Horton DSO\*\*, (later Admiral Sir Max Horton GCB DSO\*\*) the commanding officer of HMS *Resolution* then in dockyard hands at Devonport (Plymouth) after a long refit. His

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executive officer was junior, he would be the executive officer or First Lieutenant. Confusingly a larger ship would have a Commander (the appointment) and a First Lieutenant subordinate to him.

<sup>27</sup> ADM 156/104 contains the correspondence relating to the Court of Enquiry..

involvement is not mentioned by his biographer,<sup>28</sup> possibly because the file was closed at the time of writing (1954) nor is the 'grateful thanks' he received from the Board for his conduct both of the Court and prosecuting the subsequent Courts Martial.

The Court was highly critical of the commanding officer and the executive officer. The commanding officer as well as commanding *Lucia*, commanded a submarine flotilla based on the ship. While the Court accepted the difficult nature of their duties, in their opinion the commanding officer:

gave insufficient personal attention to the methods employed by the First Lieutenant ... to enable him to correct this officer's deficiencies ... He [the Commanding Officer] was responsible for two incidents which were contributory to the discontent in the ship

and the executive officer:

did not consistently employ that firm and conciliatory manner of conducting duty which is the surest way to gain the respect and confidence of the men.

These are an explicit and very serious condemnation of two officers' man management, an essential component of leadership.

Following the inquiry disciplinary action was taken. Four ratings were court martialled (Captain Horton was the prosecuting officer) and twenty eight were dealt with summarily. Two ratings were sentenced to terms of hard labour and dismissal from the service, and two to detention. One of those dealt with summarily, a leading seaman, was discharged from the Navy 'Services No Longer Required' (SNLR). This was an administrative measure which was not officially regarded as a punishment. This was made plain in a subsequent parliamentary answer, his case having been taken up by the newspapers, and becoming something of a *cause celebre*.<sup>29</sup> The other twenty seven were sentenced to periods of detention from seven to seventy eight days.

The First Lord of the Admiralty (then A.V. Alexander, a Labour politician) received at least two letters from Trades Union sources.<sup>30</sup> The first dated 10th January from the 'Stratford 3<sup>rd</sup> branch of the A.E.U.' demanded:

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<sup>28</sup> Rear Admiral W.S.Chalmers CBE DSC, *Max Horton and the Western Approaches*, (London: Hodder and Stoughton 1954).

<sup>29</sup> ADM 178/109 contains the unreferenced Parliamentary question and answer.

<sup>30</sup> ADM 178/109.contains the correspondence.

[t]he immediate release of the 30 sailors of the submarine depot ship “Lucia” – now under arrest because they protested against the curtailment of their Christmas leave.

Further, we demand that facilities be given to these members of the working class to elect their own representatives . . . .

Further, we demand full political rights for the armed forces, and the right to form Soliders’ [*sic*] and Sailors’ Trade Unions

Another, dated 12 January 1931 recording a unanimous resolution ‘by a Mass Meeting of over 800 workers’ in the Rhonda Valley in Wales was curiously similar in some of its wording, demanding:

the immediate release of the 30 sailors of the submarine depot ship, Lucia, now under arrest because they protested against the curtailment of their Christmas leave.

This meeting regards the arrests a total denial of elementary rights, and further demands that these members of the working class be given facilities to elect their own representatives to express the grievances on behalf of those arrested, and calls for the full publication of the facts and proceedings.

An organisation styling itself ‘Friends of the Soviet Union (Manchester)’ demanded ‘the immediate release of the ratings’. The Communist Party of Great Britain weighed in with a pamphlet entitled the ‘Sailors and Marines Programme’ with a forward ‘by a lower deck man’ demanding trade union rights for service personnel.<sup>31</sup>

The Board of Admiralty met to consider the matter on 27 January 1931 with the Judge Advocate of the Fleet and the Head of NL [Naval Law] division in attendance.<sup>32</sup> They had the minutes of the Court of Enquiry, and the proceedings of the subsequent Courts Martial before them. From their study of these documents they concluded that:

It was clear to the Board . . . that blame was attributable to the Captain and also to the First Lieutenant . . . but these faults afforded no ground for a concerted refusal to obey a perfectly legitimate order.

After carefully reviewing the circumstances . . . the Board decided . . . that it was a case in which some clemency should be shown.

All of the Courts Martial sentences were reduced, and ‘the remaining twenty-seven cases which were dealt with summarily’ were similarly reduced (but it appears that discharge of a leading seaman SNLR was not rescinded).

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<sup>31</sup> ADM 156/191. Contains the advice received by and the deliberations of the Board of Admiralty relating to the *Lucia* mutiny.

<sup>32</sup> ADM 156/190 Board Minute 2801.

The Board minutes quoted above have an appendix whose wording and style is different. This sets out clearly the reasons for the Board's actions, and includes a paragraph:

The officers referred to [i.e. the Commanding Officer and the First Lieutenant] will have their appointments terminated forthwith and will be placed on half pay, with an expression of the Board's serious displeasure for the regrettable state of affairs revealed by this incident, and HMS "LUCIA" [sic] will be immediately paid off and recommissioned with a new crew.

Another paragraph deals with methods of making a representation or complaint, in which the Board accepted that 'insufficient knowledge of the regulations' existed, and that 'steps will be taken'. This is unusual as generally Board minutes recorded only decisions and not the discussion or reasoning behind that decision. The appendix to this minute reads as if had been intended for wider dissemination, but it was not followed by a Confidential Admiralty Fleet Order (CAFO) (which would be the normal route to disseminate such sensitive content) nor is there a record of a directed letter being sent to Flag Officers, the normal alternative method. The Board minutes and appendix therefore remained '**SECRET**. *For the information of Members of the Board only*' [sic] which was itself extremely unusual and further, it was held closed by the National Archive until 2007.<sup>33</sup>

However presumably this was the origin of a CAFO, originating from the Naval Law Division in May 1931, entitled 'Redress of Wrongs' which said:

Cases have occurred recently from which it appears that the correct method of stating grievances ... are not sufficiently well known, either by officers or by men. ... The attention of Commanding Officers is specially directed to the fact that ... no one is to be penalised for making a complaint in accordance with the rules ... punishment of anyone for making a frivolous or vexatious complaint is no longer allowed, provided that the complainant ... complies with the regulations.<sup>34</sup>

This was accompanied by a poster for display in HM Ships (Form S.272) which it was directed was to be 'kept permanently displayed in an accessible part of the ship ... and is to be read quarterly at the same time as the Articles of War'

As has been remarked before, the records held by the National archive are incomplete, and have been 'weeded' before being archived, in particular of the all

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<sup>33</sup> ADM 156/90 Appendix to Board Minute 2801.

<sup>34</sup> CAFO 1129/31 *Redress of wrongs*.

important minute sheets. Thus, it impossible to be sure of the events that actually occurred after the meeting of the Admiralty Board. A reasonable supposition would be that the original intention of the Board was to disseminate the reasons for their actions more widely but ultimately chose not to. Whether this was a result of political pressure and for what reason is unknown. Edwards (himself a serving officer at the time) believes that:

[w]ithin the Royal Navy the manner in which the *Lucia* was dealt with by Whitehall had a disastrous effect upon morale. Among officers there was a widespread feeling of having been badly “let down”. The treatment of the officers of H.M.S. *Lucia* demonstrated the confirmation of their worst fears – that they could not rely upon the support of the high command and were liable at any moment to be treated as pawns in a game of which they knew nothing, but for which they had a hearty contempt.<sup>35</sup>

Whatever the mechanism, the Board’s failure was in not communicating with the service, and in particular the officers, who were left with the impression that the officers of HMS *Lucia* had been made scapegoats.<sup>36</sup> That the Board’s decision was correct is borne out by the subsequent career of the Executive Officer who went onto half pay, and was not employed again until the war. He was promoted commander, and was the executive officer of HMS *Hawkins*, a cruiser, during the Second World War. He was seen to be a weak officer but the ship was fortunate that he had a strong and able First Lieutenant.<sup>37</sup>

### The mutiny at Invergordon and its aftermath

The Royal Navy has suffered many mutinies, some big, most small. While some, like that at the Nore in 1797 have been described as having political or insurrectionist overtones,<sup>38</sup> most have been, like the mutiny in HMS *Lucia*, what anywhere else in society would be termed ‘industrial action’ or a strike. The mutiny of the Atlantic Fleet at Invergordon in September 1931 has been exhaustively studied over the years.<sup>39</sup> It has been correctly described as ‘the culmination of the effects of short sighted policies

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<sup>35</sup> Kenneth Edwards, *The Mutiny at Invergordon*, p. 111.

<sup>36</sup> Letter to the author from Vice Admiral Sir Louis Le Bailly dated 3 October 2009.

<sup>37</sup> Letter to the author from Brigadier McGarel-Groves Royal Marines (who commanded HMS *Hawkins* marine detachment) dated May 2009.

<sup>38</sup> James Dugan, *The Great Mutiny*, (London: Andre Deutsch, 1966) p.200.

<sup>39</sup> Anthony Carew, *The Lower Deck of the Royal Navy 1900-1939: The Invergordon Mutiny in Perspective*, (Manchester: Manchester University Press 1981); David Divine, *Mutiny at Invergordon*, (London: Macdonald 1970); Kenneth Edwards, *The Mutiny at Invergordon*; Christopher M. Bell ‘The Invergordon Mutiny, 1931’ in Christopher M. Bell and Bruce A. Elleman (eds), *Naval Mutinies of the Twentieth Century: An International Perspective*, (London: Frank Cass, 2003) pp. 170–192.

extending over more than a decade.’<sup>40</sup> While the mutiny had some insurrectionist characteristics in that it was overtly a mutiny against government action – in this case a pay cut – it cannot be compared to that at the Nore. There were two important distinguishing features. Firstly, it was not a mutiny against the officers of the Atlantic Fleet, individually or collectively. At first sight, the second difference appears superficial, almost in a historical context, flippant. Contemporary accounts and official statements, (with the exception of one newspaper) did not refer to the episode as a mutiny. Descriptive terms used in various documents and by the media included ‘unrest’, ‘disaffection’, ‘strike’, ‘collective action,’ ‘insubordination’ but not ‘mutiny’.<sup>41</sup> Even in Admiralty documents it is initially referred to as an ‘incident’ or ‘disaffection’, and only after the passage of time is the term ‘mutiny’ used.<sup>42</sup> The reason for this will be discussed after considering the mutiny itself.

It is not intended here to review or re-assess the totality of the mutiny, rather to look at some aspects that are indicative of the officers’ attitudes, motivation and (in the Herzberg sense, as discussed in the Introduction) their hygiene.

By 1931 following a return to the gold standard in 1925 and the ‘Wall Street Crash’ the country faced a financial crisis. In March the government set up the ‘Economy Committee’ under Sir George May. Its remit was to find ways to cut government expenditure. There was a run on the pound in the early summer which added to pressure on the government for economies. This led to governmental discussions of naval pay. During these the Admiralty argued that the 1919 rate (which had been superseded by the lower 1925 rate for those entered after that date) was sacrosanct. In this context it must be remembered that ratings, i.e. non-officers, had not been subjected to the same pay cuts detailed in the previous chapter. Unfortunately the politico-economic crisis which precipitated the mutiny coincided with the illness and absence from duty of the First Sea Lord, Admiral Field. The First Lord, A.V. Alexander, was abroad until 18 August, the Second Sea Lord (responsible for personnel matters) and the Deputy Chief of the Naval Staff were on leave throughout August. Thus on the 14 August there were only three members of the Board (two Service, one civilian) available in London. They indicated that they were not prepared to accept the May Committee recommendations regarding naval pay. However, the First Lord,

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<sup>40</sup> Kenneth Edwards, *The Mutiny at Invergordon*, p. viii.

<sup>41</sup> Kenneth Edwards, *The Mutiny at Invergordon*, p. 283.

recalled from Germany told the cabinet, apparently without discussing it with the Board, that 'I think the personnel of the Navy as a whole will loyally accept the sacrifice that is demanded of them'.<sup>43</sup> However, the government fell on 25 August, making way for a National government, under the same Prime Minister, Ramsay Macdonald. The new First Lord (Austen Chamberlain), as recounted by Roskill, did not firmly represent the views of such Board members as were available, and the decision to implement the proposed pay cut went ahead.

This thesis is not the place to examine or comment upon the poor administration of the announcement, beyond noting that the promulgation of the announcement was badly handled, and whatever the facts, the perception by officers and men was that the responsibility for the muddle, indeed incompetence, lay at the Admiralty's door. While the breakdown in command arrangements due to the illness of Admiral Hodges, his temporary relief by Admiral Tomkinson and the consequent flag shift certainly played a part,<sup>44</sup> the almost indecent haste with which the government's economy measures were introduced was in large part to blame. This not only led to the inept way the announcement was handled, but the poorly thought-through dimensions of the cuts, such that significant numbers of ratings actually had their pay cut by 25% because as well as the 10% cut, they were all transferred to the 1925 payscale.<sup>45</sup>

The Atlantic Fleet was en route to the Fleet anchorage at Invergordon when the pay cuts were announced. At Invergordon the ships went to anchor, shore leave was granted and a boat routine established to allow men to go ashore. The facilities for recreation ashore were limited, essentially a playing field, recreation rooms and a 'wet' (i.e. serving alcohol) canteen.

Unlike the other two services, the Navy had only a very small regulating or police branch. To maintain discipline ashore a shore patrol made up of men chosen from the duty watch would be landed under the command of an officer often, but not invariably, supported by a regulating branch rating. They worked within the constraints

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<sup>42</sup> ADM 12/1706 lists Admiralty Board correspondence and conclusions.

<sup>43</sup> Stephen Roskill, *Naval Policy Between the Wars: The Period of Reluctant Rearmament 1930-1939*, p.91.

<sup>44</sup> Admiral Hodges, the Commander in Chief Atlantic fleet was taken ill, and Rear Admiral Tomkinson took over temporarily for the period leading up to and over the mutiny. He therefore physically moved to the fleet flagship, a process known as a flag shift. The consequent communications procedural breakdowns contributed to the causation of the mutiny.

<sup>45</sup> Christopher M. Bell, 'The Invergordon Mutiny, 1931' p. 178.



of the Naval Discipline Act. This applied within designated areas, such as warships and dockyards. Curiously, while the Act had been extended, for example to the ‘Salvation Army Home, Castletown’ and the ‘Fleet canteen’ at Lyness in the Orkneys, it only applied to the ‘Naval Recreation Ground and Recreation rooms’ at Invergordon and not to the Fleet canteen.<sup>46</sup> This might explain why the Officer in Charge of the shore patrol (Lieutenant Elkins, later Admiral Elkins) allowed himself to be physically propelled from the canteen, albeit without violence being offered, in the run up to the mutiny.<sup>47</sup>

A curious encounter took place the night before the mutiny itself. Lieutenant Elkins recorded that a ‘three badge man’ off HMS *Rodney* who was ‘slightly drunk’ told him ‘We’re doing this for you as well as ourselves’.<sup>48</sup> The significance of the rating being a ‘three badge man’ is noteworthy. A rating is awarded a good conduct stripe, referred to colloquially as a ‘badge’, worn as a chevron on the left sleeve for (then) successively 3, 8 and 13 years service with good conduct, to a maximum of three such badges. These attracted a financial allowance, a penny a day per badge. Thus a ‘three badge man’ had served for a minimum of thirteen years without significant disciplinary infractions.

The whole mutiny appears to have had a rather surreal air. Lieutenant Elkins when woken by his servant on the first morning of the mutiny was told ‘The hands refused to fall in this morning, Sir’.<sup>49</sup> However, Elkins decided there was sufficient time to have a bath before himself turning to for duty. He then went to the wardroom (officer’s mess):

where everybody was looking pretty glum and [I] had a cup of tea. I was surprised to get it, and asked if there would be any breakfast for the officers. I was told by the steward that as far as he knew everything would be as usual.<sup>50</sup>

A conspicuous feature of the mutiny was that ‘mutineers’ continued throughout to pay proper, even exaggerated, marks of respect to the officers,<sup>51</sup> and officers in turn ‘express[ed] wishes rather than giving orders so that no rating could be put in the position of disobeying an order’ which would have made him an individual mutineer.<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> AFO 164/26 *Naval Discipline Act- Jurisdiction on Shore*.

<sup>47</sup> David Divine, *Mutiny at Invergordon*, p. 141.

<sup>48</sup> David Divine, *Mutiny at Invergordon*, p. 142.

<sup>49</sup> David Divine, *Mutiny at Invergordon*, p. 153.

<sup>50</sup> David Divine, *Mutiny at Invergordon*, p. 155.

<sup>51</sup> Kenneth Edwards, *The Mutiny at Invergordon*, p. 264.

<sup>52</sup> Bob Whinney, *The U-Boat Peril: a Fight for Survival*, (London: Cassell 1986) p. 30.

‘Loyalty to the Officers persisted’,<sup>53</sup> Marines would refuse to turn to for duty in the morning but appear to act as mess waiters in the wardroom at meal times. Other matters of naval routine continued. For example at the ceremony of colours,<sup>54</sup> the mutineers would ‘face aft and salute’ as ordered at the ‘still’,<sup>55</sup> but would take the subsequent piped order to ‘carry on’ literally, and return to their previous activity or inactivity. Evening rounds (when an officer formally visited each mess-deck) were conducted normally, with proper marks of respect being made to the officer conducting rounds.<sup>56</sup>

This sense of participation/non-participation was widespread. In HMS *Rodney*, it fell to the subaltern of Marines - a second lieutenant, equivalent to a sub lieutenant - (in a battleship, the officer in charge of the Marine detachment would have been a captain – equivalent to a lieutenant commander or an army major) - to deal with the problem of the Royal Marines failing to turn to. The subaltern went to the Marine barracks (as, what would otherwise be known as a mess-deck if it had been occupied by sailors) and told the Marines ‘I would like to remind you that you are all sworn men , and, if you are not present at the next muster of the Hands, I will see you are shot’.<sup>57</sup> (The officer concerned, Second Lieutenant Campbell-Hardy, became a much decorated general, well known for his very direct approach to his duties).<sup>58</sup> However, the question arises, where was the Captain of Marines, his superior?

There was no significant violence throughout the mutiny and, apart from one captain making preparations to unmoor his ship by parting the cable (i.e. use the ships engines to part the anchor cable),<sup>59</sup> even preparations for violence within the Fleet are confined to works of fiction.<sup>60</sup>

In contrast at about the same time, the Chilean Navy mutinied over much the same issue, pay cuts forced by the international economic situation, which fell disproportionately on those more junior. That mutiny ended with air and land artillery

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<sup>53</sup> Kenneth Edwards, *The Mutiny at Invergordon*, p. 195.

<sup>54</sup> Raising of the ensign and jack in harbour at 0800 or 0900 (dependent on season).

<sup>55</sup> A pipe made with a bosun’s call, a single note. The ‘still’ was a mark of respect for the white ensign.

<sup>56</sup> Kenneth Edwards, *The Mutiny at Invergordon*, p. 289.

<sup>57</sup> Bob Whinney, *The U-Boat Peril* p 29.

<sup>58</sup> Naval Officers and ratings are not required to swear an oath of loyalty, while Royal Marines, despite being part of the Royal Navy are.

<sup>59</sup> HMS *Valiant*.

<sup>60</sup> Charles Gidley Wheeler, *Jannaway’s Mutiny*, (Lincoln NE: iUniverse Inc 2005) p 283.

bombardments of mutinying ships.<sup>61</sup> There was an obvious breakdown of the officer/man relationship; the Chilean mutineers locked their officers up. At Invergordon there was no breakdown in the officer/man relationship, either personal or to a large extent disciplinary. The mutiny was a product of poor morale on the lower deck, and it is difficult to imagine that morale in the wardroom was any better, indeed after the way they had been treated over the previous decade, conceivably it was worse. A midshipman present at Invergordon actually described officer morale as being ‘appalling’.<sup>62</sup> It is difficult to escape the conclusion that given the lack of firm disciplinary measures from above and continuing obvious respect by the ‘mutineers’ to their officers, even a sense of sharing,<sup>63</sup> that the officers sympathies probably lay with the mutineers, and, as will be shown, that was not confined to the Atlantic Fleet.

### The Aftermath

Unlike the Chilean mutiny, the end of the Invergordon mutiny was almost an anti-climax. The Admiralty agreed to look into the men’s complaints and that there would be no victimisation of mutineers. Then the ships dispersed to their home ports.

There are very many odd aspects to the aftermath of the Invergordon mutiny. The mutineers largely went unpunished, and certainly there were no punishments like those after the much smaller *Lucia* mutiny a few months earlier.<sup>64</sup> There appears to have been a collective wish to brush the whole matter under the carpet, and as quickly as possible. Within weeks Admiral Kelly, who had been brought out of retirement to take command of the Atlantic Fleet, was reassuring the King that ‘All [was] well with the Fleet’.<sup>65</sup>

Within the service and out of public view, there was an inevitable ‘blame game’. For itself, the Admiralty conducted a near witch hunt among commanding officers, but

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<sup>61</sup> William F. Sater, ‘Mutiny in the Chilean Navy, 1931’, in Christopher M. Bell and Bruce A. Elleman (eds), *Naval Mutinies of the Twentieth Century: An International Perspective*, (London: Frank Cass 2003) pp 145-169; Carlos Rene Manuel Tromben Corbalan, ‘The Chilean Naval Mutiny of 1931’, Unpublished PhD thesis, University of Exeter, 2010.

<sup>62</sup> Vice Admiral Sir Louis Le Bailly, letter to the author dated 3 August 2009.

<sup>63</sup> Mike Farquharson-Roberts ‘Forgotten or Ignored, the Officers at Invergordon: “We are doing this for you as well you know.”’ In Helen Doe and Richard Harding (eds) *Naval Leadership and Management 1650-1950: Essays in Honour of Michael Duffy* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2012) p.118.

<sup>64</sup> An undertaking had been given that there would be no punishments. For a description of how a member of the ‘Strike Committee’ in HMS *Norfolk* was ‘propelled’ out of the navy see Fred Copeman, *Reason in Revolt*, (London: Blandford Press, 1948) p. 50-1.

strove to avoid any blame accruing to itself, and no-one appears to have blamed the First Lord who precipitated the whole mutiny by not even seeking the advice of the Board in the first place. It would appear that not only had the Admiralty Board lost touch with the navy, the First Lord of Admiralty had lost touch with the Board that he chaired.

The various supposed culprits identified by various authorities, from the Admiralty Board, to the press, supposed Bolshevik agitators and poor quality petty officers are of no concern to this thesis, but those concerning the officers are. Firstly the Admiralty requested special reports by admirals on ships captains and from captains on how their departmental heads had performed.<sup>66</sup> (Interestingly, *vide supra*, the report on the Captain of Marines of HMS *Rodney* is not in the file). One report by Admiral Tomkinson is worth quoting, that on the commanding officer of HMS *Nelson*, (others were not dissimilar):

This Officer to some extent came under my personal observation and did not appear to me to have a very correct appreciation of the course of events. I have no definite knowledge of what he said to his ship's company, but I gather that what he did say was not entirely suitable for the occasion. He appeared to me to lean too much on his Commander, but despite this made the astonishing suggestion that the Commander should proceed to the Admiralty owing to his knowledge of the feelings of the men.<sup>67</sup>

These reports ended many officers' careers. As with the earlier mutiny in HMS *Lucia*, after Invergordon the more senior the officer, the more their career suffered, Admiral Tomkinson, despite having been initially commended for his actions and being subsequently promoted, was then prematurely relieved of his subsequent appointment. Of the commanding officers of the four capital ships and four cruisers present at the mutiny, seven were relieved of their commands and only one was subsequently promoted to flag rank, Captain A.J. Power (HMS *Dorsetshire*).<sup>68</sup>

After Invergordon the Admiralty Board circulated a narrative of the events to the various Commanders in Chief asking for their comments. Admiral Tyrwhitt,

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<sup>65</sup> Stephen Roskill, *Naval Policy Between the Wars: The Period of Reluctant Rearmament*, p.128.

<sup>66</sup> ADM 156/71. *Atlantic Fleet. Insubordination at Invergordon*.

<sup>67</sup> 2SLPersRec.

<sup>68</sup> Stephen Roskill, *Naval Policy Between the Wars: The Period of Reluctant Rearmament*, p.130.

However, John Winton states that the Commanding Officer of HMS *Rodney* was relieved of his appointment, but promoted later to rear admiral see John Winton, *Cunningham*, (London: John Murray, 1998) p.52. See also 'Able Seaman 'Ginger' Le Breton' in Max Arthur (ed.), *Lost Voices of the Royal Navy*, (London: Hodder, 2005) pp.172-4 for a laudatory lower deck view of Captain Power at the mutiny.

Commander-in-Chief, The Nore, replied. He was one of the outstanding officers and leaders of his generation,<sup>69</sup> having been, extremely unusually for the time, knighted while still a substantive captain serving afloat in wartime.<sup>70</sup> In a formal letter<sup>71</sup> he was very critical of the Admiralty for giving no information as to the processes that led to the announcement of the pay cut and reported the opinion of his officers saying:

6. What is still rankling in the minds of Officers and Men of the Navy is the fact that the Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty have never accepted any degree of responsibility for having been the direct cause of the mutiny, in that, through some neglect or mismanagement at the Admiralty, orders were issued by Their Lordships which precipitated the mutiny.

...

8. I would also point out that as an aid to Commanders-in-Chief in producing the report called for by the Admiralty letter, exact information is placed at the disposal of the Commanders-in-Chief, but no information as to what took place at the Admiralty is afforded.

9. In conclusion I cannot emphasise too strongly how deeply I feel that the most urgent need of the Navy today, compared to which all suggested changes are trivial, is that the absolute confidence of Officers and Men in the Admiralty be restored.

I have the honour to be,

Sir,

Your obedient servant,<sup>72</sup>

This letter was criticised 'by various members of the board'; which ones are not recorded.<sup>73</sup> There is no reply to Admiral Tyrwhitt contained in the files. The only surviving criticism of his opinion is the advice to the Board drafted and initialled by Sir Oswyn Murray, the Permanent Secretary to the Board (a civil servant) which concludes:

I suggest that it should be made clear to him that his views on what is involved in Service discipline do not meet with the approval of the Board, but They look to an officer in his position severely to discourage officers and men, and particularly officers, from allowing such views to permeate the Service.<sup>74</sup>

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<sup>69</sup> Ultimately Admiral of the Fleet Sir Reginald Tyrwhitt GCB, DSO, 1<sup>st</sup> Baronet. He commanded the Harwich Patrol during the First World War, see William Guy Carr, *Brass Hats and Bell-Bottomed Trousers: Unforgettable and Splendid Feats of the Harwich Patrol*, (London: Hutchinson & Co, 1939).

<sup>70</sup> T A Heathcote, *The British Admirals of the Fleet 1734-1995: A Biographical Dictionary*, (Barnsley: Leo Cooper, 2002) p. 244.

<sup>71</sup> In the Royal Navy, letters were and are graded into routine, official, demi-official, directed and formal. The last normally commences 'Sir, I have the honour...' and always finishes (word and layout) as is set out in this quotation from Admiral Tyrwhitt's letter.

<sup>72</sup> ADM 1/27410 Letter by Admiral Tyrwhitt to Secretary of the Admiralty [*sic*] dated 28 January 1932..

<sup>73</sup> ADM 12/1706. Entry '34 Discipline of the Fleet'.

<sup>74</sup> ADM 1/27410 Unreferenced minute by Oswyn Murray dated 10 February 1932.

In essence, his advice to the Board was that the messenger should be told that he should not criticise the Board, and certainly should not listen to the opinions of his subordinates or pass on their feelings to the Board. For a civilian of whatever standing to make such remarks about a senior flag officer of proven leadership ability in war and peace and if, as the records suggest, his was not the only such opinion among Board members, it can only confirm a significant degree of detachment from, and even arrogance about, the actual worries and concerns of the service including its officers. It is also indicative of the permanent secretary's standing that he felt able to give his opinion on the disciplinary relationship between flag officers.

Tyrwhitt's was not the only critical voice; Admiral Kelly said 'complete confidence in the administrative authority will not be restored as long as the present Board of Admiralty remain in office.'<sup>75</sup> Kelly's attitude, while understandable, was unlikely to produce any action. He had obviously forgotten or was ignoring the fact that two members of the Board were politicians, and, probably more importantly, two were civil servants.

Admiral Dewar, serving on half pay (lately captain of HMS *Royal Oak* during the previously described 'affair') went somewhat further. He stood as a Labour candidate for Portsmouth North in the 1931 general election. During the campaign he issued a pamphlet showing the Kaiser and the governor of the Bank of England (Montagu Norman) under a heading 'The British Navy at Jutland in 1916 beat the ex-Kaiser and at Invergordon in 1931 it beat Mr Montagu Norman', a reference to Britain being forced off the gold standard as a result of the Invergordon mutiny.<sup>76</sup>

It is difficult to escape the conclusion that many officers, some very senior, sympathised and even identified with the 'mutineers' and what they were trying to achieve; above all, that they felt the Admiralty did not understand them or their feelings. Edwards believes that the real problem arose because the morale of the navy had been 'taken for granted ... by the Board of Admiralty in 1931' rather than being 'faithfully nursed'.<sup>77</sup>

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<sup>75</sup> ADM 178/89 cited in Robin Brodhurst, *Churchill's Anchor: Admiral of the Fleet Sir Dudley Pound OM, GCB, GCVO*, (Barnsley: Leo Cooper, 2000) p. 82.

<sup>76</sup> Barry D.Hunt, *Sailor-Scholar: Admiral Sir Herbert Richmond 1871-1946*, (Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University Press 1982) p.208.

The point was made earlier that the media, Parliament, and even the Admiralty avoided calling the episode a mutiny.<sup>78</sup> It is almost as though everybody wanted to brush it under the carpet, by avoiding calling it a mutiny would minimise it. It is as though there was a feeling of collective guilt. The major proximate cause of the mutiny was incompetent management at the top level and the officers, even at a very high level, were at the least, sympathetic to the mutineers.

Roskill makes only passing mention of how personnel issues were addressed after the mutinies, stating his inability to ‘go into the lengthy deliberations of all of those bodies and the detailed Recommendations they made.’<sup>79</sup> He confined himself to the reduction of officer complements. The committees he mentions in passing effectively constituted an audit of the way the navy did its business, and since these are dealt with nowhere else in the literature they must be briefly examined to put what follows into context. Unfortunately the extant records do not record the inevitable bargaining (even ‘horse trading’) that must have taken place before the committees ever met and while their findings were being drafted – if indeed any such records were ever made. Tracy points the finger at Admiral Dreyer, suggesting that he ‘largely deflected [Field’s] good intentions’ but without citing a source.<sup>80</sup> It is tempting to suppose, and it fits the known facts, that a politically weakened First Sea Lord was prepared to give up some changes, in particular those implemented following the Larken and Bennett committees to be discussed below in order to keep the rest of the changes to officer training. Despite losing a policy he obviously cared about, increased promotion from the lower deck, that was the result of those committees’ deliberations (else why would it have been introduced so early in his tenure?), Field kept the major part of his reforms to officer and broader training. Some of these changes would have blended quite readily into Kelly’s strictures on officer employment. All this must remain speculation unless or until some personal papers or unknown closed papers come to light. Whatever the mechanisms and machinations by which it happened, what were, as will be seen, critically important changes and improvements to officer training were effectively endorsed and continued forward.

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<sup>77</sup> Kenneth Edwards, *The Mutiny at Invergordon*, p. viii.

<sup>78</sup> Only the *Morning Post* used the term in its reporting of the mutiny and the aftermath, see Kenneth Edwards, *The Mutiny at Invergordon*, p. 282.

<sup>79</sup> Stephen Roskill, *Naval Policy Between the Wars: The Period of Reluctant Rearmament*, p. 126.

<sup>80</sup> Nicholas Tracy ‘Field, Sir Frederick Laurence (1871-1945)’ *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford University Press, 2004)[ accessed on line 22 Dec 2011].

## Officer entry and commissioning from the lower deck

Mention has been made of Field addressing commissioning from the lower deck. It is dealt with here because of the effects of the post-Invergordon changes, but much precedes the mutiny. Very early in Field's time as First Sea Lord the Larken committee was appointed chaired by Vice Admiral Larken, 'to consider the question of promotion from the lower deck through the rank of Mate'.<sup>81</sup> Subsequently in November 1930, a further Admiralty Fleet Order entitled 'Commissioned Officers of the Royal Navy – Systems of Entry' was published. In view of its importance after such a long period of inertia it is worth quoting:

The Admiralty have been giving consideration to the present methods of recruiting officers for the Royal Navy. Whilst they are fully satisfied with the standards of the present candidates, they consider that the existing methods of entry may unduly restrict the field ... They are anxious that candidates of the standard necessary ... should have a fair opportunity ... from whatever schools and whatever classes of the community they are drawn.<sup>82</sup>

This committee was chaired by Captain Sir Ernest N. Bennett, (who was also a Justice of the Peace and a Labour MP) – hence the 'Bennett Committee' - the other members were an Admiral of the Fleet, a Rear Admiral and an ex-Army headmaster and two civilians. In the reference cited Bell ascribes far more importance to this committee than to the Larken committee,<sup>83</sup> describing how the First Lord (Alexander) was attempting to democratise officer entry. Bell appears to believe that the stumbling block to broader entry was the interview, because then a candidate's accent etc would be obvious to his disadvantage, but suggests no alternative to interview as a method of selection; and he particularly mentions that 'naval officers would continue to have the final say over which candidates were admitted to the naval colleges.' In the context of British society in the 1930s, it is difficult to see what workable alternatives there were to interview and involvement of naval officers in the selection of future naval officers. Taken with the absence of any funding for potential entrants in the prevailing economic circumstances,<sup>84</sup> it is difficult to see how Alexander's desire to enter more boys from differing backgrounds could have been achieved.

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<sup>81</sup> AFO 2837/30 *Mate System – Committee*.

<sup>82</sup> AFO 3015a/30 *Commissioned Officers of the Royal Navy – Systems of Entry*.

<sup>83</sup> Christopher M. Bell, 'The King's English and the Security of the Empire: Class, Social Mobility, and Democratization in the British Naval Officer Corps, 1918-1939' *Journal of British Studies* 48 (July 2009), pp. 695-716.



In fact the most important change for the future of the Royal Navy was brought about following the report of the Larken committee. After considering it, the Board abolished the titles of Acting Mate and Mate ‘forthwith’ – substituting acting sub lieutenant and sub lieutenant – and set out in detail new procedures for commissioning ratings from the lower deck, including provision for them to be given ‘additional school instruction’, and stated that

From the time when officers promoted from the lower deck join up with Acting Sub-Lieutenants at Greenwich they will come under identical regulations, be eligible for similar promotion marks etc., and for similar prizes.<sup>85</sup>

This total commonality was not to be achieved until the abolition of the ‘Special Duties’ list – that for ratings promoted from the lower deck after age 25 – early in the next century.

At the same time a confidential history sheet for selected ratings was introduced.<sup>86</sup> This form CW1 (still in use) was to be started on ‘ratings who are considered to be potentially suitable for commissioned rank’. It was to be treated as a secret document, and when first filled in (‘raised’ in naval parlance) or destroyed, the fact was to be reported to the Admiralty CW (Commissions and Warrants) Branch as well as the ratings Port Division (his personnel administrative authority, an early sign of central management of lower deck commissions). AFO 2473/31 was incorporated into KR& AI,<sup>87</sup> thus having the force of law. While the weakness of central management of officers *vis a vis* management of ratings by their port divisions has been mentioned, this only applied when the centre (if such a term can be used the 1930s) was functionally weak. It did mean that when the Navy expanded rapidly and broadened the pool from which officers were sought, a single central mechanism already existed to manage the expansion. Unfortunately there was some significant resistance to commissioning from the lower deck, and as will be seen, in the aftermath of Invergordon, this change was not used; it was effectively placed in suspended animation.

The Invergordon mutiny has no direct bearing on lower deck commissions, but some of the aftermath certainly did. Roskill dismisses in a single (admittedly lengthy)

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<sup>84</sup> Stephen Roskill, *Naval Policy Between the Wars: The Period of Reluctant Rearmament 1930-1939*, p. 33.

<sup>85</sup> AFO 2473/31 *Commissioned rank – Promotion from the Lower Deck*.

<sup>86</sup> CAFO 2474/31 *Selected Ratings Confidential History Sheets – Introduction*.

<sup>87</sup> KR & AI Articles 261 and 264 and Volume II 1935 Appendix XII part 3.

paragraph the Admiralty personnel committees formed and their findings. Three committees were formed which had a very broad remit:

to review existing Naval policy in regard to the distribution, manning, training and discipline of the Fleet, and to consider what changes can be recommended, in view of the large reductions in Naval expenditure required by the national financial situation.<sup>88</sup>

The committees 'will also take into careful consideration the incidents in connection with the recent insubordination in the Atlantic Fleet ...'. Only the second committee is of relevance to this chapter; its terms of reference included that it was 'to review conditions of entry, ... promotion ... and all other questions (other than disciplinary and welfare) affecting personnel.'<sup>89</sup>

The committee was headed by the Second Sea Lord, Admiral C.T.M. Fuller, and its membership comprised the heads of all the personnel and training areas. Sub-Committee A looked at 'officer' issues and its terms of reference were [underlining in the original]

1. Entry and training of cadets
2. Training of Junior Officers from the date of first entry up to the rank of Lieutenant.<sup>90</sup>

There was mention of increasing entries from the mercantile schools (Pangbourne, *Conway* and *Worcester*), but apart from a single reference to there being '8 officers ex rating' annually<sup>91</sup>, the committee did not mention, let alone discuss lower deck commissions. However, paradoxically, Sub-Committee D did suggest that midshipmen should have a period of training on the lower deck which was, as will be seen, to be adopted.<sup>92</sup> This recommendation was to be of vital importance for the future training of officers; the committee was recommending that officers to be should have to experience what the men they were to lead actually did. There matters seem to have rested and few if any officers were commissioned from the lower deck in the next few years, not even the eight per year supposedly allowed for.

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<sup>88</sup> Stephen Roskill, *Naval Policy between the Wars: The Period of Reluctant Rearmament 1930-1939*, (London: Collins) 1976, p.126.

<sup>89</sup> CAFO 2572/31 *Organization of the Fleet etc: Appointment of Admiralty Committee.*

<sup>90</sup> ADM 116/2895 *Personnel (Officers and Ratings) Committee. Case 10797 V3.*

<sup>91</sup> ADM 116/2895 Report of Sub Committee A Appendix A para 2.

<sup>92</sup> ADM 116/2896 Reports of Sub Committees D and E.

Field obviously believed in commissioning from the lower deck – else why would it have been one of the earliest changes he introduced? There is nothing in the records that indicates why he allowed this change to effectively be side lined. It seems to have been lost in the aftermath of Invergordon.<sup>93</sup> Speculation is pointless; somehow in the bureaucracy and post-Invergordon turmoil it was lost, but as will be seen, only to be resurrected three years later, and that by a First Sea Lord (Chatfield) who was, at heart, against the concept as will be seen in the next chapter.

### The Inflection – the need for reform

The Royal Navy faced serious problems culminating in the Invergordon mutiny, Roskill's nadir. These had not arisen overnight; the navy had been starved of finance and good management ever since the end of the First World War. The material state of the navy, parlous as it was, is beyond the scope of this thesis except to note its deleterious effect on morale. However, the personnel of the navy, both officers and ratings had been neglected, even ignored. Roskill, in discussing Admiral Madden as First Sea Lord, suggests that with a Labour government, committed to economy, nothing could have been done. This chapter argues that nonetheless Field, faced with a worse economic position than that facing Madden actually did achieve improvements and started the navy on an upward path again.

It is worth briefly noting how the other two armed services reacted to the politico-economic situation. The whole structure of the army was different to the navy. It was based on the regiment or corps.<sup>94</sup> Officers looked primarily not to the War Office, but to their regiment, and even when promoted out of it, retained its name as a post-nominal.<sup>95</sup> This meant that the army was to an extent spared the navy's disenchantment with its central administration. In turn, they were better managed, for example army officers were subject to only one pay cut through the 1920s (each service set its own pay scales, subject to parliamentary approval through the annual 'Service Estimates' process).<sup>96</sup> The still nascent Royal Air Force fought continuing battles for its

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<sup>93</sup> Bell believes the driving force was Alexander, the labour First Lord. Christopher M. Bell 'The King's English and the Security of the Empire, pp. 695-716

<sup>94</sup> The infantry artillery and cavalry were organised in regiments, other arms into corps. To confuse matters, the latter designation was applied to some tank units.

<sup>95</sup> For example, Colonel Snooks L/KOYLI – Late/Kings Own Yorkshire Light Infantry.

<sup>96</sup> Anthony Clayton, *The British Officer: Leading the Army from 1660 to the Present*, (Harlow: Pearson, 2007) p. 195.

existence during the 1920s and to retain control of the Fleet Air Arm.<sup>97</sup> Nonetheless it emphasised personnel aspects, even if its aspirations to have high technical and equipment standards could not initially be met.<sup>98</sup> To illustrate this, many excellent officers' messes were built, even overseas, despite equipment shortages; RAF officers felt better looked after by management than their naval counterparts.<sup>99</sup>

While this thesis looks at the naval officer corps, specifically the executive officers, to an extent often not appreciated by those who do not know it intimately, the navy is a surprisingly homogenous body. Reference has been made to the mutiny in the Chilean Navy which occurred at about the same time and for much the same reasons as the Royal Navy did at Invergordon. The Chilean mutineers took over their ships from the officers and locked them up. At Invergordon a (presumed) future mutineer told an officer that 'We are doing this for you as well' and the mutineers continued to pay marks of respects and look after the creature comforts of their officers. Probably the navy's greatest strength was that it was united emotionally – from area flag officers such as Tyrwhitt downwards - against its management, the Board of Admiralty which was held in near contempt as:

a body who had left their naval sympathies as well as their uniforms behind them and who, with their civil clothes, had put on also a civil mind.<sup>100</sup>

The personnel problems that the navy faced were worse for the officers than the ratings. As detailed in the last chapter, they had been subject to more pay cuts and did not receive a marriage allowance, which was a significant financial detriment. Most importantly was the way they were administered. Ratings were administered locally, by their port divisions.<sup>101</sup> Their service number indicated which division was responsible for them, and they would serve in ships based in their 'homeport' where normally the ship would be re-fitted and return to give leave. Mention has been made earlier of Lambert's view that implies that the junior officers were regarded as a mass of labour. They were not managed as individuals (apart from officers such as those who were part of a flag officers retinue) not least because there were no effective mechanisms to do so.

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<sup>97</sup> W.J. Reader, *Architect of Air Power: The Life of the First Viscount Weir of Eastwood 1877-1959*, (London: Collins, 1968) p. 108.

<sup>98</sup> A.E. Ross (ed.), *Through Eyes of Blue: Personal Memories of the RAF from 1918*, (Shrewsbury: Airlife, 2002) p.16.

<sup>99</sup> F.C. Richardson 'The Officers Mess Heliopolis 1934' in A.E. Ross (ed.), *Through Eyes of Blue: Personal Memories of the RAF from 1918*, (Shrewsbury: Airlife, 2002) p.31.

<sup>100</sup> Admiral of The Fleet Lord Chatfield, *The Navy and Defence; Volume 2 It might Happen Again*, (London: William Heinemann, 1947) p.58.

<sup>101</sup> Chatham, Portsmouth or Devonport (Plymouth).

They were administered centrally from the Admiralty. As has already been described, they could not decline an appointment. So, if their home was in Portsmouth and they were appointed to a Chatham ship, when the ship gave leave in Chatham, they had to travel to Portsmouth, at their own expense. To compound this, officers living locally who were able to go their home overnight or at weekends, could draw a ration allowance, money to make up for the food they would have been provided with if they had stayed on board the ship; their home life was subsidised.

When Admiral Kelly was brought out of retirement and appointed to command the Atlantic Fleet, he prepared a report for the Admiralty which contains some interesting comments upon officers and particularly their employment:

33. It is abundantly clear also that the present system of training and appointment of Officers is in many ways unsatisfactory. The appointment of Officers to Ships is governed by the requirements of the Quarter Bill,<sup>102</sup> and this results in a surplus of Officers, particularly of Lieutenant Commanders. To give all these Officers employment of a character suitable to their age and seniority is not possible in a modern Capital Ship, and the efficiency of Officers of all ranks therefore suffers.<sup>103</sup>

As Kelly noted, ships' manning was entirely based on wartime needs, with no consideration given to peacetime management of people. This went further, ships underwent a continuous change in manpower, people were always moving on, it was difficult to build teams, but at the same time, ships were always expected to be at war readiness, or in naval parlance 'fully worked up'.

The over officering of the fleet identified by Kelly was in part a consequence of the excess of junior officers (in this context, lieutenant commanders and below) that had been allowed to develop since the 'Geddes axe' as described in the last chapter. With the numbers of promotions to commander (and subsequently to captain) having been reduced with no reduction in the input of cadets, as has been described, the increasing numbers of lieutenant commanders had a diminishing chance of being promoted, and if not promoted, had to serve until age 45 before being compulsorily retired on a small pension. Edwards, himself a passed over lieutenant commander, describes it more colourfully 'It was the end of all ambition, yet it was not the end of his service.'<sup>104</sup> He enlarged on the problem:

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<sup>102</sup> See Glossary.

<sup>103</sup> ADM 178/129. *Case 00242*

<sup>104</sup> Kenneth Edwards, *The Mutiny at Invergordon*, p.44.

[o]n average, during the eight years following the great “Geddes axe” ... fifty lieutenant-commanders were promoted each year, and each year more than a hundred lieutenant-commanders were “passed over.” Thus the numbers of these “passed over” officers was enormous. In 1933 it was 354. Practically every ship larger than a destroyer carried at least one such officer. In every port there were collections of Reserve Fleet ships officered almost entirely by officers who had been “passed over” for promotion – naval rubbish-heaps of old and rotting ships and men robbed of hope.<sup>105</sup>

The ever presence of these officers, who with no hope of promotion, marked as ‘passed over’ so inevitably given the less desirable appointments would have been damaging to not only their morale, but that of the other officers junior to them who would see them as a terrible warning, and would make things difficult for their seniors trying to lead and inspire the un-inspirable.

Unfortunately:

[p]romotion to the “brass hatted”<sup>106</sup> ranks of commander and above was by arbitrary selection and a single “black mark” could, and often did, ruin a career. To assume responsibility and to take a definite and strong line of action in any matter might lead to commendation and promotion, but it increased enormously the chances of securing a fatal “black mark”.<sup>107</sup>

This opinion and Admiral Kelly’s report is supported by the report written by the commanding officer of HMS *Resolution*, then Captain Turle, in an S206 dated September 1933 shown at Fig. 22. It is worth quoting at some length:

[He] has erred tactlessly in this ship with my predecessor and was given a well-deserved black mark, but the whole episode occurred due to his sense of zeal and duty – a lazy or cowardly Officer would have done nothing and thus received no black mark; it is unfortunately true already that Lt/Cdrs. think it necessary, due to limited chances of promotion, to avoid any semblance of a black mark, and this is re-acting disastrously on initiative.<sup>108</sup>

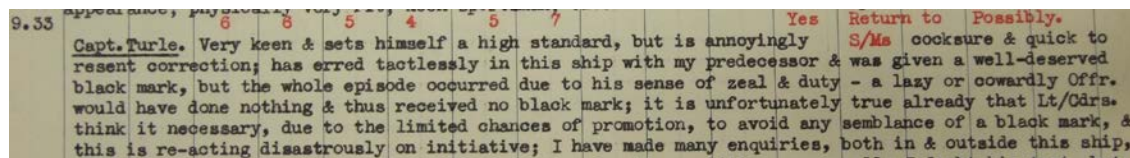


Fig. 23. Extract from an S206 transcribed onto an officers record card (2SL PersRec).

Thus not only was the excess of officers deleterious in itself, it was affecting the way officers performed their duties. This was damaging to the navy, and to make it

<sup>105</sup> Kenneth Edwards, *The Mutiny at Invergordon*, p.45.

<sup>106</sup> The cap worn by a commander and more senior officers has gold oak leaves around its peak, hence the term a ‘brass hat’, see Appendix A for a picture.

<sup>107</sup> Kenneth Edwards, *The Mutiny at Invergordon*, p. 188.

worse the system, if such it was, to select officers for promotion, the chance and circumstance described earlier by Lambert was no longer fit for purpose. Among Field's greatest reforms were those of managing officers' promotions, by revising the reporting mechanisms, ensuring firstly that the Admiralty, for the first time, properly 'knew' its officers, and then managing the promotions, a first step on the road to properly managing their careers.

#### The 1932 Naval Estimates, the start of the ascension

In presenting the Naval Estimates for 1932, the First Lord of the Admiralty (Sir Bolton Eyres-Monsell) said to the House of Commons 7 March 1932 that:

Conditions since the war have brought about a decreased flow of promotion, with the result that the ages of officers in each rank have been steadily increasing. The situation has now become so acute that if it were not at once dealt with, it might soon be necessary to stop all promotion from Lieutenant-Commander to Commander for a year. In order to prevent such a serious contingency, it has been decided to curtail employment at the top of the Officers' List to the extent necessary to ensure an adequate number of vacancies in the interest of officers generally.<sup>109</sup>

That is to say, senior officers would be put on half pay/unemployed pay to allow promotions to continue. The effect of an aging senior officer population meant that in addition there was the risk that officers would hit the point of being retired on age and be retired, despite having been promoted. In fact, the First Lord underestimated the dimension of the problem. Study of Fig. 19 in the previous chapter will show that the remedy of stopping promotion from lieutenant commander for a year, i.e. 50 promotions would have been insufficient.

#### The Reforms: Personnel administration

The administration of officers appointing and career management and its weaknesses were described in chapter three of the first part of this thesis. These had not been addressed since the end of the First World War and the system was increasingly outdated and unresponsive to the needs both of the service and of its officer corps. To briefly recapitulate; the Second Sea Lord was a member of the Board of Admiralty and was additionally 'Chief of Naval Personnel' but had a very small staff. As described

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<sup>108</sup> 2SLPersRec.

<sup>109</sup> AFO 32/592 *First Lord's Speech on the Navy Estimates, 1932.*

earlier, the administration of officers' records, their appointments and undertaking preparatory work for promotions selection boards was undertaken by the Commission and Warrant Branch (CW Branch)<sup>110</sup> The Naval Secretary, an appointment held by a rear admiral reporting to the First Sea Lord, oversaw the selection (by the First Sea Lord and First Lord) and the appointing of flag officers (admirals and marine generals), who would thus also oversee the senior captains/colonels who were to be considered for flag/general rank.

This was an impersonal and arbitrary system for the mass of officers. However 1929 had seen the start of change. A new office appeared: the 'Second Sea Lord's Office for appointments & c' [*sic*]. This was headed by the Naval Assistant (NA) to the Second Sea Lord (in the parlance of the time, NA2SL) with an engineer rear admiral to oversee appointments of engineering officers.<sup>111</sup> The first post holder of the former post following this change was one Captain Tovey, coming from the first course at the Imperial Defence College,<sup>112</sup> and who by 1931 became a rear admiral while in post and was later to be Commander in Chief Home Fleet. The fact that such an obvious 'high flier' was appointed to this post and promoted while doing the job suggests that it was deemed to be of some importance.<sup>113</sup> Taken together, these changes are indicative of what would now be termed that the 'Human Resource' management of the officer corps was being recognised as being of increasing importance. It should also be noted that they took place before the Invergordon mutiny, the 'nadir' which supposedly drew attention to the poor management of officers. That said, it is difficult to see the designated officers as being able to give more than cursory oversight to officers' careers as each of the two aforementioned officers were supported only by two commanders. Further change would be necessary to give the Second Sea Lord sufficient 'horsepower' to actually manage the officer cadre, indeed to manage all of naval manpower. Nonetheless, this was a significant reform, and its utility can be confirmed by its continued and expanding existence into the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

### Reporting and promotion

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<sup>110</sup> ADM 1/16506 ...*Division of responsibility between C.E. and C.W. branches in dealing with appointments...*

<sup>111</sup> Specialised officers appointing was handled by the relevant division of the Admiralty, thus medical officers were appointed by the Medical Director General (Navy).

<sup>112</sup> See Fig. 35.

<sup>113</sup> Ultimately he was to be Admiral of the Fleet Sir John Tovey GCB KBE DSO.



Historically, the successive steps on an officer's career ladder had been by examination to be promoted to lieutenant, then by selection to captain with 'interest' being a key component. Thereafter promotion was by seniority, i.e. the passage of time. In the early part of the period under consideration, promotion to lieutenant was by first passing a series of examinations and then gaining a competency (a watchkeeping certificate) and being recommended by his commanding officer. Subsequent promotion to lieutenant commander was automatic after eight years, but thereafter promotion to commander and further was by selection on merit. The reporting system for officers has been described in part one of this thesis. The Admiralty was keen that promotion should be fair and equitable and that 'interest' and patronage which had previously been relied upon to 'ensure ... that most of those promoted possessed the ability to reward and credit their patrons'<sup>114</sup> - should not play a part. As described earlier, the Admiralty had set its face firmly against interest and patronage.

Before the First World War, with an expanding navy, chances of promotion were good. However, after the war with a shrinking service, the chances of promotion were much reduced. Where officers served was arbitrarily decided by the CW branch, although there was what amounted to a patronage system by the specialist schools for their alumni. Where an officer served was vitally important for his career; to be promoted obviously he had to have good reports written on him, but a report from a better known superior would inevitably carry more weight, so, for example, service in the flagship of a major fleet was more likely to lead to promotion than serving in a ship on detached service.

While interest was decried, the reporting system that the Admiralty relied on to know its officers was not fit for purpose. Promotions were supposed to happen when an officer was in a 'zone' of seniority. Officers 'in zone' were considered every six months on the basis of recommendations from commanding officers, and a set number promoted. The zone of seniority was promulgated at irregular intervals. For example in September 1920 it was stated that:

The zones of promotion of Officers for the half yearly selections to be made on 31<sup>st</sup> December next and for future half yearly selections until further notice are as follows:-

*Executive Branch*

Commanders, 8-4<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> years' seniority inclusive

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<sup>114</sup> Andrew Lambert, *Admirals: The Naval Commanders who Made Britain Great*, (London: Faber and Faber, 2008) p.161.

Lieut.-Commanders, 6<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> -2 years' seniority inclusive ... On the date of selection.<sup>115</sup>

This meant for example that commanders who would be of 4<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> years seniority to 8 years seniority at the time they were selected, not when promoted six months later, would be considered for promotion. Promotion of an officer more junior ('under zone') was allowed for in the detailed regulations, but seems rarely if ever to have occurred in peace time; similarly over zone promotion was possible (Captain 'Johnny' Walker of Battle of the Atlantic fame was an over zone promotee).

The zones were altered in 1922; now lieutenant commanders had to be of 3 years seniority to be considered.<sup>116</sup> In 1923, the zone for promotion to captain was similarly raised by one year.<sup>117</sup> The zones were re-promulgated without change in 1924 and 1925, and no further announcement or change made until 1929.<sup>118</sup> Then lieutenant commanders could be selected six months earlier;<sup>119</sup> followed in January 1930 by a further change, to captain 4 to 8 years, to commander 3-7 years.<sup>120</sup> There was an awareness of the problems arising from a strict zonal limit for promotion. One of the plethora of committees formed after the Invergordon mutiny actually recommended 'consideration whether upper seniority limit for promotion to Commander and Captain should not be abolished'.<sup>121</sup> In fact the upper limit remained in place throughout the twentieth century.

There was no obvious reason for what amounts to tinkering with the system. Changes of six months or a year in the zones will have done nothing to remedy the crisis that was steadily mounting. Having left a steadily worsening situation to fester for a decade, taking only what amounted to half hearted measures to deal with it, in 1931 changes started to happen and in 1932 following the publication of the Naval Estimates, the manner of officers' selection for promotion was at last addressed.

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<sup>115</sup> AWO 2834/20 *Promotions – Half-yearly Recommendations.*

<sup>116</sup> AWO 815/ 22 *Zones of Promotion- Executive Branch.*

<sup>117</sup> AFO 877/23 *Zones of Promotion- Executive Branch.*

<sup>118</sup> AFOs 2241/24 and 494/25 *Zones of Promotion- Executive Branch.*

<sup>119</sup> AFO 1639/29 *Zone of Promotion for Lieutenant-Commanders- December 1929.*

<sup>120</sup> AFO 3/30 *Zones of Promotion- Executive Branch.*

<sup>121</sup> ADM 116/2896 Report of Sub Committees D and E..

### Confidential reports and the introduction of numerical marking

Not only were there fewer promotions to be had, the reduced number now exposed the major weakness of the promotion system, that is it relied too much on chance to select those to be promoted. The Admiralty depended on regular confidential reports to assess officers and make decisions on which officer to promote. At regular intervals, at least annually (six monthly if 'in zone' for promotion), on leaving an appointment and on supersession of his commanding officer a report on 'Form S206' would be prepared. A special report could be called for (as described in the last chapter, the decisions made on officer redundancies during the 'Geddes axe' were based on such reports) and if for disciplinary reasons, an officer was placed on quarterly report, every three months. It follows that confidential reporting was key to managing an officer's career.

These reports were confidential not only from others in the ship, but usually from the subject. The directions for completion on the S206 form revised in March 1924 (for use when reporting 'on Officer below the rank of Lieutenant-Commander' [underlining on original form] stated 'This report should be shewn to the Officer reported on whenever practicable.' (see Figures 15 & 16.) In reality, some commanding officers read portions of the report out, some allowed a brief glimpse, which from the author's personal experience was far from sufficient to pick up any nuances, and some commanding officers would content themselves with giving the subject officer the brief abstract they were required to, referred to as a 'flimsy' from the thin paper on which they were written. These latter had a pre-printed header giving his personal details, followed by 'has served under my Command – [giving the dates] – and then a phrase which could be 'to my complete and entire satisfaction' or lesser plaudits, down to the legendary and probably apocryphal 'to his entire satisfaction'.

They could contain a significant abstract of the S206, but if so, only positive remarks, and might contain next to nothing, see Fig. 24. There was no way of the subject telling what had been omitted, including crucially, any recommendation that the commanding officer had made regarding suitability for and timing of promotion.

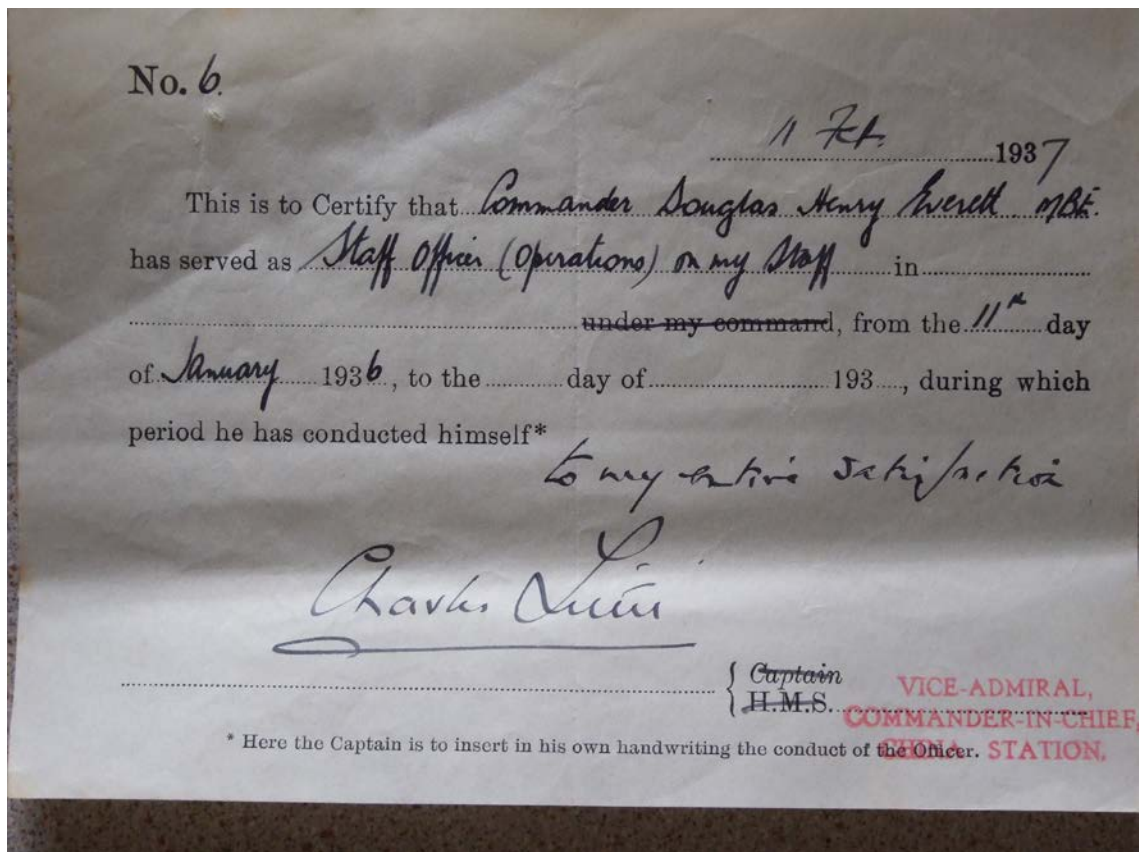


Fig. 24. Example of a ‘flimsy’. This would probably be all an officer would be told about his professional progress in the eyes of his superior.

The S206 shown in Figs. 16-18 had been somewhat improved by being reduced to a single side by 1925, see Fig. 25. However even this form gave very little for a promotion board to work on; only those officers at the extremes of performance would stand out. The long overdue improvement came in 1931. The rather banal title of the AFO - ‘Reports on Officers – Revision of Forms’ - covered a significant change; the introduction of numerical grading for each attribute [capitalisation is as the original]:

Under the new system, variations in qualifications will be expressed by the following numerical notations:-

9	corresponding to	Exceptional
8, 7 or 6	“	Above the Average
5	“	THE AVERAGE OFFICER
4, 3 or 2	“	Below the Average
1	“	Poor <sup>122</sup>

<sup>122</sup> AFO 1976/31 Reports on Officers – Revision of Forms.

S. 206.

Rank. *div. the ant*

Name of H.M. Ship *WINERN*

Period of Report *From the 10<sup>th</sup> March 1924 - 26<sup>th</sup> July 1925*

Capacity in which Officer has been employed *Compendence and Torpedo Control Officer*

Occasion on which report is rendered *Relief of Commanding Officer*

Seniority. *15<sup>th</sup> May 1925*

For use at the Admiralty. *Rm 31*

(a) General Conduct *Satisfactory* (b) If Not of temperate habits to be so stated here *above average*

(c) Professional ability *average* (d) Zeal and Energy *average*

(e) Power of Command *average* (f) Judgment *average*

(g) Reliability *above average* (h) Initiative *average*

(i) General opinion of Officer:— *leadership, average. A good influence in the ship takes an interest in the men's recreations, has tact and is a good conversationalist. Plays work tennis, keeps himself fit. His officer has made great progress, though still a little lacking in "sea sense" - but is keen, hardworking and reliable.*

(j) Is Officer suitable to specialise, if so, in what capacity *As Gunnery.* (k) Whether recommended for promotion (in ordinary course or specially) *In due course*

(l) In the case of an Officer in command of seagoing ship:—

(i) Ability in handling ship

(ii) Whether fit in all respects for command of more important seagoing ship in due course

Signature and rank of Reporting Officer *Charles St. John*

Date *26<sup>th</sup> July 1925*

Remarks of Flag or Senior Officer:— *Concurrence*

28 JUL 1925

Fig. 25. Form S206 prior to introduction of numerical marking. For an example of the earlier form which ran to four sides of foolscap but contained little more information, see Figs 16-18. (2SLPersRec)

This change at first sight seems of little consequence. Actually it allowed for more subtle gradation which, with the greater use of text, was to prove of much greater value to promotion boards charged with picking officers worthy of promotion. As Chatfield put it 'Numbers can be meant,<sup>123</sup> adjectives cannot, and so one can realise clearer the general calibre of one officer compared with another.'<sup>124</sup> An example of the new form is shown at Fig. 26.

<sup>123</sup> Properly 'averaged'.  
<sup>124</sup> Lord Chatfield, *The Navy and Defence: The Autobiography of Admiral of the Fleet Lord Chatfield PC GCB OM etc*, (London: William Heinemann, 1942) p.201.

Numerical reporting now allowed officers to be directly compared, however imperfectly. Over the years the system was refined. Subsequent reporting officers, with a wider view of the field would state that an officer had been over or under marked and subtract or add one or two marks accordingly. Centrally applied correction factors, on the basis of the past marking of the reporting officer completed the picture. The latter were applied so that if a given officer was known a 'hard marker', his marks would, for example, be multiplied by, for example, 1.1. Inevitably officers' correction factors became known, no-one wanted to have a correction factor of less than unity, and be seen as soft. This helped prevent over marking, which has bedevilled some armed forces using a similar marking scheme.

Form S206 was updated, eventually to include ten numerical qualities to be recorded, but in essence it remained unchanged until its demise in the early twenty first century. Its importance can be judged from the fact that Chatfield in his memoirs singles out this change as being of particular importance (and claims the credit for suggesting the scheme to the Second Sea Lord) despite not even being at the Admiralty when it was actually introduced under Field.<sup>125</sup>

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<sup>125</sup> Lord Chatfield, *The Navy and Defence: The Autobiography of Admiral of the Fleet Lord Chatfield PC GCB OM etc*, (London: William Heinemann, 1942) p.201.

S. 206. **CONFIDENTIAL**

Rank.	Name in full.	Date of Birth.	Seniority.	For use at the Admiralty.
Commander	Ge [REDACTED]	N. K.	30.6.35	First Sea Lord. Naval Secretary. Officer's Record Registry.
Depot. (Commissioned Warrant and Warrant Officers.....)				
Occasion for Report..... On relief.....				
Ship... Staff of Commander-in-Chief,		Station... Mediterranean.....		
Period of Report		Capacity in which employed.. Fleet Gunnery... Officer		
From..... 6. June, 1939.		To 3. Aug., 1941.....		
Section I.	(a) General conduct; Satisfactory <del>or Unsatisfactory</del> (b) Of temperate habit; Yes or No. (if adverse—a full statement is to be made on back of form).			
Section II.	(c) Professional Ability..... 7.....		(f) Intellectual Ability..... 7.....	
	(d) Personal Qualities..... 7.....		(g) Administrative Ability..... 7.....	
	(e) Leadership..... 7.....			
Section III.	If in command of a seagoing ship:— (h) Ability in handling ship..... (i) Fit for more important sea command: Yes or No.*			
Section IV.	General opinion of Officer:—  A most keen and painstaking Officer who brought the Gunnery efficiency of the Fleet to a very high pitch. This is illustrated by the Gunnery successes at Calabria and at Matapan and the several successful bombardments of the enemy coasts. Very fit. Should do well in the higher ranks of the Service.			
Section V.	Suitable to Specialise: Yes or No. (k) In what capacity.....			
Section VI.	(l) Whether recommended for promotion: Immediate <del>or No</del> <del>Accelerated</del> <del>In ordinary course</del>			
Date..... 3rd June, 1942.....	Signature of Reporting Officer.....			REAR-ADMIRAL CHIEF OF STAFF
Remarks of Senior Officer:—	Index Error.....			
Date.....	Signature and Rank.....			

Fig. 26. Post 1931 S206

### The 'Batch System'

The other major weakness of the promotion system whenever promotions were being considered, was that all in zone officers were considered together. The result was that those who had attracted attention (e.g. those serving on an admiral's staff) and those about to go out of zone received disproportionate attention. Thus good officers could languish through the zone, and miss out in the mass at the end, particularly if in the earlier years in zone they were serving out of the sight of senior officers. The solution

was the 'Batch system'. Properly the introduction of the batch system of promotion belongs in the Chatfield era, being introduced six weeks after Field retired. However, such a major and complex change must have been under discussion before he retired and the then Second Sea Lord (Vice Admiral Pound) responsible for such matters was in office over the change of First Sea Lords (August 1932 to September 1935) so it must have been conceived under Field's aegis.

The 'batch system'<sup>126</sup> grouped officers whose seniority fell in the same six month group to form a 'batch'. As the batch went into the promotion zone according to its size and the needs of the service it would be allocated a set number of promotions, and these promotions would be given at intervals as the batch progressed through the zone. This also meant that officers would be in competition for promotion only against others in their batch, not the totality of those in zone. Thus the boom and bust of the older system which could result in good officers not being promoted because there were no more available promotions left when he came to the end of his zone, would be obviated, and above all, it allowed for manpower planning. It also precluded commanding officers playing the system in who they recommended for promotion as officers only competed against other members of their batch, and it would be unusual for two from a given batch to serve together.

After six months this was modified to give greater detail concerning the relative ranking of all of the officers under the command of the reporting officer, indicating whether each was recommended or not for promotion, those being recommended for immediate promotion, rather aptly, 'to be indicated by a star'.<sup>127</sup> The batch system continued to be used, with modifications, into the twenty first century.

It is difficult to overestimate the importance of these two changes. They meant that at long last the navy had got away from the promotion system described by Professor Lambert of relying on chance for the better officers to rise to the top which had characterised officer career management until Field's reforms.

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<sup>126</sup> CAFO 584/33 *Promotion to Captain and Commander – Executive Branch- System of Selection.*

<sup>127</sup> CAFO 2360/33 *Promotion to Captain and Commander – Executive Branch- System of Selection.*



## Junior Officer Training

Even without including commissioning from the lower deck there were three cadet training 'streams' as described in the previous chapter. This system had grown up piecemeal; the pressures of an imminent war had meant that the Special Entry stream and the (much smaller) nautical college stream were grafted onto the 'Dartmouth' stream. The nautical college entry trained with the Special Entry, despite already having had a significant amount of nautical training, so the three streams were functionally two. Training and particularly sea experience were of different durations and type (Dartmouth cadets tended to be sent to battleships, Special Entry cadets to destroyers). Additionally as has been mentioned earlier, Special Entry cadets starting as midshipmen at the same time as Dartmouth cadets, were promoted sub lieutenant earlier. In an attempt to deal with this anomaly, midshipmen of the same seniority were paid at different rates depending on which 'type' they were. The 'Committee on Personnel' examined the 'entry and training of cadets' including the proposals of the Bennett Committee, and endorsed the two stream system, concluding that 'both systems of entry, namely through Dartmouth and by Special Entry, should be retained,' and felt that 'nothing was to be gained by transferring the training of the latter to Dartmouth'.<sup>128</sup> While there had been sporadic attempts to resolve such anomalies, by 1931, the whole structure was long overdue for administrative reform.

Quite apart from the streams, the substance of officer training itself was long overdue for change. Following the end of the Cambridge course which had been introduced to make up for the education the young officers had not received because of the war, and its replacement by the sub lieutenants Greenwich course, their training had not been altered or updated in any way. In particular, there was an almost total neglect of formally teaching the most important quality required of an officer – leadership. One of the post Invergordon committees whose outputs have already, in part, been described reported that a fault in officer training was that 'Junior Officers lack initiative ... [and their] leadership poor'.<sup>129</sup> Up until this time, much had been made of 'Officer Like Qualities' often abbreviated as OLQ. Indeed for Special Entry cadets at passing out, there was a prize, an Admiralty Dirk, usually awarded to the Chief Cadet Captain, for

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<sup>128</sup> ADM 167/86 Un Referenced Preliminary report regarding matters under the consideration of the committee on personnel..

<sup>129</sup> ADM 116/2896 Enclosure to memorandum by secretary of the committee on personnel dated 17 December 1931.

OLQs<sup>130</sup> but not for Dartmouth cadets.<sup>131</sup> However, the 1921 description of ‘Officer Like Qualities’ previously referred to, ‘physique, bearing, character, etc, (summed up as Officer like qualities)’ suggests that there was an emphasis more on looking the part rather than what would now be perceived as leadership.<sup>132</sup> As has been pointed out, this reflected the navy’s perceived needs, leadership by example, but it did not embrace the totality of leadership, which in modern terms includes man management. Officers under training were not taught, or given any experience in ‘getting things done’ until they went to sea as sub lieutenants. As cadets, midshipmen and acting sub lieutenants they were pupils either at a school ashore or afloat.

This was to change. Unnoticed by historians, officer training underwent a major philosophical change at the beginning of the 1930s. It has probably been missed because there was no outward and visible sign of this change; officers took the same length of time to be trained, ostensibly undergoing the same courses, each of the same duration, but by the time the Second World War came, most lieutenants had been trained in a new way, with an emphasis on leadership. Previously it had been assumed that leadership was an innate class-based attribute despite there being many historical examples to prove the contrary,<sup>133</sup> let alone more recent examples attributable to poor leadership, such as that described as having occurred in the mutiny in *HMS Lucia*.

A series of reforms were accepted by the Board and promulgated starting in July 1932 during Field’s tenure as First Sea Lord. The first of what became a comprehensive series of reforms was the (re-) introduction of ‘training [for cadets] in a sea-going cruiser specially provided for the purpose.’<sup>134</sup> The two First World War vintage minesweepers used for a modicum of sea training at Dartmouth (HM Ships *Forres* and *Carstairs*) were to be paid off, HMS *Erebus* which was being used as a training ship for Special Entry cadets was to revert to being a turret drill ship, i.e. to train guns’ crews (she was a monitor with a single twin fifteen inch gunned turret)<sup>135</sup> and HMS *Frobisher*, a 9,600 ton ‘Effingham’ class cruiser was ‘to be altered for service as a

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<sup>130</sup> John H. Beattie, *The Churchill Scheme: The Royal Navy Special Entry Cadet Scheme 1913 – 1955*, (Not given: Private Publication, 2010) Appendix 9 p.1.

<sup>131</sup> Jane Harrold (BRNC Archivist) e mail to author 10 February 2012.

<sup>132</sup> ADM 116/1888. O Murray letter 1 March 1920.

<sup>133</sup> Brian Lavery, *Royal Tars: The Lower Deck of the Royal Navy, 875 -1850*, (London: Conway, 2010) p. 259.

<sup>134</sup> AFO1662/32 *Training Cruiser for Naval Cadets*.

<sup>135</sup> BL Mk1/N 42 calibre, the same gun as in most battleships. Ian Buxton *Gun Monitors: The History of the Design, Construction and Operation of the Royal Navy’s Monitors* (Tynemouth: World Ship Society/Trident Books, 1978) p. 173.

cadets' training ship.' She was 'to take two terms of Dartmouth cadets, after their Dartmouth course, and all cadets now trained in H.M.S. "Erebus", and to carry out three cruises a year, changing cadets as necessary every four months'. For the first time, the Dartmouth and Special Entry (and the nautical college cadets) were to be trained in the same environment. Whether they were actually to train together is uncertain.

There was a very important change in officer training included, which presumably followed on from the recommendation made after the Invergordon mutiny, referred to earlier, that midshipmen should have a period of training on the lower deck. The AFO stated:

(v) The complement of the "Frobisher" to be kept as low as possible, one of the objects of the scheme being that the cadets should do much of the work of the ship.<sup>136</sup>

This was a vital change to officer training. Future officers were to experience first hand what the men they would be responsible for leading actually did, not in theory, but in practice. This was an essential component of their training in man management and leadership.



Fig. 28. HMS *FROBISHER* as a training cruiser.

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<sup>136</sup> AFO1662/32 *Training Cruiser for Naval Cadets*.

September 1932 saw the publication of the most important document concerning officer training of the inter-war years, indeed probably of the first half of the twentieth century. Its importance cannot be over-estimated as it completely reviewed and re-organised not only the training of officers, but far more crucially, the thinking behind that training. It took the form of a fifteen page Admiralty Fleet Order entitled ‘Junior Officers – Training’.<sup>138</sup> Its length is some measure of its importance, most AFOs were a few paragraphs in length, rarely exceeding a page approximating to a modern A5 size, (apart from those setting out a single course syllabus which might run to two or three pages). It was introduced with immediate effect. Unlike the previous syllabi that have been described, it additionally sets out the philosophy on which training of junior officers was to be based. The inference that may be drawn is that it was intended to address identified weaknesses and deficiencies, indeed the preamble stated that ‘certain modifications of the present system have been found necessary in the light of experience of the past years’.

It continues:

2. The objects which training must achieve are:-

- (a) General Education
- (b) Acquisition of Professional Knowledge
- (c) Development of Officer-like Qualities.

3. *General Education* – A general education is necessary to form a foundation on which subsequent professional knowledge can be built. It must be general in nature and should not specialise on the side of science and mathematics beyond what is needed as a basis for the technical courses for the rank of Lieutenant.

4. *Acquisition of Professional knowledge.* – The ultimate purpose of professional knowledge is to enable a Lieutenant to carry out the normal duties of his rank. Except for seamanship and the elementary knowledge of other subjects needed by a Cadet or Midshipman, this instruction is given during the courses for the rank of Lieutenant. The objects of the courses for the rank of Lieutenant have been laid down so as to limit the extent of professional knowledge to that which is absolutely necessary.

5. *Officer-like Qualities* - After the acquisition of elementary professional knowledge, the conditions requisite for the development of officer-like qualities are opportunity, responsibility and sea experience. There has been a tendency for these three points, **which form the most important training of all**, [author’s emphasis] to be neglected for the sake of technical instruction at sea. It cannot be too strongly emphasised that although professional knowledge is an important factor in the power of command, it is in itself insufficient, and must not be allowed to prejudice the training in officer-like qualities.

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<sup>137</sup> This is reproduced in full in Appendix E.

<sup>138</sup> AFO 2315/32 *Junior Officers – Training*’.

6. It has, therefore, been decided that the training of junior officers is to be considered as falling into three periods, each with its primary consideration, and it is on this basis that the present system of training has been revised.

*1<sup>st</sup> Period.* – As Cadet, when education is the primary consideration. For the Dartmouth Cadet, the education should be general in character, except for such elementary professional instruction as is necessary before he goes to sea. For the Special Entry Cadet, the instruction should be purely professional.

*2<sup>nd</sup> Period.* – As Midshipman, when the development of officer-like qualities is the primary consideration. During this period, the elementary professional knowledge already acquired is applied and developed in carrying out the duties of an officer.

*3<sup>rd</sup> Period.* – As Acting Sub-Lieutenant when the acquisition of professional knowledge is the primary consideration, and general education is continued.

As well as setting out training objectives, the AFO designates responsible officers, reporting and assessments, including updating the rules for midshipmen's journals, and specifies that a period of training should if possible be spent in Destroyers, because it was felt that a period of service in a small ship was of particular value.

The AFO includes topics and areas to be covered during training, but these are far less proscriptive and detailed than those described earlier. It sets out at the head of each subject the training objective, and in many cases the objective of each area of training, for example, under 'TORPEDO' the stated object is 'to teach the knowledge of the torpedo subjects required by a midshipman in the performance of his duties as such', and Section III sets out that he is to be taught a 'general description and typical uses of explosives...' so that he might '...carry out his duties:- (i) In charge of a boat in which a demolition party is embarked'.

Paragraphs 5 and 6 are by far the most important. Until this change, midshipman were at sea to be taught; they were not seen as being at sea to learn how to be officers, (indeed Richmond had made the point that there was too much emphasis on rote learning) to the point that there had been representations that midshipmen serving in ships that did not carry an instructor officer – a school teacher – were unfairly disadvantaged when it came to sitting the seamanship examination and should receive an 'adjustment of marks.'<sup>139</sup> Now the emphasis was to be on 'officer like qualities' to be acquired while a midshipman 'while carrying out the duties of an officer'. Repeated references were made to 'Officer Like Qualities' and leadership. As has been emphasised previously until this point, leadership had been thought, implicitly rather

than explicitly, to be an innate class based characteristic. However, Field recognised that more was required. None of the documents cited gives any indication of how the mandated training was to be carried out, but the outline is apparent. They were to be exposed to what ratings did, by actually having to do it, and then to get out of the classroom and take charge of sailors in a controlled and supervised environment. Basic concepts of leadership can be taught, and it can be learned to some extent by example, but ultimately the only way an officer can acquire leadership skills is by actually leading, not by sitting in a classroom. This AFO recognised the fact that officers had to experience leadership, and as midshipmen, under supervision, they were to use ‘the elementary professional knowledge already acquired [which] is [to be] applied and developed in carrying out the duties of an officer.’

Overall, this AFO has a decidedly modern ring to it, specifically including the setting of training objectives and the recognition that training should be sufficient and timely for the immediate task, but not beyond. As has been seen, the tendency to over train, particularly noticeable in specialist training, had been a feature of officer training. Instead this change almost suggests a move to the post Second World War ‘Systems Approach to Training’.

It set the pattern of officer training which remained unaltered up until the Second World War, and with exception of the cessation of the training cruiser, into it. It is undoubtedly the most significant change in officer training of the first half of the twentieth century and beyond. Allowing for one year spent as a midshipman, and two as a sub lieutenant, almost 90% of lieutenants serving at the outbreak of war would have been trained under this system, even excluding the effects of the advance of seniority given to most sub lieutenants at the outbreak of war.<sup>140</sup>

### Sail Training

The question of sail training is appropriately discussed here. There certainly was an atavistic desire widespread in the service to train both officers and ratings for a period under sail. The First Lord (Sir Bolton Eyres-Monsell, later Viscount Monsell, himself previously a cadet) ‘largely initiated’ a sail training programme. The Board

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<sup>139</sup> However, it was not felt ‘possible to make any allowance in this respect’ see AWO 3369/20 *Midshipmen – Instruction Afloat prior to Examination for the Rank of Lieutenant.*

discussed the matter and decided to proceed. It actually got as far as a sail training ship being included in the 1932 naval estimates laid before parliament receiving ‘a warm, even enthusiastic, welcome from many members of Parliament, as well as a good Press’. An AFO was issued asking for officers with sail experience to notify the Admiralty so that the crew of the first ship could be identified. Initially it was intended that the ship would train Boys.<sup>141</sup> Richmond was against sail training ‘It is ... of little value’, feeling that it was pointless ‘if it is confined merely to a few months’ and thus had no place in a modern navy.<sup>142</sup> Chatfield when he became First Sea Lord wasted no time in cancelling the whole scheme, ‘rid[ding] [him]self of this nightmare’.<sup>143</sup>

### Operational training

The Admiralty also had concerns regarding operational training, the training undertaken by a ship as a unit, termed nowadays ‘collective training’. It had been the practice that when new or on coming out of refit, a ship would receive a complete crew. Then she would be commissioned and, after an initial period, be expected to be at all times ready for war until paid off for refit or disposal and the crew would disperse.<sup>144</sup> During the commission, officers and ratings would come and go. Admiral Kelly had described after the Invergordon mutiny the deleterious effects on officer morale of the ship being fully manned for war, and there literally not being enough for the officers to do in peace.<sup>145</sup> However, there were further aspects, the constant trickle of manpower changes meant that a ship’s company was in a permanent state of flux. This meant that maintaining morale and efficiency was difficult; it was difficult to lead when those being led, and indeed the leaders, were continually changing. The effect on the materiel of the fleet, ships and their equipment, being constantly utilised is outside the scope of this thesis.

A ‘Committee on Personnel’ was formed ahead of the aforementioned First Lord’s statement as part of the Naval Estimates.<sup>146</sup> They attributed all of the problems

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<sup>140</sup> AFO 405/40 *Training of Junior Executive Officers During Hostilities*.

<sup>141</sup> AFO 1160/32 *Training under Sail –REPORTS*.

<sup>142</sup> Admiral Sir H.W. Richmond, *Naval Training*, (London: Oxford University Press, Humphrey Milford, 1933) p. 95.

<sup>143</sup> Lord Chatfield, *It Might Happen Again: Volume II The Navy and Defence*, (London: William Heinemann, 1947) p. 54-59.

<sup>144</sup> Some key ratings who knew particular parts of the ship in detail, for example the ‘freshwater tankey’ would remain.

<sup>145</sup> ADM 178/129 Undated Letter by Admiral John D. Kelly para. 33.

<sup>146</sup> ADM 167/86 *Preliminary report* regarding matters under the consideration of the committee on Personnel. .

that had arisen to ‘two compelling causes’. Firstly ‘the intensive study of material rendered necessary by the rapid advance of science’ and secondly ‘the unceasing pursuit of weapon efficiency demanded by the brief years of preparation for the late war.’ In a far reaching analysis the committee looked a wide range of issues including ‘seagoing training ships’ and said:

The First Lord, in his speech on the Naval Estimates in 1932 said that there were ... certain main defects in the Naval Service. I can sum up these defects by saying that for years past so much attention has been given at sea to achieving the highest possible degree of weapon efficiency and maintaining the Fleet in a state of almost immediate readiness for battle, that the broader aspects of training the personnel have suffered in many directions.

There followed a new statement of training policy. It represents such a radical re-thinking of training doctrine that it merits study in some detail.<sup>147</sup> The tone of the whole order is unusual in that there is an almost self critical tone to parts of it. It first sets out why the policy was being issued, a concern that ‘there is liable to be a tendency to over-estimate the importance of the machine at the expense of the efficiency of the personnel.’

It then drew on the Naval War Manual, quoting from it to make the point that training has two components, ‘SKILL – to maintain and use material’ and ‘MORALE – the driving force which governs the keenness to learn and the effort to employ’. It then goes on to define both terms and the definition of morale is of particular interest:

3. Morale as here used, includes all those personal qualities such as initiative, resource, leadership, enthusiasm and discipline which are essential for the efficient use of men

The CAFO emphasises the importance of morale, and expresses ‘Their Lordships’ concern that leadership had been relatively neglected. It continued that ‘it is Their Lordships’ view that while weapon skill can be achieved by an intensive period of drill, the development of the qualities of leadership and initiative requires years of application of a system designed with that end in view’. This represented a major change in the thinking behind naval training. After a discussion of the effects on what would now be termed fighting efficiency, it set out in the key paragraph the changes to be implemented. Firstly, newly commissioned ships should be allowed a four week period in which to ‘shake down’, preliminary to a two week ‘work up’. The paragraph then continues:

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<sup>147</sup> CAFO 2023/32 *Training Policy*. This is reproduced in full in Appendix E.



(ii) Adequate opportunity should be given to Commanding Officers for the training of their officers and men.

(iii) **Decentralisation should be encouraged so as to give more responsibility and more opportunity for the exercise of command and initiative.** [author's emphasis]

The importance of these two sub-paragraphs is far reaching. In the 'Introduction' to this thesis, the two theories of Command, viz., Directive Command and Mission Command were set out and discussed. This Admiralty Fleet Order is a firm statement of an intention to pursue Mission Command over and above Directive Command.

### Tactical training

Until 1930 attendance by a captain at the 'Technical and War courses' was voluntary; such officers could apply to go if they wished. In 1930 this ceased.<sup>148</sup> Hereafter, they would attend. While this pre-dated Field's period of office but it was indicative of a trend that was to continue increasingly through the 1930s as the navy moved from being an internally volunteer service (except in the matter of appointments), to one in which officers were directed according to the needs of the service.

Extraordinary as it may seem, until 1930 an officer qualifying and assuming command of a destroyer was not required to have nor was he examined in any aspects apart from the strictly mechanistic regarding such a command i.e. he was not formally taught at a command level or examined on how a destroyer would be used in war. He would have been examined in how to maintain, load, aim and fire a gun and torpedo, but not in how these weapons would have been used. In a later chapter, the matter of how much importance the navy attached to command will be examined. However this restriction of training rather suggests that the navy did not see command of even as important a vessel as a destroyer of that much significance. This was to change; in 1930 for the first time officers 'who have passed for command of destroyers' were to attend the Tactical School 'during periods when destroyer work is being specially dealt with'.<sup>149</sup> The Tactical School was for senior officers about to assume commands of larger ships or groups of smaller ships which would include future 'Captains (D)' – commanding destroyer flotillas. Sending future commanding officers of individual

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<sup>148</sup> AFO 132/30 *Captains, R.N. – Technical and War Courses.*

<sup>149</sup> AFO 2589/30 *Destroyer Officers – Attendance at the Tactical School.*

destroyers, 'General Service' or unspecialised officers, on such a course was recognition of the need for them to have greater tactical awareness, another indication of a move towards Mission Command thinking. However, the wording does rather suggest that they could sit at the back while their elders and betters were talking about use of destroyers!

All of the foregoing changes were of vital importance for the navy as a fighting organisation and their importance cannot be overstated. The Royal Navy had drifted through the 1920s; officers' individual training, their operational training and collective training were now being addressed. These were the changes that were to fit the Royal Navy for the Second World War.

### Morale

While Field's reforms mainly affected officer training across the board, it was largely his successor Chatfield who addressed broader morale issues. However, there were some changes that will have had an effect on what would now be termed bonding. The service was and is very aware that formal dining in the mess has a positive effect on group cohesion; it is not for nothing that most courses of any length end with a dinner or even a ball. Interestingly in 1930 for the first time the Staff College dinner at RN College Greenwich was opened to '[a]ll officers who have been through the Royal Naval Staff College ' They would have to pay 'approximately 3s 6d per head, [17.5p] excluding wines'.

There were other attempts to make Officers feel valued. AFO 2022/31 of August 1931 was indicative.<sup>150</sup> This stated that 'An expression of Their Lordships appreciation has been conveyed to Lieut-Comdr. R. Woods, R.N., for the useful information he has supplied and the care he has taken in compiling four Remark Books for the year 1930, whilst serving as the Navigating Officer of H.M.S. "Delhi" '. This may seem of little consequence, but it was not. An officer was being personally and publicly commended for performing a routine duty well. This performed a vital function, not only for the individual concerned, but also told the wider officer community that the work of individuals was noted at the top of the service, that they as individuals mattered. It is probable that with the Invergordon mutiny occurring the next

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<sup>150</sup> AFO 2022/31 *Navigating Officers' Remark Book*.

month, in this instance it probably had little effect. However it was a practice that Chatfield was to continue.

It is appropriate to re-assess the navy at the point when Admiral Field left office, in terms of the Herzberg grid that has been referred to throughout this thesis.

#### Hygiene Factors

Pay and Benefits	Poor
Company Policy/ Administration	Improving
Relationships with co-workers	Good
Physical environment	Poor

#### Motivational Factors

Achievement	Poor
Recognition	Improving
Work itself	Improving
Responsibility	Improving
Promotion	Poor, but improving
Growth	Poor

Fig. 29. Herzberg Matrix at the end of Field's term of office.

#### The Inflection

The navy has always regarded the man in charge when anything happens in a ship, unit, a command or indeed the entire service, as being responsible for the event. Hence a commanding officer is decorated if his ship does well, and court-martialled if it collides, is grounded or lost.<sup>151</sup> On that basis, Admiral Field must bear the blame for the mutiny at Invergordon, the 'nadir' for the service between the wars. However, Field had started reforming almost from the day he took office, addressing particularly officer training in the round, entry to the branch, and what is now termed 'collective training' as well as officer career management. These reforms addressed weakness's that had built up throughout the 1920s due to neglect by his two immediate predecessors. Far from heading the weakest Board in the history of the service, as it is described by Roskill, the

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<sup>151</sup> Up until well into the Second World War, if a ship was lost – even due to enemy action - the senior surviving member of the seaman branch, officer or rating, was court-martialled (and not necessarily acquitted) for the loss of the ship. For an example concerning the loss of HMS *Manchester*, see Captain S.

Field Board laid the foundations for the development of the officer corps that was to take it through the greatest test in its history, the Second World War. The vast majority of the lieutenants that went into that war had been trained under Field's reformed system, and all of the younger commanders and captains had been promoted under his new reporting system and many under the batch system, ensuring that a better spread of officers were promoted.

There was much more to be done; Field did not address the detachment of the Admiralty from the wider service, and did little directly to improve officer morale, although he made a start. Those aspects fell to his successor, Admiral Chatfield. Nonetheless, Field does not deserve the opprobrium heaped upon him; the evidence suggests that he recognised the major weaknesses of the navy and was addressing them when the Invergordon mutiny forced him from his chosen course. It is of note, Invergordon and his poor health notwithstanding he served a normal term as First Sea Lord, when sacking him could easily have been justified; indeed after Invergordon he apparently offered his resignation.<sup>152</sup> While he would have been weakened in political/administrative terms by the Invergordon mutiny, his major weakness, evident after the *Lucia* mutiny and after Invergordon, was an apparent inability to master or even attempt to practice what would now be called 'corporate communications', which for the navy meant a missed opportunity to publicise within and outside the service the corporate renewal that Field had set in train. Fortunately for the navy, Chatfield proved to be a master of that art. However, without Field's reforms, the officer corps would have been weaker in composition in its senior/middle grades, more poorly trained and less well positioned to deal with the expansion that the Second World War required.

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W. Roskill, *The War at Sea: The Period of Balance*, (Uckfield: The Naval and Military Press, 2004) p. 306 fn 2.

<sup>152</sup> Stephen Roskill, *Naval Policy between the Wars: The Period of Reluctant Rearmament 1930 – 1939*, p. 125.

## Chapter 4

### The Ascension: Admiral Chatfield and the improvement of the officers' lot.

Admiral Chatfield<sup>1</sup> who succeeded Admiral Field 21 January 1933 is quite rightly viewed as the man who prepared the navy for the forthcoming war. While a lot of this preparation inevitably was of material; a major programme of warship building and also a continuing fight to regain control of the Fleet Air Arm, Chatfield put a lot of effort into the officer corps. This falls into two main areas, firstly, the subject of this chapter, improving the officers' lot and concomitantly, their morale. Secondly, to be covered in the next chapter, actually preparing the officers corps for war. Inevitably there is some overlap, as morale was and is an essential component of war fighting capability.

Admiral Chatfield had his weaknesses, for example, that he was class conscious to the point of snobbery is obvious from his own writings. Looking to his strengths, Marder says of him that he:

was without question the finest officer the Royal Navy produced between the wars. ... [he] had almost everything; character, charm (though he always looked rather severe and was somewhat lacking in a sense of humour), brains, energy, administrative ability, and exceptional professional competence.<sup>2</sup>

Liddell-Hart's opinion was that he was 'a more effective personality than any of the three Chiefs of the Air Staff during [his period of office].'<sup>3</sup> This was to be of significance as one of Chatfield's major battles in Whitehall was to regain control of naval aviation, the Fleet Air Arm, from the Royal Air Force. Liddell-Hart does not venture an opinion on Chatfield *vis a vis* his army opposite numbers, but, in terms of battles for resources, the major battleground in Whitehall in the 1930s, the army was not the same threat to the navy as the air force.

His contribution to preparing the material of the Royal Navy for war was immense. His management of the rearmament programme is well beyond the remit of this thesis; suffice it to say that under his stewardship the Navy entered the war with as balanced a Fleet as could be achieved within the continuing financial constraints which

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<sup>1</sup> Later Admiral of the Fleet Lord Chatfield PC, GCB, OM, CVO.

<sup>2</sup> Arthur J Marder, *Old Friends, New Enemies: The Royal Navy and the Imperial Japanese Navy – Strategic Illusions, 1936-1941*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1981) pp. 30-1.

<sup>3</sup> Basil Liddell Hart, *The Liddell Hart Memoirs Volume 1*, (London: Cassell, 1967) p. 325.

continued even as war became increasingly inevitable,<sup>4</sup> and with the groundwork laid for further expansion, for example, mass produced convoy escorts. While this is mostly irrelevant to this thesis, not only would it have of itself been a significant contributor to improving morale of the officer corps, in simplistic terms, that the country thought enough of the navy to spend money on it, but Chatfield himself gave a personal lead that the navy had sorely lacked for many years. However, Chatfield's contribution went far beyond that, put simply he re-connected the Admiralty Board with the navy.

While he was Commander in Chief of the Mediterranean Fleet over the period of Invergordon mutiny and thus out of the United Kingdom,<sup>5</sup> it is difficult to believe that he was unaware of Tyrwhitt's letter described in the previous chapter, or at the very least the sentiments that led to its being written. A possible indicator of Chatfield's views was that Tyrwhitt was promoted to Admiral of the Fleet on 31 July 1936.<sup>6</sup> This could not have happened without Chatfield having recommended it. However, while Chatfield was a natural leader, commissioning from the lower deck effectively remained in abeyance during most of his time as First Sea Lord, and, as will be shown, his expressed views suggest that, on this matter at least, he was extremely reactionary.

Thus, while tempting, it would be incorrect to look at everything concerning the navy's management of its officers after the nadir at the end of 1931 or early 1932 as an improvement. It would be wrong to assume that at the inflection the navy shook off the inertia and above all the reactionary attitudes of the 1920s and then moved forward, initially unknowingly, but increasingly suspecting, to what was to be its ultimate test, the Second World War. That would be erroneous, the navy did not change the way it managed its officers overnight. Rather the 1930s were a period of gradual but increasing change. Some changes, such as the end of the entry of thirteen year old boys as officer cadets, which had been presaged in 1913 with the start of the 'Special Entry', had to wait until after the war was over.<sup>7</sup> The changes were throughout evolutionary, rather than revolutionary, and many were carried out without full realisation of their ultimate

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<sup>4</sup> In February 1939 the Admiralty Board was forced by the Treasury to reduce the Naval estimates, see Stephen Roskill, *Naval Policy Between the Wars: The Period of Reluctant Rearmament 1930-1939*, (London: Collins, 1976) p. 451.

<sup>5</sup> 27 May 1930 – 30 Oct 1932.

<sup>6</sup> T.A. Heathcote, *The British Admirals of the Fleet 1734 – 1995: A biographical Dictionary*, (Barnsley: Leo Cooper, 2002) p.245.

<sup>7</sup> The last thirteen year old entry to Dartmouth was in May 1949, see Jane Harrold and Richard Porter, *Britannia Royal Naval College, Dartmouth: An Illustrated History*, (Dartmouth: Richard Webb, 2005) p.140.

utility. The best example of this is commissioning of ratings, that is commissioning from the lower deck. When originally introduced in something resembling its modern form in 1913 as the 'Mate' system, it was to meet a foreseen shortage of officers, not as a way of democratizing the officer corps, although ultimately that was to be its consequence. While the Field Admiralty had seen it as broadening the officer base, it will be shown that when the process was renewed under Chatfield, it was again, as in 1913, to meet a shortfall of officer numbers. Chatfield himself saw no need to broaden the social base from which officers were recruited, indeed quite the reverse. However, the mechanisms actually set up were those that proved capable of being used for a vast and unforeseen expansion of the officer corps to meet the needs of the Second World War, but that was not the original intention.

### Morale

Chatfield makes much in his autobiography of the need for and of his efforts to re-connect the Admiralty with the Fleet (but without indicating why it was necessary), 'I have referred to the importance I attached to the First Sea Lord maintaining touch with the sea. Acting on this principle I paid a visit to the Home Fleet ... in my first year of office.'<sup>8</sup> From an anecdote he tells of a young seaman remarking that ' "I never knew there was an Admiral at the Admiralty"...', he was aware that the Admiralty and the Board were seen as being separate from the Navy, and cannot have been unaware that this view extended to the officer corps. One (then) junior officer was put off by the rudeness and detachment of the members of the Admiralty Board at a social occasion.<sup>9</sup> Chatfield was also aware that the practice of members of the Admiralty Board, whether Service or civil of wearing 'plain clothes' (i.e. civilian dress) even when visiting ships at sea added to this detachment and made them:

easy game for the politicians and the Treasury, and out of whom the seaman, stoker and marine could expect to get little sympathy.<sup>10</sup>

Early in his tenure, the service members of the Board took to appearing on visits in naval uniform which Chatfield regarded as being extremely important, indeed he went as far as getting the political members of the Board 'to adopt a more sea-going rig;

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<sup>8</sup> Admiral of the Fleet Lord Chatfield PC GCB OM Etc, *It might happen again Volume II The Navy and Defence*, (London: William Heinemann 1947) p.52.

<sup>9</sup> Admiral Sir William O'Brien interview 22nd April 2008.

<sup>10</sup> Admiral of the Fleet Lord Chatfield PC GCB OM Etc, *It might happen again* p.52.

a special badge to be worn on a yachting cap was designed for them'.<sup>11</sup> There is no mention of this extending to the civil servants on the Board, indeed they do not appear to have ventured beyond the Admiralty itself.

Another change took place on 1 April 1935 which would have helped to re-connect the Admiralty with the navy. Uniformed members of the Admiralty Board ceased to be paid naval half pay and a civil service salary. They were unusually however paid according to the post occupied; that is according to their standing on the Board, rather than according to their rank.<sup>12</sup>

While awards of prizes for the best performing officers on courses such as the advanced gunnery course were routinely notified in Admiralty Fleet Orders, early in Chatfield's term, the Board started to again publicly commend officers for doing their job well, continuing a practice that appears to have started under Field (there had been one instance in 1931); for example in September 1933 in an AFO which was 'communicated to the press':

An expression of Their Lordships' appreciation has been conveyed to Lieutenant C.C. Martell, R.N. for the useful information he has supplied and the care he has taken in compiling five Remark Books for the year 1932 while serving as Navigating Officer of H.M.S. "Bee" [*sic*].<sup>13</sup>

For Lieutenant Martell this AFO obviously would have been good for his morale, serving in a small ship on the China station, far away and otherwise un-noticed but such a campaign would have also have had a positive effect on the morale of the officers. Such public commendations and the institution of publicly announced prizes for performance on courses and specialist essays would have been good for officer morale. In this case it was a part of a co-ordinated campaign, outside the Admiralty and within, as:

the heads of the Admiralty showed a gift for 'public relations', and for gaining supporters, far surpassing that of the other services.<sup>14</sup>

The increase in public attention was not entirely positive. More senior and more perceptive officers and ratings would have been well aware that the repeated 'alarums and excursions' of the period which are described more fully in the next chapter were

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<sup>11</sup> Eyre-Monsell, the then First Lord had actually been a naval cadet.

<sup>12</sup> Commander Charles N. Robinson (ed.), *Brassey's Naval Annual 1936*, (London : William Clowes, 1936) p.13.

<sup>13</sup> AFO 2134/33 *Navigating Officers' Remark Books*.



having a deleterious effect on men and material; ships and ships' companies were being worked hard and ship refits were delayed or cancelled. This, taken with the government despite being committed to re-armament still cheese paring, instances continuing up until the 1939 Naval Estimates, must have left nagging doubts in some naval minds as to the government's attitude to the armed forces in general (although the army suffered worse than the navy<sup>15</sup>). An essential component of morale is the belief by the individual and the group that the whole organisation believes in them. To an extent this must have been lacking.

Reference was made in the introduction to the apparent increase in publication during the 1930s of books about the navy's doings in the First World War.<sup>16</sup> In the case of re-prints, in this instance, date of original publication is given as many were repeatedly re-printed and even issued by book clubs, indicative of a significant demand.<sup>17</sup> While the public standing of the army was in the 1930s going through the period of revision characterised by the war poetry of the period, the navy appears to have been recovering its standing with the public and a realisation that it had played no small part in the winning of the First World War, indeed the book club edition cited above opens 'Before we settle down to watch the detailed story of how an unarmoured, though armed, fleet of liners was directly responsible for Germany's downfall in the Great War...'. If there were not a change in public perception of the navy, why else would there have been a market for such books? Whichever came first, the improvement in perception of the Royal Navy or the publication of the books, there must have been an inevitable lift in self-belief and morale.

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<sup>14</sup> Basil Liddell Hart *The Liddell Hart Memoirs Volume 1* p. 336.

<sup>15</sup> Donald Cameron Watt *How War Came: The Immediate Origins of the Second World War, 1938-1939* (London: Pimlico, 2001) p.94.

<sup>16</sup> E. Keble Chatterton, *The Big Blockade*, (London: Hurst and Blackett, 1932); E. Keble Chatterton, *Danger Zone: The Story of the Queenstown Command*, (London: Rich & Cowan, 1934); William Guy Carr, *By Guess and By God: The Story of the British Submarines in the War*, (London: Hutchinson & Co, 1930); William Guy Carr, *Brass Hats and Bell-Bottomed Trousers: Unforgettable and Splendid Feats of the Harwich Patrol*, (London; Hutchinson & Co, 1939); R.H. Gibson, Maurice Prendergast, *The German Submarine War 1914-1918*, (London: Constable and Co, 1931); Sir Roger Keyes, *Naval Memoirs: The Narrow Seas to the Dardanelles 1910-1915*, (London: Thornton Butterworth, 1934); Hugh Cleland Hoy, *40 O.B. or How the War Was Won*, (London; Hutchinson & Co, 1932); Tapprell Dorling (writing as 'Taffrail'), *Endless Story: Being an Account of the Work of the Destroyers, Flotilla-Leaders, Torpedo-Boats and Patrol Boats in the Great War*, (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1931).

<sup>17</sup> Keble Chatterton, E. *The Big Blockade* (London: Hurst and Blackett, 1932) was republished by Hutchinson and Co as a book club edition annotated on the title page '19<sup>th</sup> Thousand'.

## Officer manning

The Admiralty still had the problem of an excess of lieutenant commanders, while paradoxically already finding that the navy was faced with an impending shortage of officers. It had too many over-zone officers who by their very existence were a negative morale influence on the service as a whole. It also wished to afford better leadership opportunities not only to more junior officers, but to senior ratings. Accordingly in October 1932, a revision of the schemes of complements was announced, 'to encourage the proper development of leadership in and the assumption of responsibility by junior and Petty Officers'.<sup>18</sup>

There was another reason for needing greater leadership experience for junior and petty officers. There was the increasing intake of boy and ordinary seamen, because '[b]etween 1927 and 1933 the Naval personnel was decreased [sic] by approximately 12,000 men. This decrease was effected by a large reduction in recruiting ... During 1933-34 the wastage of time-expired men will be unusually high ... [t]he number of new entries is therefore abnormally high.'<sup>19</sup> The result would be that 'the number of ratings available to draft [will contain] a large proportion of untrained men.' This would inevitably throw a significant burden on the junior and petty officers who would have to manage and train these untrained sailors. It is also tempting to suppose that some of the resistance to commissioning from the lower deck, arose from a feeling that the better men were needed on the lower deck, but apart from the views discussed, there is little to support that speculation, at least in the papers concerning officers.

## The Binney Report<sup>20</sup>

The terms of reference and the report by the 'Binney' Committee established in May 1935, named for its chairman Rear Admiral T.H. Binney DSO, gives a fascinating insight into the pressures on the Admiralty with particular reference to manpower, and specifically officer manpower. It also shows a management that was now far more in touch with the navy as a whole than its predecessors, and which was prepared to listen.

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<sup>18</sup> AFO 2485/32 *Commissioned Executive Officers – Revised Complements and Amendment to Seaman Complements – REPORTS.*

<sup>19</sup> CAFO 2960/33 *Seaman Complements.*

<sup>20</sup> ADM 1/8795 *Peace and War Complements of HM Ships.*

Admiral Binney himself was unable to attend meetings of the committee for the first two months of its existence, and the initial work was undertaken by the remaining members, a captain, two commanders and a lieutenant commander with a civil servant as secretary. The committee took the opportunity to range widely in its opinions and recommendations. It was tasked 'to examine the peace and war complements of H.M. Ships.' It was classified 'SECRET' and neither the terms of reference nor the report were disseminated by the AFO system, not surprisingly in view of some of its conclusions and recommendations.<sup>21</sup> In very detailed terms of reference which explored many avenues, and the first two paragraphs warrant reproduction in full:

1. To determine the minimum number of officers under the classification of (i) Lieutenant, (ii) Warrant Officer and (iii) Midshipman which can be accepted in the quarter bill of each class of ship on the understanding that:-
  - (a). Non-executive officers are employed in the quarter bill to the greatest extent possible.
  - (b) Ratings are employed to replace officers in the quarter bill to the greatest extent possible.
2. To determine the greatest extent to which the number of officers arrived at in 1. can be reduced in peace time whilst still allowing for the ship to be fought immediately after war is declared.

The terms of reference went on to detail to what level of readiness each fleet was to be assumed to achieve, and continued in section III :

7. In working out the above the following considerations are to be kept in mind:-
  - (a) That if Commissioned Executive Officers are to have a reasonable chance of promotion the requirements of [*sic*] Lieutenants in peace must be kept to a minimum.
  - (b) That it is essential to make more use both of non-executive officers and of ratings for filling Action Stations now filled by executive officers.
  - (c) That it must be assumed that we can find Chief and Petty Officers who have the necessary power of command, leadership and technical knowledge to fill all Action Stations, except those where the officer's highly developed brain is essential.

The committee visited widely and sought a wide range of opinions, and were at pains to emphasise that the opinions they had sought were 'from ships' [*sic*] officers' that is not from staff officers (even those embarked) etc. They emphasised that they were 'much struck by the unanimous opinion expressed,' that manpower reductions were not possible while 'one or two officers and many men are out of the ship on duty

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<sup>21</sup> ADM 1/8795 was a closed file in the National Archive/Public Record Office until 1986, which is probably why Roskill makes no mention of this extremely important report.

for weeks at a time' (readers of the report will have been well aware that of the five members of the committee, three were then currently appointed to sea going ships, and two were from HMS *Leander*, one – a commander - probably the executive officer and one the commanding officer of a destroyer) and recommended 'THAT EXTRA-SHIP DUTIES ARE REDUCED TO AN ABSOLUTE MINIMUM'<sup>22</sup> particularly emphasising that '[t]he real training of a man in his particular action or other duties must be in the ship.' [sic].

The committee can reasonably be described as pushing their terms of reference to the limits when they addressed the subject of career structure and promotion. They drew attention to the influence on 'the parents of candidates for Naval Cadetships, who see large numbers of officers deprived of naval service when in the prime of life' and stated that 'to obtain a larger number of aspirants to a naval career and therefore raise the standard of cadets entered, it is necessary to increase the prospects of promotion to Commander'. They accepted that there would 'always be a large number of Lieutenant-Commanders who can never expect to reach higher rank' and went on to say:

We consider that the question of improving and extending the careers of over-the-zone officers, in order to make the Service more attractive, is of even greater importance than that of improving the prospects of promotion of individual officers.

This went to the core of the problem set out earlier regarding de-motivated passed over officers. That would have been a trenchant criticism of Admiralty policy by itself, but the committee continued to heavily criticise promotion policy:

It is pointed out that even now a large number of officers promoted to Commander are not fit for all Commander's duties, e.g. as Executive Officer of a big ship. Also, that some officers promoted to Captain's rank are by no means competent to fill all captain's appointments or, to carry the matter further, that not all officers promoted to Flag Rank are considered suitable to command Squadrons and Fleets at sea.

The Binney report was largely written by relatively junior officers in a highly disciplined service. Reference was made in the introduction to the prevailing ethos 'thou shalt not criticise, but obey'. However, in the days before modern management tools such as 'continuous attitude surveys' etc, it was very difficult for the Admiralty to be fully aware of the feelings and attitudes of its officers and men. The latter were all too

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<sup>22</sup> The recommendations of the committee are scattered throughout its report as conclusions of individual sections and are capitalised rather than there being a section devoted to recommendations at the end of the entire report.

well aware of this deficiency; the attempt by one commanding officer to send his executive officer to the Admiralty in the immediate aftermath of the Invergordon mutiny because he understood the feelings of the men has been described. At last, the Admiralty had realised that it had to listen and the Binney Committee was tasked not only with revising schemes of complement, but also looked at the attitudes of officers towards reductions in numbers and towards promotion. They were aided by the committee itself being made up of relatively junior officers, three of whom were actually serving at sea. While it is important that the majority of the reports recommendations were implemented, of far greater importance is that the Board of Admiralty had asked some searching questions of the navy, and listened to the answers, truly a sea change.

### Personnel management

A significant change in the way the personnel of the navy were administered was represented by the ‘Mobilisation Department’ first becoming the ‘Manning Department’ and then by 1934 mutating into ‘The Department of the Director of Personal [*sic*] Services’ which oversaw conditions of service – largely for ratings but also for officers – and was headed by Rear Admiral Somerville.

Prysor in an unpublished thesis nominally covering the period 1939-45,<sup>23</sup> but in fact casting back over the entire inter-war period has examined in careful detail a lot of the changes that improved morale in the service as a whole such as welfare, conditions of service and medical/dental care, as well as living conditions afloat. He feels that ‘by far the most significant development was the creation of a directorate and Department of Personal Services (DPS). This new body ... dealt with questions involving conditions of service and welfare of personnel ... under the auspices of the Second Sea Lord’. Prysor links this to the effects of the Invergordon mutiny. Perusal of the Navy List suggests it was established in 1934, so it may indeed well have followed on from the recommendations of one of the many committees that were convened in the aftermath of the mutiny. He rightly sees this department as having a significant impact on morale because of its wide reaching responsibilities, including welfare and living conditions.

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<sup>23</sup> Glyn Prysor, ‘Morale at Sea: Personnel Policy and Operational Experience in the British Navy, 1939-45’, Unpublished DPhil Thesis University of Oxford 2007 pp 27 – 28.

Other changes included the gradual expansion of the previously mentioned 'Second Sea Lord's Office for Appointments & c' through the 1930s. This meant that officer's careers were increasingly being managed by naval officers, and less by the civilians of the Commission and Warrants branch. Officers will have appreciated the involvement of people of their own cloth (as it were) in their career management, again impacting favourably on their morale.

### Education

The debate as to which of the two main entry schemes for officers produced the better officer was mentioned in an earlier chapter, and particular attention drawn to Chatfield's views that the Dartmouth officer was better, partly because of the training and partly because the Special Entry cadets came from the smaller, less well known public schools and 'the grammar schools'. This is very revealing of his social prejudice, and might, taken with his views on commissioning from the lower deck, have some bearing on the delay in expanding the officer corps by these routes despite future shortage of officers that was increasingly recognised throughout his tenure as First Sea Lord.

Apart from absorbing Royal Naval College Osborne on its closure in 1922, Dartmouth had remained almost unchanged from the First World War. The curriculum took no account of that war, cadets continued to re-enact the Battle of Trafalgar with ship models, but were not taught anything about the Battle of Jutland. There had been only one significant change to cadet education and training which occurred in 1924. The post-Dartmouth sea training period for cadets had been modified when the training cruiser was discontinued as an economy measure. Instead of the Dartmouth and Special entry cadets coming together on joining the training cruiser, Special Entry cadets were sent largely to destroyers and the Dartmouth cadets were sent to 'ships of the Atlantic and Mediterranean Fleets'.<sup>24</sup>

Change was presaged in 1932 when Captain Wodehouse, the captain of Dartmouth, wrote to the commanding officers 'of a number of major warships [of the Home and Mediterranean Fleets, HM Ships *Nelson*, *Hood*, *Queen Elizabeth*, *Valiant*, *Furious*, *Dorsetshire*, and *Resolution*]'<sup>25</sup>. In his letter he said that 'We so often hear

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<sup>24</sup> AFO 813/24 *Cadets – Training etc., after leaving Dartmouth.*

<sup>25</sup> *Miscellaneous Correspondence File re Cadet training 1932*: Britannia archive BRNC.

that “cadets are not what they were” and that “there is something wrong with them”’. He went on to ask for the commanding officer’s opinions (or that of the snottie’s nurse<sup>26</sup>) of the ex-Dartmouth cadets as ‘it should be possible to change the training if we could discover what the faults are and what the remedy is.’

To modern thinking this would be unremarkable; that is Dartmouth seeking feedback as a means of closing the educational loop. However, this appears to be the first instance of any of the schools seeking formal feedback from the fleet as to the performance of their product. Lest it be thought that this should have been commonplace, one interviewee who attended Dartmouth in 1939 and later was captain of one of the schools (HMS *Vernon*) said that up until the 1970s the individual schools worked out their syllabus for themselves, matters ‘were not talked through with the fleet’.<sup>27</sup>

The feedback received was very interesting and wide ranging. At one extreme was a short typewritten letter from HMS *Hood* that said ‘I am not one of those who think there is anything very wrong with the modern cadet’ to one who commenced a long hand written and carefully thought out critique of officer training by saying ‘ I am one of those who thinks there is something wrong with the cadet ex RNC ’ This and other letters compared the Dartmouth cadet unfavourably with his Special Entry contemporaries,<sup>28</sup> that they were ‘less knowledgeable on subjects outside the service’ that ‘the Dartmouth trained officer is inclined to consider himself the ‘salt of the earth’ [and] in his dealings with foreign people or civil communities that his mode of life [and] point of view is the only sane one’.

Reference was made to the Dartmouth cadets being stale, due to ‘lack of practical and responsible jobs given to midshipmen.’ Probably the most damning remarks were that ‘the Dartmouth system does tend to produce an unimaginative type ... imbued with the idea that the Navy is perfect in all respects [and] that to criticize is ‘not done’’, that they displayed ‘narrowness of outlook’, that ‘they lack self confidence and reliance’ and ‘know very little practical seamanship’. The commanding officer of

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<sup>26</sup> ‘Snotty’ was a slang term for a midshipman, the ‘Snotties’ nurse’ the officer in a ship responsible for the midshipmen on board.

<sup>27</sup> Interview with Captain S.M.W. Farquharson-Roberts OBE RN dated 24 April 2008.

<sup>28</sup> Quite how is uncertain. As has been described, since 1926 they had gone to different ships.

HMS *Resolution* concluded that they suffered ‘from lack of contact with life and people - - [sic] in fact that they have been too much chased, and herded and nursed.’<sup>29</sup>

A recurring theme was that the Special Entry cadets were more open minded, flexible and had better leadership skills than their Dartmouth contemporaries and that apart from what might be termed ethos, they lacked little. Even the post-Invergordon committee looking at officer entry said ‘that the final product of the Special Entry (i.e. the Lieutenant and Lieutenant-Commander) is at least as good as the Dartmouth product.’<sup>30</sup> Considering that the Special Entry had been introduced to meet an officer shortage immediately before the First World War and had been close to being dispensed with in its aftermath, this marks a remarkable turn around in service opinion, a major change in thinking by the more senior members of the officer corps. Instead of the accepted wisdom that had existed literally for centuries that officers had to be trained from childhood, there was a move to acceptance that an officer could in fact be trained quite quickly. This was going to be of major importance in a very few years, when the senior officers of the ships stating the opinions set out above were going to be in the upper reaches of the navy as it embarked on the biggest expansion of its officer corps in its history.

The officers reporting back to Dartmouth had practical suggestions as to how Dartmouth could be improved; most suggestions centred on the term system and its inflexibility. It will be remembered that a batch of cadets entered Osborne and then Dartmouth and stayed together in that group called a ‘Term’ throughout their time at the college(s). To a significant degree they were sequestered from other Terms and, apart from the few selected to be Cadet Captains for more junior terms, were given next to no responsibility. One cadet (later an Admiral of the Fleet) felt that he was given no more responsibility the day he left than the day he joined Dartmouth.<sup>31</sup> The fact that he was not selected to be one of the rare cadet captains is either a comment on his being a late developer, or more likely, that the selection of cadet captains was, at best, idiosyncratic, being the preserve of the term officers.

Most of those suggesting change felt that a move to a house system, like that at public schools, under which boys would be grouped as it were vertically, that is joining

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<sup>29</sup> *Miscellaneous Correspondence File re Cadet training 1932*: Britannia archive BRNC.

<sup>30</sup> ADM 116/2895 containing minutes of the Personnel and Officers committee.



a group on arriving at the school and progressing upwards with younger boys joining the same group each year, rather than the horizontal 'term' system was preferable as it allowed for older boys to mentor younger ones through a leadership or prefectural system. The house system was not finally introduced until 1935 (and terminologically confusingly, the houses created were called 'Terms', and the academic year at Dartmouth was still described as being in three terms).<sup>32</sup>

The reason for the change being delayed for nearly two years was itself indicative of the way education and training was overseen by the navy. For administrative purposes, Dartmouth came under the command of Flag Officer Plymouth. Despite the Captain of Dartmouth having the approval of the Admiralty to change to the house system, Flag Officer Plymouth blocked it. Only when a new Flag Officer Plymouth was appointed in the natural course of events, did the change take place.

In 1935 there were further changes. By now each cadet had a designated individual tutor and an 'alpha' stream had been introduced for the more academically able (or inclined) cadets. These cadets undertook extra study beyond the normal curriculum. These changes to cadet education were not soon enough to have any significant effect on the officer corps by the Second World War. The changes that were to affect the officer corps as it went into the Second World War were those that Field had initiated described earlier. The importance of the changes at Dartmouth was that they showed that there was a change in thinking about officer training, and not just at upper management levels of the service. The change meant that the more senior boys in a 'term' (or house) now had more junior boys in the same term and inevitably, even if they did not achieve cadet captain status (equivalent now to a prefect at a public school) were expected to mentor and lead them. Dartmouth had become vertically stratified rather than horizontally, even unconsciously, the older boys were expected to lead.

### The Royal Naval Sailing Association

The navy in the twentieth century had, at best, an ambivalent attitude to the value of sail training. Chatfield's speedy cancellation of the sail training ship(s) ordered by his

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<sup>31</sup> Admiral of the Fleet Sir Henry Leach. Interview 23 October 2008.

predecessor was indicative, and certainly senior officers remained very much against it, holding even recreational sailing to be of little value to the service. Despite this '[v]arious attempts to form some sort of yachting club or association for Naval Officers [had] been made ever since 1920.'<sup>33</sup> In contrast, the Royal Air Force founded a yacht club in 1932 and 'soldiers [had] always been more prominent than sailors' in yacht racing.<sup>34</sup> In 1933 ('with the support of Lord Jellicoe and Sir Roger Keyes') further unsuccessful efforts were made, until in 1935 the formation of a 'Naval Sailing Association' was again mooted. This was to be 'entirely private ... and not subject to official control. Their Lordships would welcome wholeheartedly the formation of such an Association'.<sup>35</sup> In due course, this became the Royal Naval Sailing Association (RNSA). The welcome given was actually somewhat less than wholehearted; Vice Admiral T. Baillie-Grohman, writing after the war to the secretary of the RNSA 'from the historical aspect' recounted that he had been to see the First Sea Lord looking for financial support. The First Sea Lord 'said he was really sorry he could not help, as all other Sea Lords were against it. How stupid & short-sighted can Sea Lords be!!'<sup>36</sup> Despite this, there was very strong support from the officer corps itself; sixty of them attended the inaugural meeting and the Association started its existence with over two hundred members.

This meant that the RNSA, while having official approval, was without any access to public funds, relying on its members subscriptions and was thus unable (unlike its Royal Air Force equivalent) to have a clubhouse. A virtue was made of necessity and the catchphrase of the RNSA (for which no origin can be found) became 'Your cockpit [of your yacht] is your clubhouse' In fact, a yacht club without a clubhouse, with facilities (specifically moorings) which were made available in every Royal Naval port in the world, and there were then many, would have been an undoubted benefit to officer morale, as while there was no formal clubhouse, an officer could avail himself of the facilities of wardroom messes in those naval bases.

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<sup>32</sup> Jane Harrold, Richard Porter *Britannia Royal Naval College Dartmouth: An Illustrated History*, Dartmouth; Richard Webb, 2005) p.76

<sup>33</sup> Records of the Royal Naval Sailing Association.

<sup>34</sup> Anon 'Sailing in the Navy' *The Yachting Monthly and Motor Boating Magazine (illustrated)* (1935) 60 p. 119.

<sup>35</sup> AFO 2073/35 *Naval Sailing Association – Proposed formation*.

<sup>36</sup> Letter in RNSA records.

## Pay, allowances etc

After 1931, officers did not suffer any further pay cuts, but nor for a long time did they receive a pay increase. The first pay rise for officers was in 1935.<sup>37</sup> While this only restored the 'Invergordon' pay cut, the pay rate was now 'consolidated', that is it was not subject to adjustment on the basis of the variation in the cost of living, which has been shown, had had some capricious results in the 1920s.

As was described in an earlier chapter, the Admiralty had tried unsuccessfully during the 1920s to get Treasury approval for a marriage allowance for officers. Eventually in 1938 they were successful, by using a 'fresh' argument, which at last convinced the Treasury. What was now put forward was that unlike the officers of the other two services, an officer serving afloat – the vast majority – had 'to maintain a separate establishment for his wife'. Why this was now recognised – it had always been the case – was not explained. The new allowance was to be 5s.6d [27.5p] for captains RN with the 'childs allowance' to which, paradoxically, they had been entitled since the First World War, now set at 2s [10p] per day for the first child and 1s. per day for each additional child. For officers of commanders rank and below, the marriage allowance was set at 4s.6d a day with the same rates of child allowance as payable to captains. The marriage allowance was a major step forward.<sup>38</sup> Since officers had had no real pay rise since 1919, this actually represented a significant increase; at last junior officers could afford to get married. This must have given a boost to morale.

At the same time removal allowances and passage allowances to an overseas naval base for families of officers serving afloat were introduced. Previously this was only payable if an officer was serving overseas in a shore appointment, which had meant that an officer serving in the Mediterranean fleet based in Malta would perforce be unaccompanied by his wife and family unless he could afford the costs of transporting them and their possessions from the UK to Malta and back again at the end of what was then the normal two year appointment. Some had done so, most did not.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> Commander Charles N. Robinson R.N. (ed.), *Brassey's Naval Annual 1936* (London: William Clowes, 1936) p.14.

<sup>38</sup> Cmd. 5746 *Statement Explanatory of the Scheme of Marriage allowance for R.N. and R.M. Officers* (London: HMSO, 1938).

<sup>39</sup> Joy Packer *Pack and Follow: One person's adventures in four different worlds* (London: Eyre and Spottiswoode 1945) PP 89-91.

As a result of this change an officer's wife now could have an assisted passage to Malta if her husband was serving afloat in the Mediterranean Fleet.

The total cost of the new measures was estimated to be £245,000 per annum.<sup>40</sup> To fund these (i.e. the marriage allowance and removal allowances) it was 'necessary' to cut the rate of pay for officers 'within the zone of benefit' who were unmarried (except for lieutenants and warrant officers) but crucially only 'from the date of an officer's next promotion', i.e. the point at which they would next receive a pay rise rather than an incremental rise.

### The officer corps through the 1930s

Thus during the 1930s the lot of the Royal Navy executive officer improved, albeit slowly. His education and training to be and as an officer underwent major changes. Some of these changes would have had insufficient time to have had any noticeable direct effect by the outbreak of war, for example the change to the 'house system' at Dartmouth, notwithstanding contemporary perceptions which were that this was 'a good thing'.<sup>41</sup>

However, the changes described in the last chapter to officer training after leaving Dartmouth (or joining the service in the case of the other entry streams) would have had a significant effect. Introduced in 1930, it would have meant that between two thirds and three quarters of all Lieutenants would have been trained under the new system. These officers had been more actively trained in leadership, and with the accelerated promotion given at the outbreak of war,<sup>42</sup> an even greater proportion of officers would have been better trained for the war ahead of them. The mere fact of high level interest in his training will have had a beneficial effect on his morale which will also have been beneficially affected by the re-armament programme, not only new construction (apart from two experimental ships, no new destroyers had been ordered for ten years after the First World War<sup>43</sup>) but while many older ships were not replaced they were modernised (most of the 'C' class cruisers decried as being particularly

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<sup>40</sup> Cmd 5746.

<sup>41</sup> As defined by Walter Carruthers Sellar, and Robert Julian Yeatman, *1066 and All That: A Memorable History of England, comprising all the parts you can remember, including 103 Good Things, 5 Bad Kings and 2 Genuine dates*, (London: Methuen, 1930).

<sup>42</sup> AFO 405/40 *Training of Junior Executive Officers during Hostilities*.

outdated and ‘decrepit’<sup>44</sup> were refitted as anti-aircraft cruisers<sup>45</sup>) as the new classes of ships joined the Fleet. Examination of these ships and their capabilities is outside this thesis, but the perception that the navy once again mattered to the government and by implication the general population will have been a boost. There were other undoubted boosts to morale, the formation of the Royal Naval Sailing Association has been mentioned.

There was a noticeable change in the way officers were managed that can only have improved morale. The mutiny in HMS *Lucia* was described in some detail in the previous chapter, because of the poor man management exhibited by the officers involved but more importantly the manner in which they were dealt with. The executive officer was not only relieved of his appointment which was announced in parliament, but placed on half pay and while he was to be re-employed during the war and promoted once, his career can be said to have suffered significant damage. In contrast, in June 1937 HMS *Warspite* was delayed coming out of refit. It was intended that she should go to the Mediterranean and there become Admiral Pound’s flagship. She was a Chatham ship (that is her ships company were from the Chatham division, and thus would have tended to live in the Chatham area) but was refitted in Portsmouth ‘an arrangement which, though sometimes unavoidable, was always unpopular and could easily lead to trouble over leave.’<sup>46</sup> There was an episode of ‘mass indiscipline’ – the then euphemism for mutiny – and, as with HMS *Lucia* an enquiry following which three officers, including the executive officer Commander D.H. Everett, were relieved of their appointments. What happened thereafter however was very different to the aftermath of the *Lucia* affair. Commander Everett was appointed as the executive officer of HMS *Ajax* and received a four page personal letter from Admiral Pound (then Commander in Chief, Mediterranean) which said in part ‘At the moment you must feel as if the end of the world had [*sic*] come – don’t let that feeling get a grip. ... You were promoted to Commander very early so you have time on your side and I shall be very disappointed if I do not have the opportunity of congratulating you on your promotion later on’.<sup>47</sup> This

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<sup>43</sup> Norman Friedman, *British Destroyers: From Earliest Days to the Second World War*, (Barnsley: Seaforth Publishing, 2009) p. 194.

<sup>44</sup> Lisle A. Rose, *Power at Sea: The Breaking Storm 1919-1945*, (Columbia (MO): University of Missouri Press, 2007) p. 66.

<sup>45</sup> E.H.H. Archibald, *The Fighting Ship of the Royal Navy AD 897–1984*, (New York: Military Press, 1987) p. 211.

<sup>46</sup> Stephen Roskill, *Naval Policy Between the Wars: The Period of Reluctant Rearmament 1930-1939*, (London: Collins, 1976) p.344.

<sup>47</sup> Letter Admiral Pound to (then) Commander Everett dated 11<sup>th</sup> Sept 1937. (Personal papers of Capatin D.H. Everett RN).

bespeaks a much more ‘hands on’ management of the officer corps, and even if the existence of the letter was not widely known, the fact that he was given another appointment<sup>48</sup> will have been widely noted in the service (officer’s appointments lists were circulated widely), in marked contrast to the public humiliation of the executive officer of HMS *Lucia* and to the same Admiral Pound’s reaction to being asked for assistance by Admiral Tomkinson, a personal friend, after the Invergordon mutiny as described in an earlier chapter.

The *Royal Oak* episode and its painful impact on the service and inevitably on officer morale was also described in an earlier chapter. In reality, it was a minor episode that attracted disproportionate attention, as with many such episodes, before and since, which become the focus of media attention. A noticeable feature of that episode had been the high level attention it received, when even the state of a warrant officer’s uniform was the subject of an Admiralty signal for fear of adverse public reaction.<sup>49</sup> An episode occurred at the Fleet Review in 1937 which actually was widely regarded within the service as amusing rather than embarrassing, and was indicative of a much lighter touch by management. A retired Lieutenant Commander Woodroffe, employed by the BBC to commentate from HMS *Nelson* on the illumination of the fleet ‘was undoubtedly suffering from the effects of alcohol’<sup>50</sup> when during a live BBC broadcast he described the fleet as being ‘lit up ... we are all lit up ... I mean with fairy lights’ and apparently expostulated robustly when the lights were simultaneously switched off. The episode received wide media attention, but was treated by the Admiralty with distant amusement rather than anything more heavy handed.<sup>51</sup> These episodes taken together suggest that the upper management of the navy were learning to manage with more sensitivity and perception, and were indicative of better management of the officer corps in general, which must have been reflected in their morale.

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<sup>48</sup> Commander Everett distinguished himself at the Battle of the River Plate in 1940, and later commanded an aircraft carrier. He retired as Rear Admiral D.H. Everett CB CBE DSO.

<sup>49</sup> Robert Glenton, *The Royal Oak Affair: The Saga of Admiral Collard and Bandmaster Barnacle*, (London: Leo Cooper, 1991) p.79.

<sup>50</sup> ADM178/140 *Broadcast by Lt. Cdr J. Woodroffe [sic] RN at Naval Review Spithead May 1937.*

<sup>51</sup> Disciplinary action would have been open to the Admiralty and for an officer being ‘Drunk on Board’ was a very serious offence. Despite being on the retired list, Lieutenant Commander Woodroffe was subject to the Naval Discipline Act as he was, at the time, embarked in an HM ship.

## Chapter 5

### The Ascension: Admiral Chatfield and the coming war

The ultimate purpose of a navy is war, either deterring it or fighting it. During the 1930s the Royal Navy was increasingly aware that it would likely to be involved in a war. Probably the marker of this, outside this thesis, was the abandonment of the 'Ten Year Rule' in 1932 under which government financing of the armed forces based on the presumption that there would be no major war for ten years, although in 1932 the actual budget for the three armed forces was cut to its lowest level in the inter-war years.<sup>1</sup> Thereafter, there was a steady increase in spending on the three armed forces and other aspects of defence.

#### The 1930s

Inevitably re-armament and the consequent material changes in the 1930s have been the major focus of the literature.<sup>2</sup> Not only did the navy start major shipbuilding programmes,<sup>3</sup> new technologies were being developed such as radar,<sup>4</sup> asdic and anti-submarine weapons.<sup>5</sup> In turn these required the development of new industries and the resuscitation, or in some cases the resurrection of older industries.<sup>6</sup> Personnel changes have received much less attention; Roskill, cited earlier as the one author who covers personnel matters over the inter-war period, gives less attention to personnel matters from shortly after the Invergordon mutiny. Personnel matters in the period leading up before about 1937-8 receive scant coverage in the extant literature. Only when the outbreak of a major European war becomes more likely (viewed in retrospect, at the

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<sup>1</sup> Peijan Shen, *The Age of Appeasement: The Evolution of British Foreign Policy in the 1930s*, (Stroud: Sutton Publishing, 1999) p. 26.

<sup>2</sup> Joe Maiolo, *Cry Havoc: The Arms Race and the Second World War 1931-41*, (London: John Murray, 2010); G.A.H Gordon, *British Seapower and Procurement between the Wars: A Reappraisal of Rearmament*, (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 1988); Corelli Barnett, *The Audit of War: The Illusion & Reality of Britain as a Great Nation*, (London: Papermac, 1987); David Edgerton, *Britain's War Machine: Weapons, Resources and Experts in the Second World War*, (London: Penguin, 2012).

<sup>3</sup> Stephen Roskill, *Naval Policy Between The Wars: The Period of Reluctant Rearmament 1930 – 1939*, (London: Collins, 1976) p. 322 et seq.

<sup>4</sup> See Derek Howse, *Radar at Sea: The Royal Navy in World War 2*, (Basingstoke: Macmillan Press Ltd, 1993) chapters 1-2 for a description of the inter-war development of Royal Naval radar.

<sup>5</sup> See George Franklin, *Britain's Anti-Submarine Capability 1919-1939*, (London: Frank Cass, 2003).

<sup>6</sup> Corelli Barnett, *The Audit of War: The Illusion and Reality of Britain as a Great Nation*, (London: Papermac, 1987) p. 112.

time it was still very much in doubt<sup>7</sup>) does the literature start to cover naval personnel matters.<sup>8</sup>

For the Royal Navy apart from the efforts to meet the naval threat posed by the rise of Nazism,<sup>9</sup> and a continuing threat by Japan to Britain's Far Eastern colonies and interests,<sup>10</sup> there was another facet of the 1930s. The navy was increasingly involved in a variety of episodes of increasing tension and conflict. In the academic literature these tend to be viewed either from the politico-military or material standpoint without looking at the impact on personnel and their management. They include the Abyssinian crisis, the Spanish civil war and the Munich crisis as well as at times direct involvement in the Japanese expansion into China.<sup>11</sup> All of these affected the officer corps in varying ways, and in some respects, prepared them for what was to come in the Second World War. At the same time, there were under-currents developing. Pacifism became much more of an issue. This thesis is not the place to discuss this issue in depth, but two effects of the public mood of pacifism that grew during the 1930s must be noted. Firstly and to an extent peripherally there was a major outcry about overseas armament sales by privately owned manufacturers, – the 'Merchants of Death', so called because of a contemporary book of the same name<sup>12</sup> – which led to a Royal Commission and 'a vast expenditure of effort which could, at such a time of crisis, have been better devoted ... in order that our diplomats and ministers might have been able to negotiate with the dictators from a position of strength.'<sup>13</sup> The effect of pacifist thinking on public opinion is well beyond the remit of this thesis and is still debated. Cameron Watt, writing of the summer of 1939 considered that '[t]he pacifist underpinning to the disarmament movement .... [was] still there and still as vociferous and active as ever. But they were revealed now as numerically insignificant, isolated minorities, who spoke only for

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<sup>7</sup> The British government even in March 1939 did not see war as inevitable. See Donald Cameron Watt, *How War Came*, (London: Pimlico 2001), particularly chapter 10.

<sup>8</sup> Brian Lavery, *In which They Served: The Royal Navy Officer Experience in the Second World War*, (London: Conway, 2008).

<sup>9</sup> Joseph A. Maiolo, *The Royal Navy and Nazi Germany, 1933-39: A Study in Appeasement and the Origins of the Second World War*, (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 1998) pp. 11-38.

<sup>10</sup> Japan was seen as being the major naval threat until at least 1936 as the Admiralty view was that the Anglo-German naval agreement of 1935 had significantly reduced any potential threat from Germany.

<sup>11</sup> Glyn Pryor, *Citizen Sailors: The Royal Navy in the Second World War*, (London: Viking, 2011) pp. 29-32. The Navy was also involved in the civil disturbances in the then Palestine, as well as other what were then termed 'policing actions'.

<sup>12</sup> H.C. Englebrecht and F.C. Hanighen, *Merchants of Death: A Study of the International Armament Industry*, (London: George Routledge & Sons, 1935).

<sup>13</sup> Stephen Roskill, *Naval Policy Between the Wars: The Period of Reluctant Rearmament*, (London: Collins, 1976) p. 247.



themselves.’<sup>14</sup> While it is difficult to assess at this temporal remove, the pacifist publicity until that point must have had some negative effect on the perceptions of the officer corps (being members of a fighting service) and their own feelings as to how they were viewed by broader society. However, the poor coverage of the personnel of the armed forces by contemporary and later writers and the dearth of contemporary diaries must make this speculative.

Another change that will have impinged on the navy was the public debate that followed the lecture in January 1931 by the prominent military theoretician Basil Liddell Hart on the ‘British Way in Warfare’ followed in 1935 by a book on the same subject.<sup>15</sup> Liddell Hart advocated in essence a return to a maritime rather than a continental strategy.

The morale of the officer corps was discussed in the last chapter. High morale was an important feature of itself, not only an essential pre-requisite for the navy to fight the coming war, but also to manage the vast expansion of the officer corps that the war would lead to. It is thus necessary to look at the various mechanisms the navy used to increase the size of the officer corps, and the various constraints and restraints placed on it.

#### Commissioning from the lower deck

As will be seen, apart from a relatively few officers inducted directly from the RNVSR<sup>16</sup> around the outbreak of war, all ‘temporary’ officers started as ratings, that is to say on the lower deck. The navy’s mechanisms for commissioning from the lower deck up to and including Admiral Field’s largely unused reforms have been dealt with already.

As part of the correspondence with the captain of Dartmouth in June 1933 described previously,<sup>17</sup> the commanding officer of HMS *Resolution* commented that ‘it is interesting to note that three [Able Seamen] (19-21 years of age) from this ship were

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<sup>14</sup> Donald Cameron Watt, *How War Came*, p. 372.

<sup>15</sup> Alex Danchev *Alchemist of War: The Life of Basil Liddell Hart* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicholson, 1998) p.168; Basil Liddell Hart *When Britain Goes to War* (London: Faber 1935) This was an expanded version of the book *The British Way in Warfare* published in 1932..

<sup>16</sup> *Vide infra*.

examined for Commissioned Rank last week by a board headed by Captain Ramsay, who remarked to me that they compared more than favourably with the medium to better type of Midshipman'. Despite one ship producing three candidates of that quality, Roskill notes that between 1932 and 1936 only eighteen seaman (executive) branch officers were commissioned from the lower deck,<sup>18</sup> nowhere near the eight per year which had supposedly been to happen since the First World War and confirmed after the Invergordon mutiny.

By 1936 matters had started to change. Twenty lower deck candidates passed the examination for commission that year<sup>19</sup> but only four were commissioned.<sup>20</sup> However, inexplicably, in the same year the Admiralty offered Royal Naval commissions to rating candidates from the New Zealand Division of the Royal Navy (later the RNZN).<sup>21</sup> Quite how or why this offer was made cannot be ascertained. It does not seem to have been extended to the other dominions, was not repeated and, most importantly, does not seem to have produced any candidates.<sup>22</sup> A partial explanation may well be that at that time the New Zealand Division was part of the Royal Navy, unlike, for example the Royal Australian Navy; there were actually recruiting offices for the Royal Navy in New Zealand.

Roskill recounts the debate regarding widening the pool for officer selection that took place in 1937.<sup>23</sup> This culminated in September 1937 when the Admiralty promulgated a revised system for promotion from the lower deck. The AFO said that:

greater facilities should be afforded to outstanding ratings to enable them to attain the necessary professional and educational standards. It is not possible to lower these standards if officers commissioned are to compete successfully with those entered as cadets ...

2. The new arrangements ... provide for ratings coming before Fleet Selection Boards at an earlier stage than formerly, and without requiring the present educational and professional qualifications. Selected ratings will then undergo a period of training in a special ship which will enable their personal capacity for

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<sup>17</sup> Miscellaneous Correspondence File re Cadet training 1932 Un-referenced file held in Britannia Archives, BRNC.

<sup>18</sup> Stephen Roskill, *Naval Policy between the Wars: The Period of Reluctant Rearmament 1930-1939*, p.191.

<sup>19</sup> AFO 150/36 *Qualifying Examination for the Rank of Sub-Lieutenant – RESULT* and AFO1532/36 *Qualifying Examination for the Rank of Sub-Lieutenant – RESULT*.

<sup>20</sup> AFO 1994/36 *Acting Sub-Lieutenants – Promotions*.

<sup>21</sup> AFO 255/36 *Promotion to Commissioned Rank in the Royal Navy of Ratings of the New Zealand Division*.

<sup>22</sup> Some Australian candidates were to be commissioned, but for the Royal Australian Navy.

<sup>23</sup> Stephen Roskill, *Naval Policy Between the Wars: The Period of Reluctant Rearmament*, pp. 342-3.

commissioned rank to be fully tested and permit special assistance in working up to the necessary standard.<sup>24</sup>

This was the Field scheme of 1931 with minor changes. Thus Roskill is quite correct in stating that ‘only minor changes were made to the existing system’. As has been discussed the ‘Field’ scheme of 1931, whose introduction Roskill barely mentions<sup>25</sup> had actually been the radical change, unfortunately effectively stillborn in the aftermath of Invergordon. The only significant change in 1937 was a greater emphasis on support for aspirant officers. What was important was that the intention to promote officers from the lower deck had been officially (re) promulgated. As Roskill points out there was significant social prejudice, not least by Chatfield who even writing in 1942 expressed his views on the social rather than professional requirements to be an officer:

The other form of entry is via the “lower deck”. This has always been a difficult problem, and more difficult than in the other two Services. If you want to know why, you must live in a man-of-war for a period and talk about it to the sailors themselves.<sup>26</sup>

He gives no further explanation, beyond remarks on the officer/man relationship, but there are indications that the class system worked both ways; Roskill states that:

Apparently candidates for commissions were regarded with suspicion on the lower deck and so were discouraged from attempting what was still a formidable hurdle.<sup>27</sup>

And another source:

An incompetent officer if popular (‘a proper gentleman’) would have his shortcomings tolerated, and would even, to a large extent, be ‘carried’ by his ratings ... but the few ... young ratings promoted direct to commissioned rank and always of sterling worth, would find every form of obstructionism placed in their way. (‘He’s not a proper Officer. He’s no better than me!’).<sup>28</sup>

Chatfield continues:

The material of our seaman entries is magnificent. Take them as soon as you can, consistent with calling it a “lower deck” entry, and they will become

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<sup>24</sup> AFO 1864/37 *Commissioned Rank – Promotion from the Lower Deck – Executive Branch*.

<sup>25</sup> Stephen Roskill, *Naval Policy between the Wars: The Period of Reluctant Rearmament*, (London: Collins, 1976) p. 34.

<sup>26</sup> Admiral of the Fleet Lord Chatfield PC GCB OM Etc, *The Navy and Defence*, (London & Toronto: William Heinemann, 1942) p.254.

<sup>27</sup> Stephen Roskill, *Naval Policy between the Wars: The Period of Reluctant Rearmament 1930-1939*, p.342.

<sup>28</sup> Rear Admiral C. C. Anderson, *Seagulls in my Belfry*, (Durham: Pentland Press, 1997) p.28.

excellent officers.... The steps now taken by the Admiralty, produced by the Board when I was First Sea Lord, have, I believe, made the selection, education and training of the lower deck candidates easier and very successful. There is little class feeling in the Navy.<sup>29</sup>

In view of the delay in implementing the scheme after its introduction and the very small numbers who actually were commissioned from the lower deck during Chatfield's time as First Sea Lord, these remarks are at best self serving. It must be noted that his words were written in 1942, after three years of war, by which time a significant proportion of the officer corps of the Navy was made up of 'lower deck' commissions. It is also of note that the 'steps now taken by the Admiralty' when he was First Sea Lord were almost identical to those introduced by his predecessor Admiral Field.

In 1937 eighteen ratings passed the examination for commission.<sup>30</sup> Seventeen were commissioned (one for the Royal Australian Navy).<sup>31</sup> In 1938, nine candidates were reported as having passed the examination for commission,<sup>32</sup> and thirteen were appointed to sub lieutenants' courses,<sup>33</sup> but were only eligible for first class passes on the War Course component; on all other components they could only receive pass grades. For all other officers under training, a pass grade was only awarded to those who had failed the examination at the first attempt. At the same time ex RNR officers were encouraged to specialise,<sup>34</sup> and as has already been discussed, there was a perception that a 'First Class' pass would be required to specialise. It is probable that only allowing lower deck candidates to achieve a pass grade was seen as effectively precluding lower deck promotees from specialisation. Thus it is tempting to speculate that by discouraging/preventing former ratings from specialising, which was seen to be the route to promotion, it was intended to keep them in the part of the officer corps less likely to achieve promotion. However, a further seventeen ratings were commissioned later in the year;<sup>35</sup> once again, after many years, the navy was tapping the most accessible source of officers.

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<sup>29</sup> Admiral of the Fleet Lord Chatfield PC GCB OM Etc, *The Navy and Defence*, p.254.

<sup>30</sup> AFO 232/37 *Qualifying Educational Examination for the Rank of Sub-Lieutenant – Result* and AFO 1118/37 *Qualifying Examination for the Rank of Sub-Lieutenant RESULT*.

<sup>31</sup> AFO 1393/37 *Acting Sub-Lieutenants Courses – REPORT* and AFO 1697/37 *Acting Sub-Lieutenant Promotion*.

<sup>32</sup> AFO 190/38 *Qualifying Examination for the Rank of Acting Sub-Lieutenant*.

<sup>33</sup> AFO 1740a/38 *Acting Sub-Lieutenants Course – REPORT*.

<sup>34</sup> AFO 87/39 *Officers ex RNR – Specialisation*.

<sup>35</sup> AFO 2133/38 *Acting Sub-Lieutenants – Promotions*.

The failure for many years of the successive schemes for promotion to officer rank from the lower deck despite it having at varying times political and uniformed board pressure behind it bespeaks what might be termed institutional class prejudice. It is interesting to see where this prejudice lay. It will be remembered that much of the Admiralty, and in particular the personnel departments, were civilian staffed. The 'Head of C.W.', the division responsible for managing officers' careers, in a memorandum concerning a tri-service approach to promotions during the forthcoming war (he was writing in March 1939) said:

The question of promotions from the lower deck is not so easy. It will hardly be possible to keep these down to the peace time level. There will therefore be a risk that there might be a surplus of this type of officer after the war

Looking back to the aftermath of the First World War he continued:

A very large number of officers promoted from the lower deck were placed upon the retired list in the post-war acting schemes [*sic*]. If ... it proves difficult to avoid promoting a large number of officers from the lower deck in any future war, it will probably be necessary to take some steps to reduce the numbers of such officers after the war.<sup>36</sup>

It would appear that the civil service was attempting to circumvent Admiralty policy, or at the least mitigate its perceived deleterious social effects, either with or without the approval of the Sea Lords whose stated policy was to increase the numbers of lower deck commissions and to produce more officers.

The length of the 'production line' for Dartmouth cadets has been discussed; as was the case before the First World War, it could not produce officers quickly enough. So the admiralty turned to its reserve forces.

#### The Reserves: the Royal Naval Reserve (RNR)

The Royal Navy has had at various times a plethora of additional allied Services the oldest surviving of which is the Royal Marines.<sup>37</sup> Others including the Women's Royal Naval Service (WRNS), Queen Alexandra's Royal Naval Nursing Service (QARNNS), the Royal Naval Reserve (RNR) and the Royal Naval Volunteer Reserve (RNVR)

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<sup>36</sup> ADM 1/9778 *Promotion of Officers etc. in wartime* Memorandum by head of CW dated 22 March 1939.

<sup>37</sup> The Royal Marines were, as well as the oldest surviving, were probably the first 'allied' service, dating back to 1666, comfortably pre-dating the Sea Fencibles etc.

existed during the First World War. The first two are of no concern to this thesis, beyond noting their existence and the fact that they were allied to the Royal Navy, but not part of it, and their members were not subject to the provisions of the Naval Discipline Act. The two Reserve arms were closer to the Navy, in that their members, when serving with the Royal Navy, were subject to the Naval Discipline Act.

The Royal Naval Reserve (RNR) was made up of merchant service officers who undertook an initial period of training of nine months and thereafter had varying commitments to serve as and when required with the Royal Navy.<sup>38</sup> During the period of training they would normally obtain their watchkeeping certificate.<sup>39</sup> Their uniform was identical to that of the Royal Navy except for their rank braid and buttons. The officers cuff braid (properly ‘distinction lace’) indicative of rank instead of being made up of single stripes was a braided narrow double stripe.<sup>40</sup> The buttons on their uniforms were also different incorporating the letters RNR around the fowl anchor and crown of an RN officer’s buttons. While they held equivalent rank to their Royal Naval counterparts, despite what some have written they did not achieve professional equality until granted ‘Qualified’ status in that rank and then again in each succeeding rank.<sup>41</sup> Thus essentially each promotion required two stages to be completed (this applied to RNVR Officers as well).<sup>42</sup> In addition, RNR officers were entitled to apply for a warrant which, if granted, permitted a merchant ship in which they were serving, to wear a blue ensign rather than the customary merchant service red ensign.<sup>43</sup>

Having rather neglected the RNR in the years after the First World War, in the 1930s the Admiralty saw the merchant service as being a good source of officers.<sup>44</sup> As well as drawing on the maritime colleges, when it was realised in 1936 that in the event of war there would be a significant shortfall in numbers of junior officers, the Admiralty offered RNR officers transfer to the Royal Navy onto a ‘supplementary’ list, initially as ‘probationary’ officers.<sup>45</sup> This produced fifty seven ‘probationary’ lieutenants and sub lieutenants who embarked on what were the equivalents of Royal Naval sub lieutenants’

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<sup>38</sup> RNR (Officers) Regulations Article 97.

<sup>39</sup> This would be in addition to any Board of Trade certificates they might hold.

<sup>40</sup> See Appendix A.

<sup>41</sup> Glyn Prysor ‘Morale at Sea: Personnel Policy and Operational Experience in the British Navy, 1939 - 45’ Unpublished DPhil Thesis University of Oxford 2007, p. 24.

<sup>42</sup> AFO 2404/36 *R.N.R. Officers – Status of “Qualified Officer”*.

<sup>43</sup> All Naval Officers could apply for such a warrant to wear a blue ensign on their own personal craft.

<sup>44</sup> Brian Lavery, *Hostilities Only: Training the Wartime Royal Navy*, (London: Conway, 2011) p. 242.

<sup>45</sup> AFO 228/37 *R.N.R. Officers – Transfer to Supplementary List of the Royal Navy*.

courses in batches starting in February 1938.<sup>46</sup> Even before the first group started training, more transfers were sought.<sup>47</sup> Officers on the supplementary list were allowed to specialise, if recommended, but only in gunnery, torpedo, navigation and signals and if they were between 2<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> and 5 years seniority.<sup>48</sup> However, later in the year they were allowed to specialise in submarines, Fleet Air Arm and anti-submarine immediately on gaining their watchkeeping certificates. This probably reflected the shortages in these branches.<sup>49</sup> Later the same year, their status was enhanced, it was announced that they would 'not in future be borne on a supplementary list but their names will appear in the general list of the Navy. [They] will, therefore, be eligible to be considered for promotion on their merits under the usual regulations.'<sup>50</sup>

By March 1939 the Admiralty sought for more RNR junior officers to enter the Royal Navy and now 'Mercantile Marine' officers without prior RNR service were offered entry.<sup>51</sup> Such candidates had to have at least a Second Mate's ticket (a Board of Trade qualification roughly equivalent to a bridge watch keeping certificate) and in August a further twenty six commenced their professional courses.<sup>52</sup> However, the scheme was abruptly suspended in October 1939 and not re-instituted.<sup>53</sup> No reason was given, but it seems likely that the Admiralty realised that with the advent of war, the Merchant Navy needed its officers just as much as the Royal Navy did.

In fact the ultimate size of the RNR was not large and its expansion through the 1930s not very great. The September 1939 Navy List shows that there were eight RNR lieutenant commanders and seventy eight lieutenants of 1932 seniority with a total of 153 lieutenant commanders and 274 lieutenants, implying an expansion of about thirty officers per year. The limited numbers means that they can have had little effect on the broader Royal Navy, numerically they were submerged into the naval service.

### The Reserves: the Royal Naval Volunteer Reserve (RNVR)

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<sup>46</sup> AFO 1802/38 *Probationary Lieutenants and Probationary Sub-Lieutenants – Courses – REPORTS.*

<sup>47</sup> AFO 52/38 *Transfer of Additional Executive Officers from the R.N.R. to the Supplementary List of the R.N.*

<sup>48</sup> AFO 51/38 *Supplementary List Officers – Specialisation.*

<sup>49</sup> AFO 2479/38 *Officers ex R.N.R. – Specialisation.*

<sup>50</sup> AFO 778/38 *R.N.R. Officers Transferred to the Royal Navy – Inclusion in the General List.*

<sup>51</sup> AFO 613/39 *Transfer of Officers from the R.N.R. and Mercantile Marine to the Royal Navy.*

<sup>52</sup> AFO 146/39 *Probationary Lieutenants and Probationary Sub-Lieutenants – Courses – REPORTS.*

<sup>53</sup> AFO 2898/39 *Transfer of Officers from the R.N.R. and Mercantile Marine to the Royal Navy – Suspension.*

Expansion of the Royal Naval Volunteer Reserve was to be the major mechanism used to provide officers for the wartime navy. In peace time it was a small organisation; a 1930 Navy list shows only seventy two RNVR executive branch lieutenants. They were designated as being 'permanent' RNVR. While almost all war time commissions were to be into the RNVR, such officers were designated as being 'Temporary' (hence the further descriptor of 'the temporary gentlemen'), the equivalent of the ratings 'Hostilities Only'; they did not remain in the RNVR on demobilisation. The Navy was determined not to repeat its First World War mistake of entering too many officers, and being faced with a large redundancy programme at the cessation of hostilities.

The peacetime, 'permanent', RNVR was made up of volunteers who undertook regular training in the evening (initially once a week, later twice) and for a fortnight (later four weeks) a year to prepare them for mobilisation. The mechanism for joining as an officer was very different to joining the Royal Navy itself:

In those days [1925] it was extremely difficult to enter the RNVR as an officer. The applications far outnumbered the vacancies and it had become the practice ... that when a vacancy did occur the Captain would ask the gunroom officers<sup>54</sup> to nominate two or three of their friends, and from these he would make the final choice.<sup>55</sup>

Their uniform differed in that the distinction lace was narrower and in waves (hence the soubriquet 'Wavy Navy'). Again their buttons differed, embodying the letters R, V and R into the area surrounding the crown and fouled anchor.

### The Reserves: the Royal Naval Volunteer Supplementary Reserve (RNVSR)

By 1935 it was obvious that the international situation was worsening,<sup>56</sup> commencing with the German re-occupation of the Rhineland. As early as July 1936 when re-armament had barely started and Hitler had been in power for less than three years there was concern that the navy would be short of officers, 'a remarkably sudden reversal of the drastic measures taken in the early 1930s to 'clear the lists' of surplus officers'.<sup>57</sup> At this point the major naval foreign policy concern remained the Japanese hence the

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<sup>54</sup> See glossary.

<sup>55</sup> D A Rayner, *Escort: The Battle of the Atlantic*, (London: Futura, 1974) p.18.

<sup>56</sup> Stephen Roskill, *Hankey: Man of Secrets Vol III 1931-1963*, (London: Collins, 1974) pp. 148-176.

<sup>57</sup> Stephen Roskill, *Naval Policy Between the Wars: The Period of Reluctant Rearmament 1930-1939*, p. 341.



policy 'Main Fleet to Singapore',<sup>58</sup> as the Admiralty felt that the Anglo-German naval treaty of 1935 had to some extent neutralised the risk of German naval expansion. That of course was to change rapidly. The head of the CW section wrote that:

[w]e have at the present time to face the possibility of a war for which all the national resources are required. The manpower sub-committee of the [Committee on Imperial Defence] are drawing up arrangements for the full utilization of the manpower of the country.<sup>59</sup>

The position and likely actions of the other two armed services were considered and once again social class was a consideration:

It will not be possible to devise any scheme whereby such persons can be earmarked for service as officers after mobilization has once taken place, without introducing undesirable class distinctions. The Army contemplate for this reason, drafting all their personnel, except that from University sources, into the ranks, and obtaining their officers subsequently by promotion from the ranks.<sup>60</sup>

In view of the same official's views on the undesirability of promoting too many officers from the lower deck mentioned earlier, it is difficult to escape the conclusion that he preferred socially acceptable men as officers.

The formation of a new arm of the naval service which became the RNVSR was discussed and approved by the Admiralty Board in October 1936,<sup>61</sup> and received Treasury approval a week later (on Trafalgar day). This was approved by the King in Council at the beginning of November. This was a very rapid progress through the bureaucratic system. While titled a separate arm of the naval service, in essence all it did was produce a list of those willing to be considered for service at some indefinite point in the future; as the head of the Naval Law division pointed out that 'the Admiralty will have no real hold over these gentlemen, any of whom will be able to withdraw from reserve at any time, even on the outbreak of war.'<sup>62</sup>

Thus was formed the Royal Naval Volunteer Supplementary Reserve.<sup>63</sup> Contrary to public perception, the RNVR did not recruit many yachtsmen as '[t]o join

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<sup>58</sup> Russell Grenfell, *Main Fleet to Singapore*, (London: Faber and Faber, 1951).

<sup>59</sup> ADM 116/3509 *Royal Naval Volunteer Supplementary Reserve*. Minute by Head of CW dated 22 July 1936.

<sup>60</sup> ADM 116/3509 *Royal Naval Volunteer Supplementary Reserve*. Minute by Head of CW dated 22 July 1936

<sup>61</sup> ADM 116/3509, *Royal Naval Volunteer Supplementary Reserve*. Board Minute 3402.

<sup>62</sup> ADM 116/3509. *Royal Naval Volunteer Supplementary Reserve*. Minute by Head of NL [Naval Law] dated 17 August 1936.

<sup>63</sup> AFO 2984/36 *Royal Naval Volunteer Supplementary Reserve*.

the R.N.V.R. meant giving up so much leisure that it was almost impossible to combine the two'.<sup>64</sup> To try and attract the yachtsmen the RNVSR was to be:

a list of gentlemen interested in yachting and similar pursuits... desirous of being earmarked for training as executive officers in the RNVR in the event of war.<sup>65</sup>

Curiously Roskill quotes the foregoing as 'gentlemen **of means**'<sup>66</sup> [author's emphasis]; the additional phrase, which is not in the original sources, is without attribution. However those joining the RNVSR were offered 'no pay, allowances or retainers of any kind' and even travel expenses 'in connection with interviews of [*sic*] medical examination cannot be repaid'.<sup>67</sup> In view of the remarks by the head of CW then and subsequently, Roskill may have been correct in his presumption of a class bias, even if wrong in its expression.

In fact the RNVSR picked up a wider range of entrants than just yachtsmen; 'He was a qualified master mariner from the big merchant liners who had left the sea to build up a thriving smallholding. But at the time of the Munich crisis in 1938 he volunteered for the RNVSR and was made a sub-lieutenant [*sic*].'<sup>68</sup> In fact, recruits were not given any rank until mobilised into the RNVR nor was there any training, nor was uniform to be issued or worn until mobilisation. The only training was undertaken on a self help basis.<sup>69</sup>

In September 1938, during the Munich crisis, recruitment to the RNVSR was stopped because the RNVR divisions (in particular the London Division) were unable to cope with the numbers coming forward, as they were undertaking the war mobilisation of RNVR members.<sup>70</sup> It did not resume; thereafter recruitment was to the RNVR direct. However, the September 1939 Navy List has approximately 1600 names of potential officers on the RNVSR list.<sup>71</sup>

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<sup>64</sup> D A Rayner, *Escort: The Battle of the Atlantic*, (London: William Kimber 1974) p. 26.

<sup>65</sup> ADM 116/3509, *Royal Naval Volunteer Supplementary Reserve* Undated, unreferenced minute.

<sup>66</sup> Stephen Roskill *Naval Policy between the Wars: The Period of Reluctant Rearmament 1930-1939*, p.458.

<sup>67</sup> AFO 2984/36 *Royal Naval Volunteer Supplementary Reserve*

<sup>68</sup> Paul Lund, Harry Ludlam, *Out Sweeps! The Story of the Minesweepers in World War II*, (London: NEL paperback, 1979) p. 17.

<sup>69</sup> [http://www.exeterflotilla.org/pubsite/flot\\_history.html](http://www.exeterflotilla.org/pubsite/flot_history.html).

<sup>70</sup> ADM 1/10054 Minute NR 6001/87/38 by ACR [Admiral Commanding Reserves] dated 29 September 1938.

As war came closer, the shortage of officers became more acute, there was an anticipated shortfall of 700 junior officers,<sup>72</sup> and there is almost a note of panic when in March 1939 ‘officers of the R.N.V.R. and ... gentlemen of the RNVSR’ were offered appointments ‘for a period of 3 years’. They would undergo ‘a course of about one month at a Shore Naval Establishment followed by three months’ training in a destroyer’ after which ‘it is intended to employ R.N.V.R. officers in destroyers, and possibly in cruisers, in lieu of a Lieutenant, R.N.’<sup>73</sup> The RNVSR gentlemen would go through the same training, but not become Lieutenants until ‘their 24<sup>th</sup> birthday’. This very short period of training was a harbinger of that introduced on the outbreak of war.<sup>74</sup>

At the same time arrangements to commission ‘selected warrant officers to lieutenant’<sup>75</sup> were promulgated and the regulations for commissioning from the lower deck were streamlined, in particular emphasising the need to identify potential candidates early in their career, ‘either in the training establishments or in their early years in the Fleet’.<sup>76</sup>

The officer shortfall had another untoward effect. In 1937 sub lieutenants’ training was shortened to produce lieutenants more quickly. This was achieved by stopping ‘as a temporary measure’ the educational course at Greenwich for Dartmouth and Special Entry cadets. It was hoped that it would be possible to re-institute the course in 1940,<sup>77</sup> but obviously international events intervened. The course continued for acting sub lieutenants who were now being promoted from the lower deck in increasing numbers and the ‘war course’ element of the Greenwich course was added on to the sub lieutenants gunnery course. The relevance of this change in the broader context of naval education and training is discussed in the concluding chapter of this thesis.

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<sup>71</sup> Unusually the Navy List does not give totals for RNVSRs. The total given is based on 28 pages of names, and one page contains 57 names.

<sup>72</sup> Stephen Roskill, *Naval Policy between the Wars: The Period of Reluctant Rearmament 1930-1939*, p.459.

<sup>73</sup> AFO 612/39 *R.N.V.R. Officers – Temporary Employment in the Fleet*.

<sup>74</sup> In a lighter vein, at about this time a description of the three main components of the navy emerged; that the RNR were professional seamen trying to be gentlemen, the RNVR, gentlemen trying to be seamen, and the RN neither, but trying to be both. No original source can be identified, but the text may suggest an origin if not a source. For a poetic version see Commander Justin Richardson ‘RNVR’ in John Winton (ed.), *Freedom’s Battle: The War at Sea*, (London: Arrow Books, 1971) p.93.

<sup>75</sup> AFO 611/39 *Promotion of Selected Warrant Officers to Lieutenant*.

<sup>76</sup> AFO 688/39 *Commissioned Rank – Promotion from the Lower Deck – Executive Branch*.

<sup>77</sup> ADM 116/97 Unreferenced memorandum ‘for the Board’ initialled ‘RHM’ dated 25 February 1937.

## The Fleet Air Arm

The question of the Fleet Air Arm merits discussion from the personnel point of view as it was by the end of the Second World War to be the major striking capability of the Royal Navy.<sup>78</sup> It will be remembered that at the instigation of the then Prime Minister, Lloyd George, an enquiry in 1917 under General Smuts had recommended that the Royal Naval Air Service (RNAS) as it then was, and the Royal Flying Corps (part of the army) be separated from their parent services and merged to form a third service, the Royal Air Force which came into existence on 1 April 1918. At that point, the RNAS had 55,066 personnel of whom 5,378 were officers,<sup>79</sup> and has been described as having been ‘a victim of its own success’.<sup>80</sup> Most of the best officers in the RNAS transferred to the new service. For those who remained in the Royal Navy, and for new entrants to what was eventually called the Fleet Air Arm, the complex and increasingly unworkable rank and career structure requiring officers who wished to be pilots to be commissioned into both services has been described earlier.<sup>81</sup>

Earlier in this thesis the way officers self selected for specialist training was described. This appears to have worked, as already remarked, the system, such as it was, appears to have produced roughly the required numbers for most branches. The glaring exception was that, unlike any other branch, there were insufficient volunteers to undergo training to be observers. Mention has already been made of the repeated calls for volunteers to undertake such training, and the reasons for its unpopularity as a specialisation despite the financial attractions has also been discussed. However, by 1935 the shortage was becoming acute. The continuing battle for the navy to regain control of the Fleet Air Arm was to finally succeed in 1938, but not before Chatfield himself had threatened resignation over the issue.<sup>82</sup> Once achieved it would take time for the Fleet Air Arm to be fully integrated back into the navy, and the shortage of observers had had to be addressed before then. Of the officers studied, twenty four

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<sup>78</sup> See David Hobbs, *The British Pacific Fleet: The Royal Navy's Most Powerful Strike Force*, (Barnsley: Seaforth, 2011).

<sup>79</sup> Captain S.W. Roskill, *Documents Relating to the Naval Air Service: Volume 1 1908 – 1918*, (Bromley: Navy Records Society, 1969) p. 747.

<sup>80</sup> David K Brown, *The Grand Fleet: Warship Design and Development 1906 – 1922*, (Barnsley: Seaforth Publishing, 2010) p. 123.

<sup>81</sup> It was not uncommon for officers to hold differing ranks in the two services. Indeed the Navy List shows many officers who were two grades different.

<sup>82</sup> Stephen Roskill, *Naval Policy Between the Wars: The Period of Reluctant Rearmament 1930-1939*, p. 403.

volunteered for and underwent Observer training. Considering that four years of the twenty inter-war years were studied, the shortfall (twenty four while thirty two were required) would not overall seem to be too bad, but the simple totals conceal that fact that the numbers volunteering fell year on year to the point that only three officers volunteered in 1935. Thus the announcement made in 1935 was to presage a major change in officer career management. AFO 1899/35 stated:

Their Lordships have decided that in order to provide an adequate number of Officer Observers for the Fleet Air Arm, other means than voluntary specialisation must be adopted for ensuring [*sic*] that a sufficient number of officers, of a high standard and ability, are available for this important work.<sup>83</sup>

While AFO went on to say that volunteers would still be encouraged, being trained as an Observer might fall to any executive officer and went on to list ten officers who would be appointed to the next course, who by implication, were not volunteers. This was a major change, the Admiralty Board had throughout the history of specialisation set its face against taking non-volunteers, even if this meant a drop in quality.

At about the same time to address the same problem, the Admiralty introduced rating observers who were termed 'Observers mates' (who when granted a warrant became 'Boatswains (O)').<sup>84</sup> Curiously Roskill makes no mention of this shortage of Observers or the measures taken to deal with it. He does mention and expounds at some length on the 'serious shortage' of 'applications to specialise in the torpedo branch' that apparently arose in 1933-34.<sup>85</sup> In fact, the relevant file in the National Archive (Roskill gives an incorrect reference) is mainly concerned with branch structure,<sup>86</sup> but does strongly put the case for controlling the numbers entering the specialty year on year to avoid the significant variations experienced. Unlike the shortage of observers referred to above, no measures were recommended or, apparently, taken to deal with a supposed shortage.

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<sup>83</sup> AFO 1899/35 *Officer Observers – Liability of all Executive Officers for selection for Qualifying Course*.

<sup>84</sup> ADM 178/169 cited in Stephen Roskill, *Naval Policy Between the Wars: The Period of Reluctant Rearmament 1930-1939*, (London: Collins, 1976) p. 392.

<sup>85</sup> Stephen Roskill, *Naval Policy Between the Wars: The Period of Reluctant Rearmament*, p. 241.

<sup>86</sup> ADM 1/8768/120.

The byzantine manoeuvring and machinations<sup>87</sup> which led to the Inskip enquiry which in turn recommended the return of naval air to the navy are beyond the scope of this thesis.<sup>88</sup> That enquiry recommended that the navy should be responsible for selecting and training the personnel of the Fleet Air Arm.<sup>89</sup> Once the Admiralty had regained control of the Fleet Air Arm,<sup>90</sup> it made an explicit statement concerning its future officer structure, which recognised the difficulties in obtaining volunteers described earlier.<sup>91</sup> Officers would now obviously only hold naval rank, and the separation of the observers from the remainder of the Fleet Air Arm which it is presumed had led to the difficulty in recruiting them ended with the effect that thereafter there seems to have been no problem in recruiting aircrew as observers (or pilots), in that there were no further calls for volunteers to train.

### Alarums and Excursions – the ‘Abyssinian’ mobilisation

The Abyssinian crisis of 1935 arose out of Italy’s attempt to incorporate Abyssinia (present day Ethiopia) into its nascent African empire, ultimately invading that country in October. The Suez Canal through which Italy moved the necessary troops and supplies was under British control and as part of a British government response under the aegis of the League of Nations, the Mediterranean fleet moved from Malta to Alexandria.<sup>92</sup> While in the end no military action was taken against Italy, there was a substantial mobilisation of the Royal Navy in anticipation of hostilities.

There were two features of the Abyssinian mobilisation that impacted on the officer corps. It will be remembered that ships’ officer complements had been reduced following the Invergordon mutiny to reflect the relative underemployment of some officers under peace time conditions. Unfortunately sources do not indicate whether ships were brought up to war complement for the Abyssinian mobilisation. It was unlikely if, as Roskill suggests, the mobilisation – for such it was – was conducted

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<sup>87</sup> Sir Samuel Hoare as Secretary for Air had in 1923 defeated near identical arguments that he now deployed as First Lord to regain control of naval air.

<sup>88</sup> They are well covered in W.J. Reader, *Architect of Air Power: The Life of the First Viscount Weir*, (London; Collins, 1968) p. 170 et seq; Stephen Roskill *Naval Policy Between the Wars: The Period of Reluctant Rearmament 1930-1939* Ch X111.

<sup>89</sup> Steven Roskill *Hankey: Man of Secrets Volume III 1931 – 1963*, (London; Collins, 1974) p. 292.

<sup>90</sup> It retained the name, not reverting to ‘Royal Naval Air Service’.

<sup>91</sup> CAFO 1913/38 *Fleet Air Arm – Reorganisation – Personnel for Pilot and Observer Duties*.

<sup>92</sup> Winston S. Churchill, *The Second World War: The Gathering Storm*, (London: Cassell and Co, 1948) pp. 133-6.

discretely, even covertly.<sup>93</sup> If they were not, it means that the heightened activity will have placed an increased load on the officers of ships with peace time complements, mainly those of the Mediterranean fleet. Whether the ships from the Home Fleet which augmented them were brought up to war complement before deploying to the Mediterranean is also unknown. However, the ships were on a semi-war footing. As restrictions on fuel consumption were temporarily lifted,<sup>94</sup> the 'Commander in Chief, Admiral Sir W.W.Fisher, was determined to take full advantage [of this]. He worked the ships without respite until they were more than ready to meet the enemy'.<sup>95</sup> However, because of the need to remain at a high level of readiness, some ships' companies could not take Christmas leave,<sup>96</sup> and spent increased periods away from home. It is difficult at this remove to ascertain the effect of the Abyssinian crisis on officer morale. Certainly the war preparations must have had a positive effect, but the political climb down could have either had a deleterious effect or led to a hardening of resolve. Even the secondary sources are equivocal. This crisis however ran into that arising from the Spanish civil war; some Home Fleet ships had barely returned to home waters before that crisis started.

#### Alarums and Excursions - the Spanish Civil war and 'non-intervention'

The Spanish civil war from July 1936 to April 1939 is only of concern to this thesis as it involved the Royal Navy and exposed its officers to the realities of war and also to the performance and behaviour of those increasingly seen as their likely opponents in any future war. The United Kingdom was neutral and officially impartial during the war itself, but segments of the British population aligned themselves increasingly as the war progressed with either the republican government side or the nationalist rebels, and volunteers fought for both sides.<sup>97</sup> There is little doubt that initially British officials favoured the right wing nationalists, and indeed gave covert and even overt aid.<sup>98</sup> However, increasingly the war became a proxy for the broader divisions in Europe, with the USSR aligning with the Republicans and the Axis powers (Germany and Italy) with

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<sup>93</sup> Stephen Roskill, *Naval Policy between the Wars: The Period of Reluctant Rearmament*, p.255.

<sup>94</sup> A ships fuel consumption increases as the square of its speed; hence there were (and are) regular restrictions on speed to save money.

<sup>95</sup> Frank Gregory-Smith, *Red Tobruk: Memoirs of a World War II Destroyer Commander*, (Barnsley: Pen and Sword, 2008) p. 5.

<sup>96</sup> Stephen Roskill, *Naval Policy between the Wars: The Period of Reluctant Rearmament* p.266.

<sup>97</sup> Fred Copeman, *Reason in Revolt*, (London; Blandford Press, 1948) pp.74-151. The author had been an active Invergordon mutineer before joining the communist party and fighting for the Republicans in Spain.

<sup>98</sup> Anthony Beevor, *The Spanish Civil War*, (London; Cassel, 2001) p. 163.

the Nationalists. British (and French) policy then became one of non-intervention. The presence of warships was required to enforce this policy and ‘to rescue refugees of many nationalities, including summer visitors to Spanish seaside resorts, from military attacks or air raids by either side. It was difficult, as well as frequently harrowing work’.<sup>99</sup> The nature of this work led at one point to a British flag officer disobeying his orders so that he might protect refugees from Nationalist forces.<sup>100</sup>

British merchant ships were sunk, mainly by Axis forces,<sup>101</sup> HMS *Hunter* was mined (13 May 1937) sustaining seventeen casualties, ‘accidental’ air attacks ‘were common, several British destroyers reporting narrow escapes’<sup>102</sup> and HMS *Royal Oak* was attacked on more than one occasion.<sup>103</sup> The German ‘pocket battleship’ *Deutschland* (later renamed *Lutzow*) landed over 100 casualties into the British naval base at Gibraltar after she had been bombed.<sup>104</sup> Dealing with casualties will have had an effect on the personnel of the naval base.

An Italian submarine *Iride* attacked HMS *Havock*, unsuccessfully, with torpedoes (31 August 1937) and was in her turn unsuccessfully counter-attacked.<sup>105</sup> This latter incident was illustrative of a difference in service thinking. Having been attacked, *Havock* did not immediately counter-attack after the torpedoes were fired. This provoked Admiral Somerville to order her by wireless signal to ‘pursue the hunt with the utmost energy, and try and make up for your astounding lack of initiative’.<sup>106</sup> This signal will have served two purposes, firstly to provoke *Havock* into activity, but, because the signal would have been read by many other ships, to very firmly point out that officers were required to display initiative, they were not expected to wait for orders, but act. It is also an illustration of how much the communications technology

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<sup>99</sup> Stephen Roskill, *Naval Policy between the Wars: The Period of Reluctant Rearmament 1930 – 1939*, p.373.

<sup>100</sup> Stephen Roskill, *Naval Policy between the Wars: The Period of Reluctant Rearmament 1930 – 1939*, p.381.

<sup>101</sup> Anthony Beevor, *The Spanish Civil War*, p. 297-8.

<sup>102</sup> Peter Smith, *Destroyer Leader*, (London: NEL, 1974) p.20.

<sup>103</sup> Joseph Moretz, *The Royal Navy and the Capital Ship in the Interwar Period: An Operational Perspective*, (London: Frank Cass, 2002) p.197.

<sup>104</sup> After leaving, allegedly in revenge for the attack on her, she conducted a bombardment of Almeira.

<sup>105</sup> Stephen Roskill, *Naval Policy between the Wars: The Period of Reluctant Rearmament 1930 – 1939*, p.382- 3.

<sup>106</sup> Robin Brodhurst, *Churchill’s Anchor: The biography of Admiral of the Fleet Sir Dudley Pound OM, GCB, GCVO*, (Barnsley: Leo Cooper, 2000) p. 97.



had improved since the First World War; *Havock* was eventually ordered directly by the Admiralty to cease her counter-attack in case she involved an ‘innocent’ submarine.<sup>107</sup>

Significant numbers of British warships, according to Roskill up to 36 destroyers, were engaged on what was termed the ‘Nyon patrol’. They were involved in the rescue of 470 survivors from a Spanish warship the *Baleares* after it had been torpedoed, ‘under very difficult conditions’.<sup>108</sup> As Brodhurst points out, the involvement of the Mediterranean fleet was far greater than just destroyers ‘in October 1937 [this involved] two battleships, two battlecruisers, several cruisers, over thirty destroyers, two repair ships, a depot ship, a hospital ship, and a number of fleet auxiliaries’.<sup>109</sup> The actual numbers of ships is un-important, what was important was the numbers of personnel, afloat and ashore in Gibraltar, who, having been exposed to war, seeing damaged ships and casualties, were thinking in a wartime frame of mind.

#### Alarums and Excursions – the Munich mobilisation

Even before the mobilisation arising from the Munich crisis, relations with Germany were causing concern to naval authorities. As the international situation worsened, the then First Lord (Duff Cooper) recorded in his diary for 2 September 1938 that he recommended to the cabinet that certain ships be brought up to their war complement.<sup>110</sup>

The Munich crisis that followed later in the month was another test to the system and exposed the shortcomings of the wartime –v- peacetime complement arrangements introduced following the Invergordon mutiny. The navy was mobilised 28 September 1938, which given the short timescale meant that the Mediterranean fleet would have had ‘to fight with its peacetime complements, at any rate initially, as reinforcements [i.e. to bring ships up to their wartime complements] would never arrive in time. The reinforcements ... had travelled overland to Marseilles and thence by liner to Alexandria.’<sup>111</sup>

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<sup>107</sup> Evidence perhaps of Directed Command or more likely, political pressure.

<sup>108</sup> Stephen Roskill, *Naval Policy between the Wars: The Period of Reluctant Rearmament 1930 – 1939*, p.387.

<sup>109</sup> Robin Brodhurst, *Churchill’s Anchor* p. 99.

<sup>110</sup> John Julius Norwich (ed.), *The Duff Cooper Diaries 1915–1951* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 2005) pp. 256-7.

## War readiness

The effect of the ‘alarums and excursions’ was that the personnel of the Royal Navy, officers and ratings, were being, perhaps unwittingly, psychologically prepared for war. Not only were they being subjected the personal turbulence of short notice changes to ships programmes and losing leave which would be a feature of the war itself, they were being exposed to actual war, mostly observing, but also under the stress of war and sustaining casualties. There was to be no repeat of the September 1914 loss of HM Ships *Hogue*, *Aboukir* and *Cressy* at the beginning of the Second World War.

However, it did have an untoward effect. Being at sea, especially in command is stressful even in peacetime. While the various emergencies and conflicts prepared officers for war, this preparation came at a price. The following lengthy quotation shows the far from atypical experiences of an officer in the years immediately before the Second World War:

In 1935 I had sailed on a war footing from Chatham to Haifa, as Second Lieutenant in the *Electra*, a new ‘E’ class destroyer. This was the emergency caused by Italy’s attack on Abyssinia ... We ran for two years from Haifa and Alexandria, with Admiral A.B. Cunningham as Rear-Admiral Destroyers, preparing us for war (but with a peace-time crew of officers). ... As we sailed out of Alexandria to return to England in 1937 ... the Spanish Civil War broke out and we increased speed and went to the Biscay ports of Spain. For the next year or so I was firstly in the *Electra*, then the *Hood*, and finally in *Penelope*, working off the coast of Spain. ... we ... saw clearly the courage, futility, cruelty and Heartbreak [*sic*] of a civil war.

When Franco had won, ... the *Penelope* was sent to Haifa to relieve the Ulster Rifles who were garrisoning the town during the Arab rebellion. ... when the 1938 Munich crisis broke, we sailed from Haifa at full speed and took up our [war] station at Port Said.

When ... the crisis was over, we returned to the Arab rebellion. The next crisis was in Easter 1939 when the Italians attacked Albania ...

In August 1939 *Penelope* returned to Portsmouth to re-commission, I had many months of overdue leave ... . In the event, I was lucky to get three weeks .... This meant that when the war started I had already been four years working at increasing pressure and more or less on a war footing.<sup>112</sup>

He then spent four years, all but six months, at sea, mostly in command. His memoir, cited above, includes a graphic account of the stress to which he was subject. The effects on commanding officers of the cumulative stress will be considered in the next chapter.

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<sup>111</sup> Robin Brodhurst, *Churchill’s Anchor* p.108.

<sup>112</sup> Roger Hill, *Destroyer Captain*, (London: Mayflower Books, 1979) pp 178-9.

The officer corps in 1939 was far better fitted for war than would have seemed possible at the end of Madden's term of office as First Sea Lord. The base of officer recruitment had been widened, albeit not significantly numerically, but the structures were in place for a vast expansion. The tool for that expansion, the RNVR had been energised. The officer corps was better trained, and above all had been inculcated with a mission command mindset. There were faults, in particular, the navy still undervalued the importance of command, and would have too few officers to command its ships, particularly the smaller vessels that were to be such a feature of the war.

**TO THE NADIR AND BACK: THE EXECUTIVE BRANCH OF THE  
ROYAL NAVY 1918-1939**

**PART THREE**

**TO THE NADIR AND BACK: THE NAVAL OFFICER ON 2  
SEPTEMBER 1939 - WAS HE FIT FOR PURPOSE?**



# **Chapter 1**

## **The Naval Officer on 2 September 1939, the Apogee: Admirals Backhouse and Pound.**

The second part of this thesis concluded as war was about to break out. It had shown how the executive officer corps of the Royal Navy was in a much better condition than might have seemed possible a few years earlier. Significant weaknesses in their professional education and training had been addressed and morale was much improved from the low point of the nadir, and improvements in the way they were managed had begun. However, the ultimate test of a navy is war-fighting and if it is to be accepted that the described improvements had been effective and above all appropriate, the performance of the navy in the Second World War must be examined. It will be shown in the concluding chapters that navy was ‘fit for purpose’.<sup>1</sup> The navy had addressed some of the personnel and organisational failings apparent in the First World War, but it will also be shown that a significant weakness remained; there was a failure to generate enough commanding officers. This will be shown to be in part because far more commanding officers were to be required than could have been anticipated (for example for the enormous amphibious forces), but also because the navy did not initially recognise that the Second World War made very different demands of its commanding officers than it appears to have planned for. However, the navy coped extremely well despite this shortcoming because it was a flexible and adaptable force which was a reflection of the quality of its officers.

Thus this chapter looks at the navy’s performance in the Second World War under Admiral Pound’s leadership, and specifically at that of its regular executive officers. The point will be made and emphasised that the navy was well led at every level, these were not donkeys leading lions but highly capable professionals leading what proved to be highly capable professionals, both regular and reserve, that not only were they fit themselves to lead, but also to give a professional and personal lead and example to the many who became officers – many more than had ever been contemplated – as the navy grew to meet the needs of the biggest maritime war of recorded history.

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<sup>1</sup> N.A.M. Rodger, ‘The Royal Navy in the Era of the World Wars: Was it fit for purpose?’, *The Mariners Mirror*, 97:1(February 2011), pp. 272-284.

While parts of the naval aspects of the Second World War will be examined, this chapter is not intended to be a mini- or micro-history of the war. Rather it seeks to draw out an illustrative overview of officers' performance in the war, particularly in its early years, to show how the navy had managed them and, above all, how it managed the expansion of the officer corps which it conducted while actually fighting a major war. This latter point cannot be underestimated. The navy simultaneously, sometimes spatially as well as temporally, had to fight a war and train officers to the point that they were fit to fight. Both war fighting and training required high quality officers. The chapter also examines how the navy reacted to war. It will be remembered that at the outbreak of the First World War, untrained cadets were sent immediately to sea, and training for career officers effectively stopped, leaving a significant 'catch up' process to be undertaken after the end of the war. It will be shown that the navy did not repeat that mistake; indeed apart from shortened specialist courses, officer education and training for its regular service officers continued almost as though there was no war. The navy also did not repeat another major mistake it made in the First World War. The expansion of officer numbers in the Second World War – vastly greater numerically than in the first – was managed very differently. Officers were given temporary commissions, and, unlike their regular counterparts, a purely role-specific training. They were neither expected to have nor were they given professional breadth.

Ship command, which is closely interwoven with, and in some respects a counterpoint to, the role of the specialist will be examined in some detail. Selection for command and the effects of what would appear to have been significant shortages of those capable of command will be examined as will the navy's attitude to officers who displayed the ability to command at sea. It will be shown that specialist officers came to ship command later in their career, indeed if at all, but, despite this, had better prospects of promotion than non-specialists. Aptitude for ship command seems to have been, to some extent, almost a negative career factor. This did not come about by chance. It was the product of the navy's education and training system which had been informed by its recent history. It can only have been based on the perception that the navy only required officers for directed command roles, ones requiring less initiative, and the brightest and the best would and should become specialists. Prior to the First World War, the importance of command of a ship in terms of its necessity for career progression had been downgraded in favour of specialisation. This part of the thesis will show the outcome of that change and how the navy found itself short of officers capable of

command, and how its officers who demonstrated an ability to command in war were used, and then in many cases discarded as not having the qualities the navy saw it itself as needing in its senior officers. It will be shown that not only did the navy favour its specialist trained officers, that it did not regard those who demonstrated high leadership ability as necessarily suited for higher command, indeed it preferred those with a proven staff capability. This will be confirmed by drawing on officers' confidential reports.<sup>2</sup> Whether this was correct for the navy in the Second World War will be examined and will draw this thesis to its conclusion.

### Higher command and the shortage of senior officers

The leadership from the top of the service had defined its broader performance between the wars and was to do so in the coming war. Admiral Chatfield relinquished the post of First Sea Lord in November 1938 and was succeeded by Admiral Backhouse. At that point Admiral Pound, who was actually to be the First Sea Lord when war broke out, had, according to Roskill, been told that he was not to be selected for the post. This was despite his being Commander in Chief of the Mediterranean Fleet, usually seen as the stepping stone to being First Sea Lord. However, according to Roskill it had been intended that on leaving the Mediterranean, Pound was to be Commander in Chief, Portsmouth, usually seen as a last appointment before retirement.<sup>3</sup> Whether or not he was fit and fitted for the job of First Sea Lord has been debated. Roskill was very much of the opinion that he was neither.

Roskill went much further than just decrying Pound's abilities stating that 'the Royal Navy was going to be very short of senior officers of first class ability and outstanding character' as 'illness and premature retirements' had thinned the field.<sup>4</sup> If this analysis is accepted, when Backhouse had to resign due to ill health within a year of taking up the appointment, there was little alternative to Admiral Pound becoming First Sea Lord just before the outbreak of war, despite his supposed weaknesses. Marder expressed a different opinion and felt that 'Backhouse and Pound were equal starters to

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<sup>2</sup> In this chapter there are many extracts from officers' confidential reports; some are taken from the manuscript originals, some from transcribed typed versions. Any underlining can be assumed to have been in red in the original and original grammar and spelling has been reproduced. To avoid breaking the narrative flow, any grammatical solecisms etc. are ignored.

<sup>3</sup> Stephen Roskill, *Naval Policy Between the Wars: The Period of Reluctant Rearmament 1930-1939*, (London: Collins, 1976) p. 357.

<sup>4</sup> Stephen Roskill, *Naval Policy Between the Wars: The Period of Reluctant Rearmament 1930-1939*, p.462.



succeed Chatfield ... the mantle fell on Backhouse, much to the delight of Pound, who preferred an extra (third) year as C-in-C Mediterranean'.<sup>5</sup> As matters transpired, Backhouse was only to be in post for a short period and died in July 1939.<sup>6</sup> Overall, Marder gives a far more measured assessment of the two Admirals than Roskill and goes so far as to say 'Backhouse was not in the same class as Pound, though very able and sound enough.'<sup>7</sup> He had a better opinion of Pound who took the navy to war and was to oversee the navy's transition from peace to war, and the start of the vast expansion of its officer corps.

At first sight, this may seem to be a dispute between historians; essentially about the inferences drawn from scraps of hard material and ultimately of little consequence. However, Roskill's point that the navy was to be 'very short of senior officers of first class ability' was, or rather would have been, an important judgement if the navy had failed during the Second World War. It did not fail; indeed it performed outstandingly well. Roskill never returned to the point, and indeed had not made it in his (earlier) official history of the war at sea. The navy performed well in the Second World War. To have done so, it must have been well led. *Ergo*, Roskill was wrong; the navy had sufficient leaders of first class ability which would include the First Sea Lord and thus it follows that Marder's opinion is to be preferred.

Nonetheless, Roskill's point that premature retirements had made for a shortage of capable senior officers warrants further examination. As the navy expanded rapidly to meet the requirements of war, it needed far more experienced officers than were currently serving, including senior officers to fill command appointments. It had an important mechanism to address this shortage, the 'Retired List'. The point has already been made that naval officers did (and do) not retire; they 'transfer from the Active List to the Retired List, both of which are lists of the Royal Navy. The commission itself is retained'.<sup>8</sup> This is not the legalistic point it may seem. Officers transferred to the retired list were told that they would be subject to being recalled to active service.<sup>9</sup> When recalled to service some officers would be transferred back to the active list, others

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<sup>5</sup> Arthur J. Marder, *Old Friends New Enemies: The Royal Navy and the Imperial Japanese Navy – Strategic Illusions, 1936-1941*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1981) p.31.

<sup>6</sup> Malcolm H. Murfett, 'Backhouse, Sir Roger Roland Charles (1878-1939)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford University Press, 2004), [accessed on line 2 Jan 2012]

<sup>7</sup> Arthur J. Marder, *Old Friends New Enemies: The Royal Navy and the Imperial Japanese Navy – Strategic Illusions, 193 -1941*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1981) p.34.

<sup>8</sup> Unreferenced briefing notes from the Naval Secretary to officers transferring to the retired list, undated.

<sup>9</sup> This was not voluntary; it was part of the terms and conditions of service of a naval officer.

would serve as retired officers, drawing their retired pay (which was not termed a pension) as well as the pay of whatever rank in which they were serving.<sup>10</sup> This was not just a wartime measure, it will be remembered that Madden had been appointed First Sea Lord after a long period of half pay.<sup>11</sup> Probably the best known examples of officers serving on the retired list were Admirals Somerville and Ramsay. The former commanded Force H, among other important positions, and the latter was to command the naval forces for the D Day landings. His wartime career will be mentioned later.

Key to this was captains' career structure. From the time an officer was promoted to captain, he could serve in that rank for a maximum of eleven years and, if not further promoted, would then be placed on the retired list, irrespective of his age. This system was colloquially known as 'eleven years, up or out'. This had a two-fold effect, firstly the navy prevented 'dead wood' piling up on the captains list blocking promotions as happened with lieutenant commanders, and the system also generated a ready reserve of captains. These were officers who had undergone two selective promotions before 'retirement', that is they were of proven capability. As the Second World War broke out the retired list also included many trained officers from lieutenant upwards made redundant in the early 1920s under the 'Geddes axe' and subsequent redundancy schemes and officers retired by age, in the case of lieutenant commanders, aged forty five and older. The importance of the retired list for the Royal Navy as it mobilised and underwent a vast expansion cannot be underestimated. It had an immediately available source of fully trained officers across the full range of ranks.

As part of the preparations for the impending conflict, some were approached in advance of war. Lieutenant Ludovic Kennedy RNVR was, before the war, shown a letter written by the Admiralty to his father who had been made redundant from the Royal Navy as a captain eighteen years earlier, asking '[i]n the event of hostilities would my father be prepared to take command of an armed merchant cruiser?'<sup>12</sup> Most such officers, often termed 'dug outs' (i.e. dug out of retirement), were appointed to

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<sup>10</sup> Vice Admiral Stephenson, on recall served as a Commodore in command of the Western Approaches work-up school at Tobermory flying his broad pennant in HMS *Western Isles*.

<sup>11</sup> He was not on the retired list. He had been on half pay as an unemployed admiral and was promoted to Admiral of the Fleet just before compulsory transfer to the retired list. Admirals of the Fleet remain on the active list, even if not employed, but on half pay.

<sup>12</sup> Ludovic Kennedy 'Captain of *RAWALPINDI*' in John Winton (ed.) *Freedom's Battle: The War at Sea 1939-1945* (London: Hutchinson & Co, 1971) p. 30.

staff and other shore appointments.<sup>13</sup> The officers interviewed for this thesis who were cadets at Dartmouth at the time remember the younger serving members of the staff being replaced by such officers.<sup>14</sup>

‘Over-zone’ or ‘passed over’ officers, i.e. those officers who had not been selected for promotion from lieutenant commander to commander or from commander to captain have been discussed. When the war came many were to be promoted. In one instance ‘an elderly lieutenant-commander, long since passed over for promotion’<sup>15</sup> was to be promoted twice and decorated during the war.<sup>16</sup> It is probable that this in part reflected a shortage of available promotion opportunities before the war, but as will be described in the next chapter, wartime requirements made of officers were rather different from those in peacetime.

However, the identified potential shortage of officers described in the last chapter meant that the Admiralty was not in a position to be too choosy about who it recalled to service. To some extent it seemed that they would take anyone they could get. One of the studied officer’s record card is shown at fig. 30. It shows that he had incurred ‘[Their Lordships] severe displeasure’ and had been placed on half pay in 1932, and not being employed for three years thereafter (at the direction of the Admiralty Board) was then placed on the retired list. As can be seen his record card states ‘WILL NOT BE EMPLOYED AGAIN’. He was re-entered into the active list in September 1938 at the time of the Munich crisis and served through the war.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> However, Kennedy was not unique. Commander Findlay, axed by Geddes, was the executive officer of HMS *Danae* at the D-Day landings and flew the same ensign that his ship had worn at Jutland. See Captain J H B Hughes RM ‘Supporting Fire’ in D.A.Farquharson-Roberts (ed.) *Royal Marines and D-Day: Some Personal Reminiscences* (Southsea: Royal Marines Historical Society, 2012) p.16.

<sup>14</sup> Interview with Admiral of the Fleet Sir Henry Leach 28 October 2008.

<sup>15</sup> W.R. Fell, *The Sea our Shield*, (London: Cassell, 1966) p. 3.

<sup>16</sup> He retired as Captain W.R. Fell CMG CBE DSC RN.

<sup>17</sup> But he was returned speedily to the retired list at the end of the war in Europe.

Certificates		W.K. Certificate 26. 1.25.
Seamanship	1	1.12.28. ... (S) <u>C.W.11713/28.</u>
Greenwich	3	
Navigation	2	
Gunnery	2	
Torpedo	2	

*NY 3011/28*

From	To	GENERAL NOTATIONS
10.20	12.22	12.52 Tendering of dishonoured cheques. Has incurred T.L.'s severe displeasure by his irresponsible conduct. Appctn to retire under special scheme NOT approved. * Is to be discharged to Half-Pay. <u>WILL NOT BE EMPLOYED AGAIN N.L.3968/32</u>
1.23	15. 2.24	
4.24	8.26	
10.26	3. 1.27	<i>Board minute 3039 - approved to discharge to half pay and not to employ again</i>
1.27	11.27	
11.27	25.11.27	
11.27	1.12.28	
12.28	14.12.28	
12.28	14. 8.30	
8.30	<del>28.10.32</del>	
10.32	<del>9.12.32*</del>	
9.38	8.10.38.	<u>Placed on Retired list (DL 7/12/35)</u>
6.39	2.7.39	<u>10. 12. 35. (Non-Service) Ch.</u>
8.39		
8.41		<i>28-30/9/38 Royal Hotel, Breda, Holland. On 1182438</i>
1.44		

Fig. 30. Portion of the record card of an officer discharged to the retired list in 1935 and as can be seen was not to be re-employed, but re-entered in 1938 and served throughout the war. (2SLPersRec)

Another officer who had been discharged as a midshipman because his performance was so poor was re-entered,<sup>18</sup> and ended the war as a decorated lieutenant.<sup>19</sup>

Thus the navy had mechanisms to rapidly increase the numbers of regular officers in the executive branch. They were well motivated and has been shown psychologically prepared for war. As a navy is only as good as its officers, whether senior or junior, the Royal Navy could not have performed as well as it did in the Second World War if it had not been well led, at the lower levels as well as the higher levels already discussed.

Just as it was impossible to look at the officer corps as the First World War ended without looking back temporally to see where the officers that comprised the executive branch had come from, so it would be pointless not to look forward from the end of the inter-war period to see how they performed in their ultimate test, the Second World War. It is thus worth looking at the early stages of the war in a little detail, not from the politico-military or material viewpoint, but from the personnel aspect, particularly of the officers. It will be remembered that Admiral Kelly had reported after the Invergordon mutiny that having ships at wartime complement meant that there were under employed officers, particularly lieutenant commanders, in peacetime. Following

<sup>18</sup> One of extremely few of those studied.

<sup>19</sup> 2SLPersRec.

this, under Admiral Field, the navy had moved away from having all of its ships at full war readiness or as close to it as could be achieved, which had meant having on board all the officers and men needed to fight the ship in wartime, described as the ‘war complement’. As described in the previous chapter, the policy had been reaffirmed by the Binney report. Ships now had a peace and a war scheme of complement, and had to be brought up to their war complement as part of the mobilisation process. To achieve this officers and men had to be appointed and then transported to the ship, which might well not be in the United Kingdom. This was done by giving officers what were described as ‘sleeping’ appointments. These would be activated on mobilisation. While some were officers serving in shore appointments, often these were officers on the retired list, reserve officers or even volunteer reserve officers. Some officers were informed of what their sleeping appointment was, and some merely of the existence of such an appointment (which probably meant that it had not been decided where they would go). Sleeping appointments were constantly updated. Rayner for example was mobilised at the time of the Munich crisis to Scapa Flow and then when war actually came to a completely different appointment.<sup>20</sup> The process actually started during August 1939, with ships being brought up to their war complement.<sup>21</sup>

### The regular officer in the Second World War

Having learnt the lessons of the First World War during which officer training (including that for cadets and midshipmen) was largely suspended, the navy did not repeat the mistake; indeed it could well be seen to have gone too far the other way. For regular officers, career progression was, to a very large extent, maintained as in peacetime. Cadets were not withdrawn from Dartmouth ‘[t]he disruption and major changes that had marked the start of the First World War at the College were not repeated in 1939. College life continued much as it had done in peacetime’.<sup>22</sup> Midshipmen’s training afloat and sub lieutenants courses continued, albeit foreshortened. The only significant change was that there was no cadet training afloat in

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<sup>20</sup> D.A. Rayner, *Escort: The Battle of the Atlantic*, (London: Futura, 1974). For his ‘Munich’ mobilisation see pp. 22-5, that at the outbreak of the Second World War p. 27.

<sup>21</sup> Donald Cameron Watt, *How War Came: The Immediate Origins of the Second World War, 1938-1939*, (London: Pimlico, 2001) p. 542.

<sup>22</sup> Jane Harrold and Richard Porter, *Britannia Royal Naval College Dartmouth: An Illustrated History*, (Dartmouth: Richard Webb, 2005) p.117. After an air raid, in 1943 the College moved to Eaton Hall in Cheshire for the duration of the war.

a training cruiser.<sup>23</sup> While ‘temporary’ officers were sent on courses specific for the navy’s needs at a given period of the war, regular officers continued undertaking career courses (although shorter) as in peacetime. From the employment perspective, while regular officers were appointed across the spectrum of duties, ‘temporary’ officers would stay within the very narrow area for which they had been trained.<sup>24</sup> It is also important to note that ‘normal’ promotion mechanisms for regular officers were maintained, while RNVR officers could be and were promoted fairly rapidly.

During the First World War the navy had used mainly regular, that is career, officers.<sup>25</sup> No thought appears to have been given until very late in the war to the need for post-war shrinkage of the navy as a whole and its officer numbers in particular. As has been described, the resulting marked excess of officer numbers or ‘over-bearing’ was a contributory factor to the poor morale of the officer corps during the inter-war period. Paradoxically, it made the navy’s job of preparing for the Second World War that much easier as when it recognised that it would need more officers for the coming war; it was at least starting from a higher baseline.

Many authors have recorded how young men were put through a trial period at sea and then commissioned and trained. As will be discussed, they were commissioned from the lower deck using the mechanisms introduced by the Field Admiralty. Such officers were seen as being ‘hostilities only’.<sup>26</sup>

The navy was faced with a dilemma with regard to continuous service ratings, that is, peace time enlistees. If they were to be commissioned using the mechanisms used for the temporary officers, at the end of the war it would have officers who would have an expectation of permanent service but who had not had the breadth of training that the navy considered essential for such an officer. The solution adopted was that ‘[c]ontinuous service ratings were to be encouraged to seek promotion through the

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<sup>23</sup> Later in the war HM Ships *Diomedé* and *Dauntless* and the Armed Merchant Cruiser *Corinthian* were used to give eight weeks sea time to CW candidates, but there was no equivalent for regular cadets. See Brian Lavery, *Hostilities Only: Training the Wartime Navy*, (London: Conway, 2011) p.156.

<sup>24</sup> For a good example see Frank Gregory-Smith, *Red Tobruk: Memoirs of a World War II Destroyer Commander*, (Barnsley: Pen and Sword, 2008). The author was a ‘salt horse’ who commanded a destroyer in the Mediterranean, was a beachmaster at D-Day, and subsequently again commanded a destroyer.

<sup>25</sup> Supplemented by RNR officers afloat. RNVR officers were used as specialists, for example in what would now be called signals intelligence. Some, such as the author E Keble Chatterton did serve afloat.

<sup>26</sup> The term was used for ratings, officers were ‘temporary’.

much slower route as warrant officers, after which accelerated advancement to commissioned officer was available'.<sup>27</sup>

The point was made in the introduction that many of the Royal Navy's officers from the First World War fought in the Second World War. These included those who were now senior officers but very many who had not achieved selective promotion namely the passed over lieutenant commanders, commissioned warrant officers and many recalled to service – those who had either resigned, retired or been made redundant. They were the same people, and, as Rodger has pointed out, 'it is extremely unusual for adults to change radically the habits of thought in which they have been brought up.'<sup>28</sup> They and those who had stayed had set the standards for and trained the more junior officers.

In the introduction it was suggested that the characterisation of the Royal Navy as a Directed Command organisation in the First World War and a Mission Command organisation in the Second World War was simplistic. Certainly, the major units of the Grand Fleet were very much run as a directed command organisation, because the perception, right or wrong, was that it was the only way to control a battle line. Elsewhere, even within the Grand Fleet, mission command was practised or viewed another way, initiative encouraged. Officers were expected to practise either when the situation required it. Thus when the Second World War came, the generality of the older officer corps was ready, willing and able to practise mission command. As has been shown, the younger officers had increasingly been much better trained in leadership and in mission command thinking.

In the first part of this thesis it was shown that the officer corps at the end of the First World War felt they had not achieved what was expected of them either by themselves or, in their perception true or not, by the public. In fact the Royal Navy had played a pivotal role in the defeat of the central powers but by blockade. The purpose of this thesis is not to argue whether the navy had expected a 'Mahanian' war and did not realise it had won a 'Corbettian' war, but rather the effect of the war on the morale of the officers. The key point is that, dependent on the theatre and mode of the war in which they had been employed, the officer corps had performed to the highest

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<sup>27</sup> Brian Lavery, *Hostilities Only: Training the Wartime Royal Navy*, (London: Conway, 2011) p. 144.

standards; they had shown initiative, originality and leadership when they were required and rigid automatic even unthinking discipline when that was required, and had shown the ability to shift between the two.

### Transition to War

When Britain went to war on 3 September 1939, for most of the country, despite initial over-reaction to non-existent air raids on that first day,<sup>29</sup> the transition from peace to war was to be prolonged over many months, a period that became known as the 'phoney war'.<sup>30</sup> This included not only the civilian population but also the Army and the Royal Air Force, neither of whom were involved in any significant combat operations until the Norwegian campaign and any major operations until the invasion of France in 1940.<sup>31</sup>

For the navy however:

there was to be no Phoney War, no phasing in. On the elderly destroyer *Walpole*, engaged in convoy duties off Milford Haven, the Captain, Lieutenant-Commander Burnell-Nugent, received the Admiralty signal [to commence hostilities against Germany sent at 11.15] and within ten minutes had attacked a possible submarine contact with a pattern of depth charges.<sup>32</sup>

This was not an excitable over-reaction to the declaration of war;<sup>33</sup> some eight hours later the German submarine U30 torpedoed and sank SS *Athenia*;<sup>34</sup> the war at sea started in earnest from the beginning.

A military organisation has to make psychological changes and adaptations as well as material preparations for war. In more modern times, the prime example is the loss of HMS *Sheffield* in the Anglo-Argentinean war of 1982. Her ship's company had not fully made the transition from a peace time mindset to that required to successfully

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<sup>28</sup> N.A.M. Rodger, 'The Royal Navy in the Era of the World Wars: Was it fit for purpose?', *The Mariners Mirror* 97:1 (February 2011) pp.272-284.

<sup>29</sup> Donald Cameron Watt, *How War Came* p.602.

<sup>30</sup> Or to one officer who had served through the Boer Wars and the First World War - as the 'bore war'. See Adrian Carton De Wiart *Happy Odyssey* (Barnsley: Pen and Sword, 2011) p.164.

<sup>31</sup> Of course, it was an invaluable period of time for them as a period of training and re-equipment.

<sup>32</sup> Harry Plevy, *Destroyer Actions: September 1939 to June 1940*, (Stroud: The History Press, 2006) p. 23. See also 'Sub-Lieutenant John Roxburgh RN' in Max Arthur (ed.), *Lost Voices of the Royal Navy*, (London: Hodder, 2005) p.210.

<sup>33</sup> Lieutenant Commander Burnell-Nugent showed himself to be a cool commanding officer during the Dunkirk evacuation and subsequently.

<sup>34</sup> Clay Blair, *Hitler's U-Boat War: The Hunters 1939-42*, (London: Cassell and Co, 2006) p. 67; John Terraine, *Business in Great Waters: The U-Boat Wars, 1916-1945*, (London: Leo Cooper, 1989) p.215.



prosecute a war.<sup>35</sup> The same failure had played a significant part in the loss of three armoured cruisers, HM Ships *Hogue*, *Aboukir* and *Cressy*, sunk by the submarine U9 on 22 September 1914. After the first two were sunk, the submarine surfaced and was fired on, but, in a manner that would have been inconceivable later in the war, the commanding officer of HMS *Cressy* stopped his ship to pick up survivors, and paid the price as his ship was then an easy target and was sunk.<sup>36</sup> The sense of shock to the service was increased by the knowledge that between the three ships, thirteen cadets as young as fifteen were lost. They had been embarked from the naval colleges as part of the war mobilisation.<sup>37</sup>

The only superficially similar episode in the Second World War was the sinking of HMS *Courageous* in September 1939. This was actually a higher command failure rather than being due to a peacetime mindset,<sup>38</sup> although inexperience in the tactical handling of an aircraft carrier and her destroyer screen played a part.<sup>39</sup> The Royal Navy does not appear to have had any problem with the psychological transition to war. Obviously, coming as it did twenty years after the First World War, there were many officers both senior and passed over lieutenant commanders who had served in the earlier war and had first hand knowledge and experience. As was described in the previous chapter, there had been two major war ‘scares’ and in addition the navy was, as it were, in a ringside seat for another – the Spanish Civil War. It takes time for the reality of war, its true *schrecklichkeit*,<sup>40</sup> to sink in, and these exposures to war will have prepared the navy psychologically for war. This would have had significant resonances for older officers. Despite the term having originated in the German army to describe their own behaviour in Belgium in the First World War, Hankey believed that their ‘misdeeds at sea’ during that war had had greater effect on naval perceptions of German behaviour.<sup>41</sup> Thus it is worth looking at some aspects of the early stages of the war in a

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<sup>35</sup> Lawrence Freedman, *Whitehall Histories: Government Official History series – The Official History of the Falklands Campaign: II War and Diplomacy*, (Abingdon: Routledge 2005) p. 299.

<sup>36</sup> E.H.H. Archibald, *The Fighting Ship of the Royal Navy AD 897–1984*, (New York: Military Press, 1987) p. 197.

<sup>37</sup> Jane Harrold and Richard Porter, *Britannia Royal Naval College Dartmouth* p. 112. Their parents were still paying the Admiralty £50 per annum.

<sup>38</sup> The ship was being mis-employed over the objections of the First Sea Lord, DCNS and DASW. In the words of the originator of the scheme ‘like a cavalry division ... to systematically search large areas over a wide front’ for submarines which rather betrays his lack of understanding of sea power. See Robin Brodhurst, *Churchill’s Anchor* pp 127-8.

<sup>39</sup> S.W. Roskill, *The War at Sea 1939-1945: The Defensive*, (Uckfield: Naval and Military Press, 2004) pp. 105-6.

<sup>40</sup> Literally ‘frightfulness’. See Barbara Tuchman *The Guns of August* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1994) p.378.

<sup>41</sup> Lord Hankey, *The Supreme Command 1914 – 1918*, (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1961) p. 352.

little detail, not from the politico-military or material viewpoint, but from the personnel aspect, particularly of the officers.

### Ethos and Morale

Throughout this thesis there has been a tacit thread that the Royal Navy was consciously an organisation apart from society in general, but still very much a part of it. Unlike many military organisations in other countries, it did not regard itself as superior to the rest of society,<sup>42</sup> but had a very strong belief that came close to arrogance that the Royal Navy was better than other navies (despite its material weaknesses) combined with an understated patriotism. Illustrative of the feeling of being part of society is that naval officers regarded uniform as being work clothes. Unlike most other countries' armed forces, naval officers would prefer on social occasions to wear civilian clothing ('plain clothes'), this despite the importance ascribed to uniform.<sup>43</sup> This tended to reduce the visibility of the service outside naval ports, adding to the mystique of the 'Silent Service'. Despite this separation or possibly because of it and, despite all its tribulations during the inter war period, as it entered the Second World War the Royal Navy was 'still endowed by the man in the street with a mysterious aura of infallibility'.<sup>44</sup> This belief in itself was mirrored by others well placed to know that it was still a superior fighting navy which went beyond being a matter of emotional belief, and continued into the Second World War. Prysor quotes an army chaplain at Dunkirk 'Never was a prayer more heartfelt than the one "Thank God we've got a Navy"'.<sup>45</sup>

As was said in the introduction, morale is difficult to assess even contemporaneously, let alone at a remove of seventy years or more. With that caveat, the indications are that as it entered the Second World War, the morale of the service was extremely good and it would appear that this was due to its belief that the Royal Navy was, man for man, better than its opponents. This varied from the enthusiasm of a midshipman, the future Admiral of the Fleet Sir Henry Leach when asked by his father the commanding officer of HMS *Prince of Wales* about the Japanese threat in early

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<sup>42</sup> The *Schutzstaffel* (SS) in Germany was an extreme example.

<sup>43</sup> 'Withdrawal of plain clothes privileges', i.e. requiring an officer to wear uniform ashore (outside a ship or naval establishment) was a punishment. See Quintin Colville 'Jack Tar and the Gentleman Officer: The role of Uniform in shaping the Class- and Gender-related identities of British Naval Personnel, 1930-1939' *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society* 13 (2003) pp. 105-29 for a discussion of the social aspects of uniform.

<sup>44</sup> Angus Calder, *The People's War: Britain 1939-1945*, (London: Pimlico, 1992) p. 60.

<sup>45</sup> Glyn Prysor, *Citizen Sailors: The Royal Navy in the Second World War*, (London: Viking, 2011) p.76.

December 1941, said ‘ “Let ’em come, ... Lets have a crack at them” ’<sup>46</sup> to the more measured view expressed by others such as Pound (then Commander in Chief Mediterranean) in a letter dated 24 August 1938 to Chatfield. Discussing the threat posed by the Italian Navy, said ‘I think our opinion of their efficiency ... [was that they are] just second rate.’<sup>47</sup> More dispassionate observers shared the navy’s perception of itself. Admiral Wilhelm Canaris, head of the German *abwehr* (military intelligence), had fought the Royal Navy in the First World War both as an officer in surface ships and later as a submariner. After being told by Ribbentrop<sup>48</sup> that the Italians would be ‘an exceptional threat to the British’ he remarked ‘Listen, if the great Mediterranean naval battle does come off, we’ll sit there on a raft and watch the ‘Beefs’ cut the ‘Italianos’ to pieces’.<sup>49</sup> Canaris as was well placed to know the material conditions of both navies, and know and understand the importance of the moral component. In the case of the former, the Royal Navy did not match the *Regia Marina*; but it is not just how good the ships and equipment are, ultimately it is the people, and how they handle and use the ships and equipment, who decide battles; the moral component that made the all important difference, as it had for centuries.

When the rapid expansion of the Second World War came, crucially the navy was able to maintain its ethos, and far more importantly, imbue those who temporarily joined it with the naval ethos and the naval way of doing things. A large part of the indoctrination, and that is what it was, fell to the ‘dug outs’, the retired officers. Most of them did not serve at sea (although many retired admirals served as convoy commodores; that is taking charge of the merchant ships in a convoy, and coming under the orders of the escort commander, often a lieutenant commander) but filled vital shore appointments in training establishments, shore bases and on various staffs. They were working with willing material, the ‘temporary officers’ who having joined the navy, wanted to be like the Royal Navy, became:

more ‘pusser’<sup>50</sup> than the most proud RN, whose years in the service were to be a lifelong memory and boast, whose ships had been run with an almost pathetic adoration of ‘naval practices’. Did a ship do her job better with officers in uniform and not old striped jerseys? With crews who handled ropes without cigarettes sticking from their lips or tucked behind their ears? I don’t know, I know we – most of us – got most damnably stiff with anyone who sneered at

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<sup>46</sup> Admiral of the Fleet Sir Henry Leach, *Endure No Makeshifts: Some Naval Recollections* ,(London: Leo Cooper, 1993) p.7.

<sup>47</sup> Robin Brodhurst, *Churchill’s Anchor* p. 108.

<sup>48</sup> German foreign minister.

<sup>49</sup> Heinz Höhne (trans: J. Maxwell Brownjohn), *Canaris*, (London: Secker and Warburg, 1979) p.343.

<sup>50</sup> See glossary.

navy ways, and we puffed up like pigeons when one of these elderly gentlemen congratulated us on a smart ship. We even went to Base Church Parades and laughed like a drain if another ship committed some small crime against what we knew was real navy style. Our younger, dandier members started wearing a certain sort of white collar and showing an inch of white shirt cuff, and pretty soon, except for our wavy stripes, no one would have known us from the real McCoy.<sup>51</sup>

The foregoing was written by an RNVR officer about the early part of the war. By 1944 an escort group commander voiced the complaint (talking of his ships' commanding officers, all RNVR) that '[t]hey were terribly serious, and inclined to be worried over such matters as the correct way to fill up forms and make returns'.<sup>52</sup> His officers had become totally navalised.

The Royal Navy's greatest achievement during the war was that it expanded its officer corps from 9,762 (excluding Marines) in January 1939<sup>53</sup> to 57,682 by June 1943,<sup>54</sup> but in doing maintained the ethos of the original organisation; indeed it managed, in the modern idiom, to lift its game. 'The speeding up of Naval expansion is due simply to the unexpected course the war [took]'.<sup>55</sup> By November 1940 the navy was expanding by about 11,000 personnel a month, and for manpower planning purposes was assuming that it would at any given time have 3,000 officer candidates. It was anticipated in December 1940 the navy would by 31 March 1942<sup>56</sup> have a Vote Aof 490,000,<sup>57</sup> which a senior civil servant minuted was 'an all-time record.'<sup>58</sup> No naval service had ever managed this before in recent history, indeed the only parallel in history, if one existed, was probably the vast expansion of the Roman Navy during the First Punic War.<sup>59</sup> The United States Navy was to manage a similar expansion during the Second World War on a larger scale but starting later and certainly gained from the Royal Naval experience, if not in matters of psychological transition to war.<sup>60</sup> Prysor

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<sup>51</sup> Peter Dawlish, 'Those Charming Old Gentlemen' in John Winton (ed.), *Freedom's Battle: The War at Sea 1939-1945*, (London: Arrow Books, 1971) p.98.

<sup>52</sup> D.A. Rayner, *Escort: The Battle of the Atlantic*, (London: First Futura, 1974) p.211.

<sup>53</sup> Brian Lavery, *In Which They Served: The Royal Navy Officer Experience in the Second World War*, (London: Conway, 2008) p.23.

<sup>54</sup> S. W. Roskill, *The War at Sea 1939-1945: The Offensive Part 1*, (Uckfield: Naval and Military Press, 2004) p. 9. He gives a suspiciously round number of 10,000 for the strength at the outbreak of war.

<sup>55</sup> ADM 116/4609 Minute by Head of PM dated 8 November 1940.

<sup>56</sup> The end of the financial year.

<sup>57</sup> Total numbers of active uniformed personnel in the Royal Navy authorised by the Treasury.

<sup>58</sup> ADM 116/4609. Minute by 'George Dunn' Head of N dated 10 December 1940.

<sup>59</sup> Adrian Goldsworthy, *The Fall of Carthage: The Punic Wars 265-146BC*, (London: Phoenix, 2006) p.105.

<sup>60</sup> While the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbour was by itself all the USN needed to make the psychological transition from peace to war, but had already lost a ship to a U-boat attack, the USS *Reuben James*, on 'neutrality' duties in the Atlantic.

makes the point that during this expansion ‘[t]he navy maintained a consistently good image, cultivating and benefitting from [a] perception of ‘prestige’’.<sup>61</sup>

### RNVR and RNVSR

While, as Lavery records,<sup>62</sup> the yachting press ‘did not expect the new reservists [the RNVSR] to feature largely in the war’, making particular reference to the ‘amateur ‘mosquito fleet’’. The reality was to prove very different. From the earliest days of the war, there was an acute shortage of officers. They were needed immediately for numerous small patrol craft. The shortage is exemplified by the short life under the white ensign of HMS *Compeadour*, previously a private steam yacht which:

was commissioned for patrol service by Commander C.H. Davey OBE, Master of the Dartmoor Foxhounds, and the three sub-lieutenants RNVR appointed to her were Mr McAndrew, the owner, Mr C.E. Turner, a docks superintendent, and a retired Surgeon Rear-Admiral [SRA] J.R. Muir. The youngest of these men was aged fifty-eight and the oldest sixty-seven.<sup>63</sup>

*Compeadour* was to spend eighty four of the first ninety five days of the war at sea, before being lost. One feature of the RNVR was that it had among its officers many like SRA Muir aged over sixty who were serving in the RNVR while on the retired list of the Royal Navy. Officers on the retired list younger than sixty were recalled to service, but not necessarily in the rank they had previously held. The most famous example was Admiral Bertram Ramsay, who had resigned before the war as a Rear Admiral and after recall served with very great distinction.<sup>64</sup>

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<sup>61</sup> Glyn Pryor ‘Morale at Sea: Personnel Policy and Operational Experience in the British Navy, 1939-45’ Unpublished PhD Thesis, University of Oxford, 2007 p.60.

<sup>62</sup> Brian Lavery, *In Which They Served: The Royal Navy Officer Experience in the Second World War*, (London: Conway, 2008) p.19.

<sup>63</sup> The Times 23 July 1940 ‘The Gallant Little *Compeadour*’ in John Winton (ed.) *Freedom’s Battle: The War at Sea 1939-1945* (London: Arrow Books, 1970) p. 83-4.

<sup>64</sup> He commanded Operations *Dynamo* (evacuation from Dunkirk) as Flag Officer Dover, the maritime components of Operation *Torch* (North African Landings) Operation *Husky* (Sicily Landings) and

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Fig. 31. This is illustrative of the degree to which RNVR officers came to predominate at junior levels. The photograph taken later in the war of a group of aircrew on an aircraft carrier flight deck shows only one regular officer. The rest are RNVR. By 1945 there were 121 Air branch Lt Cdrs RN and 282 Lieutenants but 2,248 Air branch Lieutenants RNVR (Illustration from Ron Mackay *Britain's Fleet Air Arm in World War II* (Atglen, PA: Schiffer Military History, 2005) p.205.)

Prysor makes the point when discussing the training of RNVR officers, that, unlike army officers who were taught to eschew initiative:

not only were naval officers expected to be resourceful, but ratings were inculcated with the values of individual and collective responsibility, pragmatism and an overriding work ethic that was closely tied to the portrayal of the wider 'customs' and ethos of the service.<sup>65</sup>

RNVR officers were being moulded to the service, becoming part of it, and were expected to show the all important facet of an officer, initiative, when required. They were adapting to the service, not *vice versa*.

Mention must be made of the matter of social class which continued to have some importance. In a passage which harks back to the earlier consideration of poor officers who would be carried by the lower deck because he 'was a proper gentleman.' Nicholas Monsarrat (who as Lieutenant and Lieutenant Commander Monsarrat RNVR commanded a sloop and two frigates) writing during the Second World War considered:

what to do with a really useless rating of this sort – i.e. a 'gent' who simply does not satisfy naval standards of seamanship. Sooner or later you have to send in a

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Operation *Neptune* the maritime component of the D-Day landings in Normandy in 1944 and was promoted, on the retired list.

<sup>65</sup> Glyn Prysor, 'Morale at Sea' p 74.

report on him – an honest report which decides his future sphere of usefulness. To keep him in the ship as an A.B. is to keep so much dead wood; the status of officer might just enable him to pull his weight. But is promotion to be on these lines? Should good manners and lack of a localized accent draw the attention and give a man such pull? Surely it should be the best *sailors* who are advanced to commissions, rather than men of gentle birth, about whose naval future one is in despair.<sup>66</sup>

### The test of war; the early stages

The ultimate test of a Navy is war. If the performance of the Royal Navy and its officer corps in the early months of the Second World War is assessed there are few surprises. Indeed the Admiralty would justifiably have looked at its performance with quiet satisfaction. Having had what amounted to a full blown rehearsal of war mobilisation the year before, the early phases of the expansion of the officer corps had gone smoothly with a lot of evidence of advance detailed planning.<sup>67</sup> Convoys had been instituted and escorted within two months of the outbreak of war,<sup>68</sup> the Battle of the River Plate had been a ‘brilliant action’.<sup>69</sup> The Mediterranean remained peaceful as did the Far East.<sup>70</sup> This phase of the war therefore can be said to have demonstrated that the system worked as intended.

What in retrospect was a preliminary to the Norwegian campaign, the *Altmark* episode, had been well handled. In particular, individual officers of HMS *Cossack* performed well, and importantly were seen by the wider service and the public to have done so. The boarding, reminiscent as it was of an earlier age, was bound to have impacted on officer morale across the fleet, improved by judicious news management. The sentence ‘The Navy’s here’<sup>71</sup> became, in modern terminology, a ‘strapline’ for the service over the next few years conflict, requiring, as it did, many evacuations to be carried out by the navy.

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<sup>66</sup> Nicholas Monsarrat, *Three Corvettes*, (London: Cassell Military Paperbacks, 1975) pp. 49-50. The named book was originally published during the war in three parts. The edition quoted anthologises a lot of his writing both autobiographical and fictional.

<sup>67</sup> D.A. Rayner, *Escort: The Battle of the Atlantic*, (London: Futura, 1975) p.27.

<sup>68</sup> Malcolm Llewellyn-Jones, *The Royal Navy and Anti-Submarine Warfare 1917-49*, (Abingdon: Routledge, 2006) p.17.

<sup>69</sup> Winston S. Churchill, *The Second World War: The Gathering Storm*, (London: Cassell & Co, 1948) p. 410.

<sup>70</sup> The latter in terms of what was happening to American and European interests.

<sup>71</sup> Harry Plevy, *Destroyer Actions* p. 91.

The Norwegian campaign was probably the last fought almost exclusively by Royal Navy officers as at that point the numbers of RNR and RNVR officers serving in the ships involved was limited. Most ships involved had been in peacetime commission. There were actually very few RNVR officers available. The August 1939 Navy List shows only fifty one RNVR lieutenant commanders (six of them ex-Royal Navy) and 105 lieutenants. The expansion had started but had yet to produce significant numbers of trained officers.

During the campaign, ships and their officers were exposed to serious air attack for the first time. Despite the perceptions of some,<sup>72</sup> the navy was very well aware of the air threat, and had, within the limited funding possible invested quite heavily in anti-air warfare.<sup>73</sup> Brodhurst has suggested that that it was under air attack in Norwegian waters that the navy was forced to display initiative.<sup>74</sup> This view cannot be supported because, if correct, it requires one of two things: either the Royal Navy was really a mission command organisation all the time, and threw off the cloak of directed command in the twinkling of an eye; or it went through the fastest transformation of organisational thinking in military, indeed human, history. The former is possible, the latter is so unlikely, indeed impossible, as not to warrant further examination. Naval officers were placed in situations where they were required to display initiative. They had been trained to do so, and did. Thus, during the Norwegian campaign, the officers, as well as courage and their 'well deserved reputation for skill and aggression'<sup>75</sup> allied this with initiative. An example of both was of Lieutenant Commander Roope winning (posthumously) the first naval Victoria Cross of the war in command of HMS *Glowworm* fighting a single ship action against a far superior enemy.<sup>76</sup>

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<sup>72</sup> Correlli Barnett, *Engage The Enemy More Closely: The Royal Navy in the Second World War*, (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1991) pp.101-2.

<sup>73</sup> As well as developing radar specifically for air defence, see Derek Howse, *Radar at Sea: The Royal Navy in World War 2*, (London: Macmillan, 1993) p.21; and the multiple pom-pom close range anti-aircraft weapon the surviving 'C' class cruisers had been modified as anti-aircraft ships and the 'Dido' class with a new dual purpose (i.e. anti-air and anti-surface) weapon, the 5.25 inch gun were building. See E.H.H. Archibald, *The Fighting Ship of the Royal Navy AD 897-1984*, (New York: Military Press, 1987) pp. 209-11; John Roberts, *British Warships of the Second World War* (London: Chatham Publishing, 2000) pp. 82-89; John Campbell, *Naval Weapons of World War Two*, (London: Conway Maritime, 2002) pp 44-6 and 71-3.

<sup>74</sup> Robin Brodhurst, 'Admiral Sir Dudley Pound 1939-1943' in Malcolm H. Murfett (ed.) *The First Sea Lords: From Fisher to Mountbatten* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 1995) p. 187.

<sup>75</sup> Stephen Badsey, 'The German Invasion of Norway: Operation Weserübung, April 1940', in Tristan T.A. Lovering (ed.), *Amphibious Assault: Manoeuvre from the Sea - Amphibious Operations from the last century*, (Royal Navy: Crown Copyright, 2005) p.82.

<sup>76</sup> Although it was not gazetted until after the war. Interestingly it was the commanding officer of the German *Hipper* who had recommended him for the award.



Levy, discussing this period, praised the initiative of the Home Fleet saying that the ‘willingness of junior commanders to think for themselves and fight any enemy they encountered suffused the Home Fleet’ and its leadership singling out four ‘junior commanders’ as showing ‘dash and determination in the face of the enemy, and their aggressive spirits helped gain and maintain the moral ascendancy the Royal Navy established over the *Kriegsmarine*.’<sup>77</sup>

Another factor, not often noted, is the ready co-operation with the other services. Obviously as the Fleet Air Arm had been part of the Royal Air Force until very recently, the navy was used to operating with its sister service, so while they had perforce to operate unfamiliar aircraft, operating with another service was well known to them. However, the ready and willing co-operation with the army shown throughout the Norwegian campaign was so effortless as to make it unremarkable.<sup>78</sup> It is only when the Royal Navy is compared with the navies of other nations, the German and the Japanese in particular,<sup>79</sup> (and also US army/navy co-operation in the early stages of the Pacific war)<sup>80</sup> who repeatedly showed a failure of inter-service co-operation at all levels, does this flexibility, particularly at the junior officer level, become apparent. Throughout the Norwegian campaign and despite command and control failures which originated at the politico-military interface, the officer corps performed well, and they showed originality of thought and action. This was still within the bounds largely of what they had been trained for although the amphibious aspects had not been a major feature of inter-war training.

While the Norwegian campaign was still in progress, the German invasion of France and the Low Countries commenced. The result from the navy’s point of view was a series of opposed amphibious evacuations, commencing with that from Dunkirk and continuing over succeeding weeks along the northern French coast. ‘Dunkirk’ or

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<sup>77</sup> James P. Levy, *The Royal Navy’s Home Fleet in World War II*, (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003) p.159.

<sup>78</sup> Stephen Badsey, ‘The German Invasion of Norway: Operation Weserubung, April 1940’, in Tristan T.A. Lovering (ed.), *Amphibious Assault: Manoeuvre from the Sea - Amphibious Operations from the last century*, (Royal Navy: Crown Copyright, 2005) p.83-4.

<sup>79</sup> Christopher Page, ‘The Planned Invasion of Great Britain: Operation SeaLion, July 1940’, in Tristan T.A. Lovering (ed.), *Amphibious Assault: Manoeuvre from the Sea - Amphibious Operations from the last century*, (Royal Navy: Crown Copyright, 2005) p.88; Arthur J. Marder, *Old Friends, New Enemies: The Royal Navy and the Imperial Japanese Navy – Strategic Illusions, 1936 -1941*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1981) pp. 291-2.

<sup>80</sup> Colin Bruce ‘Guadacanal: Operation WATCHTOWER, August 1942’ in T.T.A. Lovering (ed.) *Amphibious Assault: Manoeuvre from the Sea Amphibious Operations from the Last Century* (Royal Navy: Crown Copyright, 2005) p.157.

rather Operation *Dynamo* was a major test of the navy's flexibility, particularly of its officers, and the arrangements made for the expansion, both by recall of officers from the retired list and embodiment of the RNVR/RNVSR. Flag Officer Dover, in a new subordinate command,<sup>81</sup> was a 'dug out', Admiral Ramsay was responsible for the operation. The story is well known and has become part of what is now almost the mythology of 1940.<sup>82</sup> The features of note were, as Roskill says that 'the command arrangements worked smoothly ... the rapid movement of forces from one command to another during this period provides an excellent example of flexibility in the exercise of maritime power.'<sup>83</sup> The navy used all the available vessels that were in any way suitable to evacuate allied troops, but a heavy burden fell on destroyers and their crews. These ships had been designed as deep water escorts to a battle-fleet and to attack enemy surface units and their officers had been trained accordingly. During the evacuation, they operated in shallow waters, close inshore to carry out an opposed evacuation, all the while under continuous and heavy air attack. The various naval parties ashore<sup>84</sup> coordinated ship movements and the embarkation of troops. The evacuation marked the first appearance in any substantial numbers of RNVR and RNR officers. They were taken from their training courses and sent to officer the ships commandeered for the evacuation.<sup>85</sup> They were from the first expected to show initiative and leadership. The example of Midshipman Bryce of HMS *Fitzroy* who was ordered ashore in the ships motorboat by his captain 'Mid, I want you to bring off the British Army, got it?' is illustrative. Dunkirk showed that naval officers had been trained to think for themselves and to lead. The latter was of vital importance when organising tired, demoralised and often disorganised troops on the beaches; Midshipman Bryce 'found it necessary to fire his pistol in the air to maintain discipline'. For his part in the evacuation, he was decorated with the DSC; at eighteen years of age he was one of the youngest recipients of this award.<sup>86</sup>

The picture that emerges from these early episodes of the maritime war is of a navy which managed the transition to war with barely a hiccup, and successfully

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<sup>81</sup> To Commander in Chief, the Nore.

<sup>82</sup> For a good recent account of the Dunkirk campaign and evacuation see Hugh Sebag-Montefiore, *Dunkirk: Fight to the Last Man*, (London: Viking, 2006).

<sup>83</sup> S.W. Roskill, *The War at Sea 1939-1945: Volume 1 The Defensive*, (Uckfield: Naval and Military Press, 2004) p.207.

<sup>84</sup> Which included Commodore Stephenson, and Captain Tennant, who would command HMS *Repulse* when she was sunk in the South China Sea.

<sup>85</sup> Brian Lavery, *In which They Served* p.35.

<sup>86</sup> Anon 'Ian Bryce: Midshipman who helped rescue hundreds from Dunkirk...' (obituary) *Daily Telegraph* 19 January 2012.

prosecuted a very different war to any that could have been reasonably be anticipated. It showed originality and initiative at all levels, and did this while embodying a volunteer reserve element and imbuing them with the ethos of the service, vital for its fighting ability. This last seems to have been almost ignored; published accounts make little of the trainers, concentrating on the trainees. It should not be forgotten that as stated earlier, at any given time in the early years of the war, the navy was training 3000 officers, that is equivalent to 30% of its officer strength at the outbreak of war. That would have been an immense task by itself, let alone while fighting a war.

### Manning and Ship Command

It has been postulated that the way the navy managed its commanding officers was a weakness. Thus it is appropriate to examine how the navy viewed command in the context of an officer's career. It has already been noted that one feature of the careers of specialist officers (with exception of submarine specialists) was that they did not achieve command as early as their contemporaries who remained in or reverted to general service.<sup>87</sup> However, it is the accepted wisdom that 'in the Navy the best officers were chosen for sea command, which was the only route to flag rank.'<sup>88</sup> Examination of Second Sea Lords personnel records of officers who entered the service between the two World Wars shows that actually neither assertion is true. There were many specialist executive officers who achieved the rank of captain, that is they had been selected for further promotion twice, surely evidence of a successful career, who never commanded a ship.<sup>89</sup> Of those who did, it is surprising how many served through the war and only had their first command very late in the Second World War, as late as 1945, or after the war had concluded. It is not as though they were being given command as a consolation prize; one officer, a gunnery specialist who had been promoted captain in 1942 and ultimately retired as a vice admiral was only appointed to his first sea going command in 1946.<sup>90</sup> One navigation specialist (not part of the study), had an eventful war including being awarded the DSC and eventually rose to vice admiral, and never held a ship command.<sup>91</sup> However, non-specialist salt horse officers were appointed to command even if they had already been passed over for promotion to

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<sup>87</sup> 2SLPersRec.

<sup>88</sup> N.A.M. Rodger, 'Training or Education: A Naval Dilemma over Three Centuries' in P. Hore (ed.) *Hudson Papers 1* (London: Oxford University Hudson Trust, 2001) p.23.

<sup>89</sup> Stephen Roskill, the noted historian, was one such.

<sup>90</sup> 2SLPersRec.

commander.<sup>92</sup> This is further evidence that the navy between the wars did not regard command *per se* as particularly important, but believed that specialisation was. This is borne out by examining the numbers of specialists promoted against their non-specialist counterparts. Of the quinquennial cohorts, only that of 1920s midshipmen could have achieved significant numbers of selective promotions before Second World War service began to have an effect and thus they have been examined in isolation. There were 118 midshipmen. There are some distortions, some of the original number opted to become engineers at the time of the 'great betrayal', and some specialist were retained during the Geddes Axe era. The former will have removed some officers of a specialist bent, and the latter by diluting the field, will if anything have reduced the chances of specialists being promoted.

Of the 118 midshipmen sixty one became specialists (including submarine and hydrographic) which is 52%. This is slightly lower than observed across the whole period. Of those sixty one, 76% achieved selective promotion, i.e. to commander or higher, 30% to captain and six flag officers. Of the fifty seven non-specialists, 55% achieved selective promotion, only 25% to captain and none achieved flag rank.

Further scrutiny of the careers of the 1920 seniority midshipmen<sup>93</sup> shows that of the forty nine specialist officers (excluding submarine specialists) only nine had been appointed in command before the end of the Second World War. One was a hydrographic specialist, whose career path was very different anyway,<sup>94</sup> one was appointed as a commander in command of HMS *Suffolk*<sup>95</sup> in 1944 when she was not operational during refit<sup>96</sup> and two in June 1945. Eleven other specialists were appointed to their first command after the war had ended. Most tellingly, twelve specialists were promoted as far as captain, and never held a command at sea throughout during their naval career. However, fourteen general service officers, that is, non-specialists, had been appointed in command before war broke out and in addition, so had eleven submarine specialists. Four General Service officers who had held ship command were passed over for promotion from lieutenant commander.

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<sup>91</sup> Anon 'Vice-Admiral Sir John Martin: Naval officer who survived his ship being thrice blown up and held important appointments after the war' (obituary) *Daily Telegraph* 18 July 2011.

<sup>92</sup> Diaries of A/Commander Layard held by the Admiralty Library and Historical Branch.

<sup>93</sup> 2SLPersRec.

<sup>94</sup> See Appendix B.

<sup>95</sup> A heavy (8 inch gunned) County class cruiser, very much a captain's command and usually a senior captain's at that.

<sup>96</sup> A commissioned ship has to have a commanding officer.

When the 1925 seniority midshipmen are examined in detail, a similar picture emerges.<sup>97</sup> Initially there were 120 midshipmen. By the outbreak of war, all of those remaining in the service were lieutenant commanders, some with almost three years seniority; that is they were close to going into zone for promotion to commander. Seventy four undertook specialist training, of whom two failed the training course (one pilot and one observer), reverting to general service (both went on to qualify to command a destroyer). There were fifty four specialists who were non-hydrographic and non-submariner, which latter, for reasons already discussed, followed a different career route. Of the specialists, four were appointed to their first command before or during the war, one in 1938,<sup>98</sup> one in 1944 and two in 1945. Sixteen were not appointed to their first sea command until after the war, five of them not until the 1950s. Unlike the 1920 seniority midshipmen, all those who were promoted captain, were eventually appointed to command at sea.<sup>99</sup> However, all eight salt horses who had qualified for command of a destroyer were appointed to command before or during the war, and thirteen of seventeen submariners. Specialisation, in essence naval higher education, was a surer route to promotion than having commanded at sea.

This assessment of the navy's attitude to command has not been drawn solely from studies of officers' careers. An S206 written by a captain on a lieutenant in 1943 suggests that having held a command was not seen as being beneficial to an officer's career. The officer on whom the report was written achieved good marks and was recommended for promotion. The text of the report reads, in part:

Keen on the Navy and wishes to specialise in signals for which he is strongly recommended. A pleasant personality and a good messmate. Has suffered a little from being in command of an M.T.B at a very early age, but is overcoming this.<sup>100</sup>

Rear Admiral Tennant, the second reporting officer concurred with the report. It is difficult to conceive of how having held command of a warship can be seen to be a disadvantage to an officer, but it obviously was, and that by a captain with the agreement of a rear admiral.

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<sup>97</sup> 2SLPersRec.

<sup>98</sup> A signals specialist who also qualified for command of a destroyer.

<sup>99</sup> In fact one was not, but he was promoted captain over zone and retired on age the same day.

<sup>100</sup> 2SLPersRec.

Of even more importance than the shortage of officers was the shortage of commanding officers for small ships. The 'Fisher' career path for specialists ensured that there was an ample supply of potential commanding officers for larger ships, that is cruisers and above, but the reliance on the non-specialist officers to provide the necessary numbers of commanding officers to meet wartime needs proved inadequate. Not only did this affect the very small patrol vessels, such as HMS *Compeadour* mentioned earlier, but also ocean escorts.

Rayner described how he was originally 'selected' for command. He was a pre-war RNVR navigation specialist who had done an anti-submarine course, foreshortened by the Munich crisis. The incomplete training programme he had undertaken during his annual training was supposed to fit him to be a 'Unit Commander' in a group of five trawlers earmarked to be converted at the outbreak of war for anti-submarine duties.<sup>101</sup> The intention was that there were to be two such unit commanders under a 'Group Commander' who would be a retired Royal Navy officer recalled to duty.<sup>102</sup> On the outbreak of war the then Lieutenant Commander Rayner was appointed to the Royal Naval Patrol Service base at Lowestoft to:

the key position of Drafting Officer<sup>103</sup> ... As assistant I had Lieutenant Lord Churston RNVR. For a week we drafted crews to the minesweeping trawlers ... Lord Churston and I would have shown the character and self-denial of saints had we not taken advantage of our peculiar position. We set about collecting five good ships' companies for our own group intending ... to choose our ships ... and then to draft ourselves and them together. After all we had come to fight a war ... We fixed our own reliefs and went to say goodbye to Commander Gardiner and the Captain. 'But you can't do that ...' Apparently it had occurred to no one that two young men in our position would help ourselves.<sup>104</sup>

Rayner was then continuously in command at sea (including being sunk commanding HMS *Warwick*) for five years and two months. It might be thought that 'proper' Royal Naval ships would be well catered for. Even with the appalling losses of destroyers (thirty three had been lost by the end of 1940), forty new ships had been launched, and commanding officers were in short supply, so much so that by the end of 1940 one commanding officer – Lieutenant Commander Burnell-Nugent - had had three destroyers sunk under him.<sup>105</sup> That the shortage of commanding officers continued at

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<sup>101</sup> In 1938 this period had been lengthened to four weeks.

<sup>102</sup> D.A. Rayner, *Escort* p.21.

<sup>103</sup> Drafting is the administrative process by which ratings are allocated to ships etc.

<sup>104</sup> D.A. Rayner, *Escort* pp. 28-31.

<sup>105</sup> HM Ships *Havant*, *Hostile* and *Jersey*. See Arthur S. Evans, *Destroyer Down: An Account of HM Destroyer Losses 1939-1945*, (Barnsley: Pen & Sword Maritime, 2010) p. 57.

least as far as the beginning of 1944 is evidenced by the experience of (then) Lieutenant Commander Donald. He was the commanding officer of HMS *Ulster* damaged when operating in support of the amphibious landing at Anzio. She was sent to Malta for repairs, during which the ship's company could expect to have some time for recreation and recuperation. Donald however was immediately temporarily transferred to command HMS *Tyrian* whose own captain had been relieved because of illness. He was ordered to immediately sail back to the Anzio area 'until we can find another permanent C.O. for her'. When some weeks later he returned to HMS *Ulster* (having had to arrange his own transport back to Malta), she was sent back to the Anzio area. He was thus the only un-rested person on board.<sup>106</sup> It seems that the only person available to take over command of a destroyer in the western Mediterranean at that stage of the war was the commanding officer of another ship.

The shortage of commanding officers went further, ships were sent to sea inadequately officered, increasing the burden on commanding officers who had not only to fight the war, but simultaneously train their officers. Denys Rayner's memoir of the Battle of the Atlantic records that in 1939 soon after the outbreak of war he and the RNR skipper<sup>107</sup> of an anti-submarine trawler were the only two officers competent to stand a bridge watch 'and thus began our long months of 'watch and watch'.<sup>108</sup> Things were no better by 1940 when he was appointed to command a new 'Flower' class corvette HMS *Verbena*:

On the morning of commissioning<sup>109</sup> the officers arrived. Two Sub-Lieutenants RNVR and a Midshipman RNVR. They had come straight from HMS *King Alfred* the officers' training establishment, and not one of them had a watch-keeping certificate. They had all three been 'hostilities' only ratings, who had been selected from their fellows and made officers overnight. *Verbena* was the first ship in which they had served as officers.<sup>110</sup>

Not only did Rayner not have a qualified watchkeeping officer, he did not have a First Lieutenant – second in command. Thus he was to be 'watch on, stop on' at sea until he could train his officers to stand a bridge watch.<sup>111</sup> Further and far more importantly, this was a warship commissioning for war. Her captain was meeting his officers for the first time on the day that she became a part of the Fleet. He lacked

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<sup>106</sup> William Donald, *Stand by for Action*, (Barnsley: Seaforth Publishing, 2009) p.161.

<sup>107</sup> An RNR warrant rank.

<sup>108</sup> See Glossary.

<sup>109</sup> See Glossary.

<sup>110</sup> D.A. Rayner, *Escort* p. 64.

<sup>111</sup> See Glossary.

vitaly important components of the team to make his warship effective. As has been seen, at the same time, it almost appears as if the navy was protecting the careers of its permanent officers; there were many with the qualifications needed at sea whose careers were not being interrupted; they were continuing along a peacetime career path despite the war.

Nicholas Monsarrat, in his autobiography described his early experiences in HMS *Campanula*:

During the first few convoys, in mid-1940 when our officer complement had been set by a short-handed Admiralty as a Captain, a First Lieutenant and two green-as-grass Sub-Lieutenants, we had to keep watch and watch at sea – four hours on, four hours off, for day after day until the voyage was over, which could be more than a fortnight later. It meant that sleep was sliced up desperately small, and often cherished sleep itself would not come ... or else it was shattered by those hateful clanging bells which ... yanked us up to action stations ... [a]fter about six months ... it had become obvious that we were likely to drop dead ourselves if we had to go on with it. ... presently we were given, first one and then two more officers.<sup>112</sup>

It is therefore not surprising that a significant feature of published and unpublished memoirs is the stress that commanding officers felt they were subject to, and the resulting strain. Commander Layard (who had been passed over for promotion before the war) in his contemporary diary refers to the load on him as a commanding officer,<sup>113</sup> Commander Rayner describes the point at which he was unable to continue at sea in command, and Lieutenant Commander Hill who was continuously in command from December 1941 to September 1944 and was passed over for promotion, finishes his memoir ‘– I was expendable’.<sup>114</sup> (His memoir starts without further explanation: ‘I have wanted to write this book ever since I came out of hospital in 1946, a year after World War II was over.’) Lieutenant Commander Donald in June 1944, having been continuously in command from January 1941, had got to the point that he ‘began to worry unduly about the prospects of handling the ship. It was clearly my duty to be asked to be relieved of my command’.<sup>115</sup> It is not the purpose of this thesis to examine the weight of responsibility that came with command or its effects on those who exercised ship command, but rather to note that it existed, and that commanding officers

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<sup>112</sup> Nicholas Monsarrat, *Life is a Four-Letter Word: Breaking out*, (London: Cassell, 1970) pp. 8-9. He was one of the ‘green as grass sub-lieutenants’.

<sup>113</sup> Diaries of A/Commander Layard RN. Admiralty Library and Historical Branch.

<sup>114</sup> Roger Hill, *Destroyer Captain*, (London: Granada Publishing, 1979) p. 294.

<sup>115</sup> William Donald, *Stand by for Action* p.188.



were pushed to the limits of their personal endurance and beyond, apparently because officers capable of doing the job were in short supply.

There are two possible reasons for keeping experienced and capable commanding officers at sea in command to the point at which they broke. Possibly management laziness; essentially, why change something that is working? Far more likely is that the navy did not have enough good quality commanding officers. This is borne out by published memoirs. Vice Admiral Macdonald in his memoir covering his service at sea during the Second World War as a lieutenant recounts his experiences of his commanding officer to whom he assigns the pseudonym 'Honk'. From MacDonald's account this officer had grave personality failings and professional inadequacies to the point that his officers were *en masse*, at one point, a knock on an admiral's door away from mutiny.<sup>116</sup> 'Honk' remained at sea and went to a further command subsequently. While he was a salt horse, as the war wore on, there are numerous anecdotes about specialist executive branch officers being appointed in command and not measuring up. A good example was recorded by the future Admiral of the Fleet Sir Henry Leach who described one such in HMS *Javelin*, a destroyer, in 1944:

The Commanding Officer was a complex character. A regular naval officer with pre-war experience in big ships he was clever, precise, petulant but perhaps somewhat lacking in human understanding. He had considerable knowledge of how to do things 'by the book' but his intuition and initiative were less well developed. He was a little unsure of himself and, it being his first command, he could have been forgiven for this had it not been for his failure to conceal it from his Ship's Company. He lived on his nerves and was not a natural ship handler. Later we discovered that his contemporaries had nicknamed him 'The Sheep'.<sup>117</sup>

Roger Hill recounts another example, and gives the explanation. In mid-1944 his ship was at anchor when he went on deck in driving rain:

I discovered the majority of the ships company lining the rails.  
'What on earth are you doing out in this rain?' I asked the nearest group ....  
'It's better than any circus, sir' a young able seaman replied, 'the ...[sic] coming to buoy'.<sup>118</sup>

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<sup>116</sup> Roderick Macdonald, *The Figurehead: A Story of Conflict and Loyalty at Sea in World War II*, (Durham: The Pentland Press, 1993) p. 132.

<sup>117</sup> Admiral of the Fleet Sir Henry Leach, *Endure No Makeshifts: Some Naval Recollections*, (London: Leo Cooper, 1993) pp. 42-3.

<sup>118</sup> This requires the ship to approach the buoy and lower a boat with a man known as a 'buoy jumper' who will secure the anchor cable (minus anchor) to the buoy to moor the ship.

This was one of the new destroyers working up. ... The boat was lowered and disappeared helplessly downwind whilst the ship drifted away, everyone shouting and gesticulating.

Here was a change. In the olden days, first lieutenants of destroyers became captains and captains moved to bigger and newer ships. Now there was a new type of destroyer captain – the staff officers, getting in their sea time before the war was over. Some were all right,<sup>119</sup>

In fact the problem was far deeper than that. The whole structure of officer careers regarding accession to command was flawed. The point has been made that it was entirely possible, indeed approaching the norm, for specialist officers to reach the rank of captain without holding a command at sea. A typical example of an officer who was obviously seen as a ‘highflyer’ with the potential to reach flag rank was Captain Rory Chambers O’Conor.<sup>120</sup> He had entered the navy in August 1914 and from 1923 was either training to be or was employed as a gunnery specialist until 1933 when he was appointed as the executive officer of HMS *Hood*.<sup>121</sup> He had a gift for management and leadership and produced a much quoted book ‘*Running a Big Ship on Ten Commandments (with Modern Executive Ideas and a Complete Organisation)*’.<sup>122</sup> He was promoted Captain in 1936 to become the youngest captain in the Royal Navy. He was appointed to his first command, a 7000 ton Leander class cruiser, HMS *Neptune* in 1941. These ships were of 72,000 hp driving four shafts/propellers.<sup>123</sup> At that point he had minimal, if any, ship handling experience, in fact his last command experience of a powered craft had been as a midshipman handling a single screw picket boat.<sup>124</sup>

By 1943/4 the navy was very short of officers fit for command. The Royal Navy was to receive 200 Landing Ship (Tank) (LSTs) and over 1,500 Landing Craft (Tank) LCTs.<sup>125</sup> The former were of around 3000 tons displacement and had a complement of eight to ten officers, the latter 300 tons displacement with two officers. There were a plethora of other amphibious vessels, very few had names, most were known by a

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<sup>119</sup> Roger Hill, *Destroyer Captain* p.246.

<sup>120</sup> He had had service in the Royal Yacht, received good reports and early recommendations for promotion, and held good appointments as well as attending the Imperial Defence College. All would have been regarded as marking out a potential flag officer.

<sup>121</sup> Nixie Taverner, *A Torch among Tapers: The Life and Career of Captain Rory O’Conor R.N.*, (Bramber: Bernard Durnford, 2000) pp. 10-13.

<sup>122</sup> Rory O’Conor, ‘*Running a Big Ship on Ten Commandments (with Modern Executive Ideas and a Complete Organisation)*’ (London: Gieves, 1937).

<sup>123</sup> E H H Archibald, *The Fighting Ship of the Royal Navy AD 897-1984*, (New York, NY: Military Press, 1987) p. 220.

<sup>124</sup> Nixie Taverner, *A Torch among Tapers* pp. 282-3.

<sup>125</sup> Then known as ‘T.L.C.’

designating letter combination followed by a number.<sup>126</sup> They were part of the enormous amphibious armada required for the various landings undertaken by the Royal Navy and the allies in North Africa, Europe and the Far East. Each, large or small, required a commanding officer, but time was relatively short to select and train them. Brian Lavery describes the officers coming straight from officer training at HMS *King Alfred* and, after a course at the amphibious warfare school, being appointed to be the First Lieutenant of a Tank Landing Craft. Then, if recommended, they would very soon be appointed in command of such a craft.<sup>127</sup> Rather than the enthusiasm shown earlier in the war for the possibility of command described earlier by Denys Rayner, the actor Peter Bull, then a Lieutenant RNVR, recounted how, after only a few months at sea as an officer, he was told he was to commission a new LCT:

[I] was flabbergasted and begged Commander Bostock to reconsider his decision; I told him that I needed further experience ... that I had never handled a ship in restricted waters. But he pointed out that the shortage of officers was so acute that risks had to be taken.<sup>128</sup>

Bull goes on to recount his very steep learning curve in command, which included collisions major and minor. For a regular officer, a collision was a serious matter and usually led to, at the least, a formal 'Board of Inquiry', but for RNVR officers, they seem to have gone almost un-noticed. He also describes his learning command and leadership skills.<sup>129</sup> The limited training for a particular role and, by pre-war standards, the youth and junior rank of those given command were notable features of the war as it developed. An extreme example was Midshipman J.S. McIntyre RNVR who at the age of nineteen was in independent command with a ships company of twenty five. His ship was a Landing Barge (Kitchen) whose purpose was to provide food for smaller vessels off the Normandy beaches in June 1944.<sup>130</sup>

While tolerant of RNVR officers and accepting that they had to learn 'on the job', the navy had very high expectations of its regular officers and was ruthless with those who did not achieve them. A junior lieutenant before the war would have been

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<sup>126</sup> E.g. LCF 16 – Landing Craft (Flak) 16.

<sup>127</sup> Brian Lavery, *In which They Served: The Royal Navy Officer Experience in the Second World War*, (London: Conway, 2008) p. 253.

<sup>128</sup> Peter Bull, *To Sea in a Sieve*, (London: Corgi Books, 1973) p.47. Commander Bostock was obviously a shrewd judge. Peter Bull finished the war as Lieutenant Commander Bull DSC RNVR having commanded a Landing Craft flotilla.

<sup>129</sup> As well as his encounter with a staff officer who objected to his appearing on the bridge of his ship wearing red pyjamas!

<sup>130</sup> Anon 'Landing Barge (Kitchen)' in John Winton (ed.) *Freedom's Battle: The War at Sea 1939-1945* (London: Arrow Books, 1971) pp. 425-7.

highly unlikely to have held a command at sea, and if he did it would be of a single vessel. Commanding a group of warships would fall to Captain (D)<sup>131</sup> at the most junior. However under the pressure of war lieutenants were given commands, not only of single ships but of coastal forces flotillas. There are many published accounts of those who did well,<sup>132</sup> but there were those who failed. A good example was a general service lieutenant of less than five years seniority who by 1943 had already been decorated for bravery by the award of a DSC. He was appointed as the ‘Senior Officer’ of a Motor Torpedo Boat Flotilla in August 1943. This was his first command, not only was he in command of MTB252, he was to have command of the 14<sup>th</sup> MTB Flotilla, comprising at least four other MTBs. Such flotillas were based in coastal forces establishments and came under the command of that establishment’s commanding officer, in this case HMS *Aggressive* at Newhaven. While he commanded his own boat, normal practice would have been to appoint as his First Lieutenant an experienced officer who would be expected to be appointed to his own command in the relatively near future. The intention would be to relieve him of some of the load of running his own vessel to devote time to his flotilla.<sup>133</sup> Within two months, by October, the commanding officer of HMS *Aggressive* was writing of him:

he has taken no energetic steps ... his flotilla is by no means organised as a coherent whole, being just a number of individual units.

My opinion of this Officer is:-

- (a). That he greatly lacks Driving Power.
- (b). That he is of nebulous personality
- (c). That he is unsuitable for Command outside his own individual Ship.<sup>134</sup>

He was relieved of command, and was discharged from the navy on medical grounds soon after the end of the war as a lieutenant. To appoint a junior officer to his first command and the command of a flotilla at the same time was asking a lot. It suggests that the navy actually had little appreciation of what was required of a commanding officer of a ship; that it felt that command, of itself, was a relatively unimportant attribute which a junior officer should be able to undertake. What was also apparent was that the navy either did not appreciate the actual burden that command placed on officers, or it was short of officers to undertake command.

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<sup>131</sup> A captain of a flotilla of destroyers.

<sup>132</sup> See Peter Dickens, *Night Action: MTB Flotilla at War*, (Barnsley: Seaforth Publishing, 2008) for an honest and insightful description of what it was to command such a flotilla.

<sup>133</sup> It will be remembered that one of the contributing factors to the *Lucia* mutiny was that the commanding officer paid little attention to his own ship, concentrating on his attached submarine flotilla, but had a weak First Lieutenant.

This was the Royal Navy's biggest failing between the two world wars, indeed in the first half of the twentieth century, to downgrade the importance of ship command as a career stage for officers. Until Admiral Field undertook his reforms, leadership ability appears to have been assumed to be an innate class based attribute which did not need to be brought out. Officers' careers were not managed in a way to develop any leadership potential, or even identify it, if Lieutenant Commander Hill's career prior to being appointed in command in peace and war was typical (and study of the personnel records for this thesis suggest that it was). Only when the Second World War came does the Navy appear to have recognised that the mission command war it now embarked on made leadership and command ability far more important than it had been in the First World War, and that it did not have enough capable officers.

A major feature of commanding officers memoirs was the feeling that the various staffs ashore did not understand them or their problems 'about the staff ashore and it was the same old story. Last war dugouts who did not seem to understand our electronic war.'<sup>135</sup> Rayner was more nuanced. He was appreciative of the efforts of individual staff officers 'at Scapa we were blessed with a most hardworking anti-submarine officer, Lieutenant M.F. Isaac R.N., who slaved without respite to keep our asdics going.' He also realised that the staff had to see a bigger picture:

How many times had I railed against the staff officer who, shut up in the warm operations room where no winds blew, nor rain nor snow penetrated, had ordered me to take my ship down the River Foyle in a blinding snowstorm? ... Jove was at least prepared to talk.  
"I'm sorry, but I've got to have a ship at sea off Inistrahull tomorrow morning at six o'clock to take the Clyde portion of the convoy. All the convoy escorts have weather damage."<sup>136</sup>

As Rayner described it on becoming a staff officer himself, coming from command at sea:

All the Commanders on the staff were Royal Navy men<sup>137</sup>, but only held the rank of 'Acting Commander'. They were fifteen to twenty years older than myself. Most, if not all of them, had left the Navy before the war with the rank of Lieutenant-Commander, and had been given Acting Commander's rank on their recall. They were a very high powered team and had been at Fort Southwick<sup>138</sup> for the assault on Normandy.<sup>139</sup>

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<sup>134</sup> 2SLPersRec.

<sup>135</sup> Roger Hill, *Destroyer Captain* p. 127.

<sup>136</sup> D.A. Rayner, *Escort* pp.226-6.

<sup>137</sup> Rayner was an RNVR Commander, with 'qualified' status and thus senior to RN acting commanders.

<sup>138</sup> The headquarters for Operation Neptune, the maritime part of the 'D' Day landings.

<sup>139</sup> D A Rayner *Escort* p. 226.

Specialists were not given the experience of either sea service or command that fell to their general service colleagues. The Lieutenant Isaac mentioned earlier was serving on a staff doing a vital, but thankless task and his was a typical example of the career path for specialists. When in 1930 the future Admiral Horton was appointed to command HMS *Resolution*:<sup>140</sup>

[h]e sent for his Second in Command, Commander R.G. Duke, and in course of conversation told him quite candidly that the only time he had served in a battleship was as a midshipman some thirty years ago.<sup>141</sup> The Commander replied in all modesty that as he had spent the last eighteen years doing navigating duties and most of it away from the big Fleets, he felt he had a great deal to learn too.<sup>142</sup>

The position of the civilian manned CW section in controlling officers' careers has been described. To some extent they carried on almost regardless of there being a war with the peacetime policies and practices, and the possibility must be considered that the fault lay with them. However, as with all officers while the mechanics of appointing a captain was undertaken by the CW section, all captains' appointments were approved by the First Sea Lord and their careers were managed by the Naval Assistant to the Second Sea Lord, who reported directly to the First Sea Lord. Their career management was by uniformed officers. There were captains who were not appointed to sea command (a captain could otherwise only serve at sea on the staff of a flag officer). The fact that some of these officers progressed to flag rank is indicative that it was not professional inadequacy that prevented them from being given a sea command. Either specialists were far too valuable to go to sea – which, at first sight, seems ludicrous – or the navy did not see any importance *per se* in the exercise of command at sea; this could easily be devolved onto non-specialists. Thus, the widely held perception that 'the criterion for reaching the higher positions in the Royal Navy was aptitude for command at sea'<sup>143</sup> was manifestly untrue. Some of the best sea commanders,<sup>144</sup> salt horse non-specialists, were passed over for any selective promotion, let alone to higher positions, while, as has been discussed, many specialists with limited or no sea command experience were promoted to captain, and even beyond. It will be remembered from the discussion of the selection of senior officers for

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<sup>140</sup> An 'R' class battleship.

<sup>141</sup> Horton was a submarine specialist.

<sup>142</sup> Rear-Admiral W.S. Chalmers, *Max Horton and the Western Approaches: A Biography of Admiral Sir Max Kennedy Horton GCB DSO*, (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1954) p. 29.

<sup>143</sup> Arthur J. Marder, *Old Friends, New Enemies: The Royal Navy and the Imperial Japanese Navy – Strategic Illusions, 1936 -1941*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1981) p. 278.

redundancy in part 1 chapter 2 during the immediate aftermath of the First World War it was explicitly accepted that some officers promoted to captain were not suitable for command, as was also noted by the Binney committee. This was not a temporary aberration forced by the exigencies of war. It was Admiralty policy.

There is an interesting officer's report written on an officer (a specialist) serving in an aircraft carrier in the Mediterranean in 1941 which neatly illustrates this:

A very charming personality, cool collected in an emergency but lacking in drive and executive ability.

He is too good natured and cannot get a move on anyone. Very cautious and adverse to new ideas.

A good administrator and expresses himself very well on paper. He would make a good staff officer.<sup>145</sup>

The officer being reported had been a 'five-oner' as a sub lieutenant, and retired from the navy as a captain, never having held a command at sea.

There were elements in the navy beyond the civil service that appeared to regard the war as an interruption to its normal business. Many wartime reports on officers appear to judge them by peacetime standards. For example, a report on an RN commanding officer (of a submarine) by his flotilla commander, a captain:

I consider him to be a reliable commanding officer with sound judgement. In harbour he is inclined to have a somewhat plausible and self assertive manner, and his ship is not as well organised as he would give you the impression it is, though undoubtedly it is efficient, as has been shown by results. There is inclined to be a laxity in his ship in harbour, and I have had occasion to speak to him on this matter more than once. On the other hand I have never had any cause to doubt that his ship would do extremely well in action. ... Makes a better wartime commanding officer than he would a peacetime one.<sup>146</sup>

If the foregoing was the opinion of a single officer, it could be dismissed as atypical. However, a flag officer, the second reporting officer, added 'Concur'.<sup>147</sup> It is difficult to believe that a senior officer would even consider that being a peacetime commanding officer in a fighting service should be the yardstick against which being one in wartime was measured, to the detriment of the latter.

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<sup>144</sup> Judged by decorations received.

<sup>145</sup> 2SLPersRec.

<sup>146</sup> 2SLPersRec.

<sup>147</sup> 2SLPersRec.

The navy through the war continued as far as possible to allow its regular officers to choose their career path. To try and ascertain what was seen by the navy as being important, officers' confidential reports have been scrutinised, and a series of illustrative extracts follows.<sup>148</sup> Reports on officers make it difficult to divine what qualities were seen as being important for promotion and thus to be valued. The only measure can be of reading their reports and then looking at their subsequent careers.

In an earlier chapter the case of one officer directed into gunnery who eventually 'escaped' was mentioned. That was in peacetime as were the batch of observers described in the previous chapter. Otherwise, specialist training was for volunteers. This continued into wartime; one of the few officers studied who, even in wartime, was directed into a specialisation was a lieutenant who was reported on:

A good hardworking officer who has been thwarted in his ambition to be a First Lieutenant and Captain of a destroyer by being 'press ganged' in Torpedo specialisation.

He was reverted to general service after the war, never commanded a ship but was promoted Commander, then incurred 'Their Lordships' Displeasure' and was retired prematurely from the service as 'Unsuitable'.

Another lieutenant commander in command of a destroyer early in the war was described by his flotilla commander as being 'below average for his rank ... not a good leader as he lacks confidence in himself ... does not grasp essentials quickly' and his second reporting officer, Admiral Syfret, added 'erratic temperamental imbalanced type'. He was given 4 marks ['below average'] for leadership.<sup>149</sup>

However, when Admiral Vian (who had a reputation for not suffering fools at all<sup>150</sup>) reported on the same officer some months later, he was

the good tough fighting type. Quick to decide. The worst of the conditions the more cheerful he becomes. Better at sea than in harbour when he is rather inclined to let the end go ... a good seaman with a quick appreciation of any developing situation. Handles a destroyer division quickly and well. Good command a forceful personality

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<sup>148</sup> 2SLPersRec.

<sup>149</sup> 2SLPersRec.

<sup>150</sup> Alastair Wilson and Joseph F. Callo, *Who's Who in Naval History: From 1550 to the Present*, (London: Routledge, 2004) p.321.



Possibly the remark that he was ‘inclined to let the end go in harbour’<sup>151</sup> damned him, as despite his having in that short space of time been decorated three times, he was passed over for promotion.<sup>152</sup>

Some senior officers saw that career broadening was important. An admiral, head of a shore based staff, reporting on his staff communications commander in 1943 wrote that:

I requested that this officer be superseded ... because his initiative, readiness to accept responsibility and manner towards others indicate that he is of the type to make a successful senior officer and that for the good of the service he should be given the chance of proving his worth in a non-specialist appointment at sea.

He was appointed to sea as the executive officer of a major unit. His next report, made by a different superior, said that:

although he has not been to sea for over five years is proving that he has the makings of an excellent executive officer.

He was transferred out of the executive branch to the nascent electrical branch, not a part of the executive branch, but was promoted to captain.

As has been shown, command ability was apparently not highly thought of and it would appear not even fully understood by some senior officers. An officer, the commander of an escort group who was made a CBE for his efforts during Operation Husky (the invasion of Sicily), was described as having a ‘dislike of making unpopular decisions’ but was promoted captain.

An officer described in his confidential report as being ‘[i]nclined to be obstinate and argumentative’ was also described as being ‘likely to do well in higher ranks’ and was promoted and another officer, also promoted, was described by his superior thus ‘I doubt if he has the brains ever to be a brilliant staff officer ... I judge him to be a very good all-round officer likely to do well in higher ranks.’

One officer included in this study was,<sup>153</sup> very unusually, appointed to submarines rather than to a surface ship as a sub lieutenant.<sup>154</sup> He did extremely well

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<sup>151</sup> A allusion to pulling on a line, i.e. not pulling his weight; the implication being that he was less likely to enforce discipline, either personal or service.

<sup>152</sup> He was promoted on the retired list, so had a commander’s pension.

<sup>153</sup> 2SLPersRec.

and gained his watchkeeping ticket in submarines. He was appointed very early to command and distinguished himself as an aggressive and able submarine commanding officer in the Mediterranean when war broke out. He was promoted to commander on entering zone (a so called 'first shot' promotion) and continued to perform to a very high level. However, his only experience of service in a surface ship had been a period of a year in an aircraft carrier in the early 1930s. He was not promoted to captain. According to his son,<sup>155</sup> himself a captain, his father had been told that his lack of career breadth (having spent most of it in submarines), meant that he was unsuitable for promotion.

While the facts support the contention that the navy regarded staff work as more important for the prosecution of the war than exercise of sea command it obviously also placed great weight on an officer being 'well rounded' in career terms and possibly beyond, as one confidential report on a destroyer commanding officers suggests, 'sound and CO of a destroyer. Has no special aptitude for letters or the arts'<sup>156</sup> which suggests that breadth, rather than having commanded afloat, well or badly, was considered to be more important.

The picture that emerges is of a service at the beginning of the war that had reformed its officer education and training, and moved a long way from the temporary aberration of directed command, - temporary in that it had been driven by the technological changes of the late nineteenth century and the only way to command the twentieth century warships *en masse* with nineteenth century command and control systems (signals) was by rigid discipline. The how and why of this change is beyond this thesis, except as it had led to the downgrading of the importance of command. Ships moving in regimented formations had little need for initiative in their commanding officers. The result was that during this period, despite what many authors have written, the Royal Navy did not see command as the route to promotion or preferment, rather professional expertise gained by being a specialist. The changes of the latter part of the First World War and the inter-war years, primarily improved communications, had meant a move back to mission command was inevitable. The Royal Navy was unprepared for a change that required it to produce very large numbers

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<sup>154</sup> The author has found only one other instance of this occurring between the wars, when talking to Lieutenant Commander Drinkwater.

<sup>155</sup> Interview with 'Rhymer'.

<sup>156</sup> 2SLpersRec.

of officers fit for command. The result was that some officers who showed aptitude for command were driven literally to breaking point, and in some cases beyond.

However, commanding officers were a small minority of the whole navy. Looking at the whole of the Royal Navy during the Second World War morale has been examined in detail and has been convincingly shown to be high.<sup>157</sup> At two earlier points in this thesis Herzberg's hygiene theory has been used to attempt to make a qualitative analysis of officer morale, once around the end of the First World War, and once around the Invergordon mutiny. A further look at Herzberg is appropriate at the point that the executive officers of the Royal Navy entered the Second World War:

#### Hygiene Factors

Pay and Benefits	Improving
Company Policy/ Administration	Good
Relationships with co-workers	Good
Physical environment	Good

#### Motivational Factors

Achievement	Good
Recognition	Good
Work itself	Possible overload
Responsibility	Good
Promotion	Good
Growth	Good

Fig. 32. Herzberg matrix on the outbreak of war

This represents a marked improvement over the eight years since the mutiny at Invergordon. Whatever Chatfield's contribution to the material state of the navy prior to the war, he must be accorded credit for the most important change, improving the morale of the officer corps.

<sup>157</sup> Prysor, Glyn, 'Morale at Sea'.

## Chapter 2

### Conclusion: The Naval Officer on 2 September 1939

This thesis has looked at the executive branch officer of the Royal Navy between the two World Wars. It opened by looking at the officer corps on the 12 November 1918, but did so by looking back to see how an individual had been recruited, educated, trained and moulded into becoming a naval officer. In the First World War, ‘the Navy prevailed and that it did was a testament to its officers and men’.<sup>1</sup> It then looked at how the executive officer corps had changed and developed, both passively and actively between the wars. The thesis came close to a conclusion by looking at him again at the outbreak of war and looking forward into the war to see how he performed, how well he and the navy had been served by his training, education and moulding between the wars, and how the officers who had been through the First World War had adapted to the very changed warfare of the latter war.

This thesis has argued that the generic executive officer at the end of the First World War had been well educated (and that deficiencies due to wartime service had been addressed in an imaginative and original manner) and trained. He was an extremely capable officer with a multi-faceted professional character, but that largely due to detached and impersonal higher management the officer corps as a whole had suffered a loss of self belief and falling morale. It has been shown that a wide ranging series of reforms to his training and career management starting in the early 1930s, together with structural changes meant that the officer corps of the Royal Navy was prepared not only to fight the coming war, but to manage the vast expansion of officer numbers that war would necessitate, and do so in a much more long sighted manner than had been the case in the First World War. It would do so by using the RNVR as its vehicle to produce ‘single role’ officers. It used the RN officers to provide the intellectual and higher management capability as few RNVR officers reached the higher levels of the service during the Second World War.

The dominant feature of the Second World War at sea compared with the First, was that in general, responsibility and the need for a high level of leadership skills had moved substantially to a lower level in the organisation. Indeed Lavery goes further:

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<sup>1</sup> Joseph Moretz, *The Royal Navy and the Capital Ship in the Interwar Period: An Operational Perspective*, (London: Frank Cass, 2002) p.24.

World War II, a ‘people’s war’ in general, was truly a lower-deck war in which individual radar and asdic operators, landing craft coxswains and anti-aircraft gunners could often turn the scale at a vital moment.<sup>2</sup>

This is possibly an exaggeration, but it makes the point well. The responsibility placed on junior officers and ratings, even very junior, and certainly – by peacetime standards – very inexperienced officers and ratings was orders of magnitude greater than in the previous war. That said, during the First World War, beyond the capital ships of the Grand Fleet, such responsibilities had been placed on many of them in the First World War, but not to the extent that was to happen in the Second World War and not quite so junior.

During the First World War officer training (including that for cadets and midshipmen) had been largely suspended. This had proved to be an error and the navy did not make the same mistake in the Second World War; indeed it could well be thought to have gone too far the other way. For regular officers, career progression was, as has been shown, largely maintained. For them, naval service retained breadth. While ‘temporary’ officers would stay within a very narrow area of naval service, regular officers were appointed across the spectrum.

The navy was also determined to avoid repeating another mistake it made leading up to and during the First World War. For that conflict it had relied on regular, or career officers, and had expanded their numbers to meet the operational need without thought being given to what would be the necessary post war shrinkage of the navy as a whole and its officer numbers in particular. The resulting marked excess of officer numbers or ‘over-bearing’ was a contributory factor to the poor morale of the officer corps during the inter-war period. Paradoxically, it made the navy’s job of preparing for the Second World War that much easier, as when it recognised that it would need many more officers for the coming war, it was at least starting from a higher baseline. For the second war, the navy determined that it would rely for its vastly expanded officer corps on officers commissioned just for the duration of the war who would then be trained for a single operational task.

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<sup>2</sup> Brian Lavery, *Royal Tars: The Lower Deck of the Royal Navy, 875 – 1850*, (London: Conway, 2010) p.13.

In the first part of this thesis it was shown that the officer corps at the end of the First World War felt they had not achieved what was expected of them either by themselves or, in their perception, by the public, and that they had not appreciated that the Royal Navy had played a pivotal role in the defeat of the central powers but had done so by blockade. The key point made was that, dependent on the theatre and mode of the war in which they had been employed, the officer corps had performed to the highest standards; they had shown initiative, originality and leadership when they were required and rigid automatic even unthinking discipline when that was required, and had shown the ability to shift between the two.

The First World War also marked the start of a major social change in Britain, what might be termed a 'Revolution in Civic Affairs'. The rigid class structure that had grown up in Victorian Britain and continued into Edwardian Britain, started to crumble. In the army, the social change happened during the war; the appalling death rate among its young officers meant that it had to draw on what were then termed the 'lower classes' for its replacement officers in a way that the navy did not need to because it did not suffer the same level of casualties. However, the navy had already, before the war had even broken out, started the process of social change; the introduction of the 'mate' system allowing ratings to become officers, and the introduction of the Special Entry scheme had shown that the navy was an organisation that would embrace change, indeed would initiate it, rather than react to it as the army was forced to in the early days of the war.

This was allied to an evolving educational and training system. The navy had in the nineteenth century recognised two very important developments, firstly that the profession of naval officer had become more technical, which required a training to meet the technical need. Probably more importantly, the navy also recognised that a single officer could no longer learn or embrace all aspects of the naval profession. While previously purely administrative, artisan and specialist functions (e.g. that of the purser and the shipwright) had historically been devolved to subordinate officers (warrant officers), now the executive officer themselves had to specialise, and this meant that when an officer reached higher ranks, he would not, indeed could not have experienced the full breadth of his profession. Instead he now had to rely on the professional advice of subordinates. Herein lay the birth of the naval staff. It was a very different structure to a land staff that evolved, and it was fitted for its naval purpose. It

is important to remember that there was a subtle distinction in usage, the 'Naval Staff' was that housed at the Admiralty in London (or its out stations) the 'staff' could also encompass the half dozen officers and ratings comprising the staff of a Captain 'D' to the staff of a major shore based command, e.g. the staff of Flag Officer Plymouth each of which undertook a different range of functions.

Immediately after the First World War the auguries were good; while officer morale had taken a knock and the officer corps had, to some extent, lost its self belief, under Wemyss as First Sea Lord (and with the continuing prodding of Richmond) the navy showed that it was moving on the right track. The matter of low pay was addressed and the Cambridge course for young officers showed that the Admiralty appreciated the need for a broader education. Unfortunately, the navy then fell under the dead hand of Beatty and then that of his chosen successor, Madden.

One of the voices that condemned the supposed failings of the Royal Navy in the First World War was that of Richmond. He had decried naval education from before the outbreak of the First World War, and after the war broke out blamed the inadequacy of education and its concentration on the 'purely material' to the exclusion of the 'teaching of war'. The War College had been formed by Corbett, a personal friend of Richmond's at the behest of Fisher.<sup>3</sup> Richmond actually lectured there although he was not a regular member of the college faculty,<sup>4</sup> which makes his remark that 'it is to be greatly doubted whether in the so-called War College, war has been really studied' possibly tendentious.<sup>5</sup> Richmond went on to blame the failings of the naval war staff on such a lack of education. The reality was that the war staff did not fail and nor did the generality of its officers. As in any such organisation, there were individual failings, but the naval staff in general in the First World War performed well, even if no allowance is made for it being the first organisation in history which performed the duties of a central naval operational staff.

The Royal Navy has not been given credit for the way its staff evolved extremely rapidly from being a combination of a nineteenth century Admiralty and Navy Board and then into a twentieth century naval staff which was at the leading edge

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<sup>3</sup> Lord Fisher, *Memories*, (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1919) p. 104.

<sup>4</sup> Bary D. Hunt *Sailor-Scholar: Admiral Sir Herbert Richmond 1871-1946* (Waterloo, Ontario: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1982)p.31

of technical and even administrative change. It recognised developments even as they happened; for example when the cryptographic division ‘broke into’ the German codes in the First World War, the operational importance was immediately recognised and the division physically moved. Many authors seem not to have noticed that its new location, the famous ‘Room 40’, was physically next door to the war room.

To recapitulate a part of the introduction to this thesis, it will be remembered that the exact origins of the naval staff remain in some dispute, although latterly the view is emerging that it had existed as a highly capable functioning entity for many years before Churchill vowed to labour until it was established. However, the perception remains that the naval staff was manned during the First World War by less than able officers. Indeed Rodger has stated that:

In the Navy the best officers were chosen for sea command, which was the only route to flag rank. The middle ranks of the Naval Staff tended to get whoever was left after the Fleet had made its choice: at best officers of ability whose health or temperament unfitted them for command afloat; at worst the unemployed or unemployable.

He continues, quoting the sentiment that:

In 1926 ... all the officers in the Intelligence Division were on their way out, that is to say that they had been passed over for promotion and had no prospects ... most of them were dead from the neck up.<sup>6</sup>

When the Navy List for May 1926 is examined it does not support this contention. It shows that at that time the Intelligence Division was headed by a rear admiral, with a lieutenant colonel of Marines as his assistant and a Royal Navy captain as his deputy. By 1930 the rear admiral was not included in the Navy List (including the retired list) so presumably was dead. His assistant was now a major general, which would have been speedy promotion in wartime, let alone during a period of peacetime retrenchment. The deputy was ultimately to become a rear admiral. There were seven commanders in the division in 1926. It must not be forgotten that being commanders meant that they had already been selected over their peers for promotion. Of them, three had indeed been passed over by time in rank for further promotion, two were in zone for promotion (although they did not achieve it) and two were below zone; that is they were not even eligible yet for promotion. One of those two latter went as his next

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<sup>5</sup> Arthur J. Marder, *Portrait of an Admiral: The Life and Papers of Sir Herbert Richmond*, (London: Jonathan Cape, 1952) p. 22.

<sup>6</sup> N.A.M. Rodger, ‘Training or Education: A Naval Dilemma over Three Centuries’, in P.Hore (ed.) *Hudson papers 1* (London Oxford University Hudson Trusts, 2001) pp. 23-4.



appointment to be executive officer of a battleship (*HMS Revenge*) a plum sea going appointment, and the other went to command a submarine flotilla on promotion to captain. The reason for looking at this in some detail is to emphasise the point that the staff was actually populated by able officers who were far from being ‘on the way out.’ The point has also been made that specialist officers occupied staff posts and were promoted even to flag rank without having had sea command which latter was not apparently seen as being particularly important.

What the navy did not do so successfully was take forward the old Admiralty and Navy Board personnel administrative functions for its officers. These remained stuck in the nineteenth century, and worse the whole education, training and management system for officers, which prior to the First World War had been world class was, after Wemyss, allowed to ossify. Any developments, rather than being co-ordinated with each other, were instead allowed to grow by accretion, making the system increasingly unwieldy and inefficient. Worse, changes manifestly did not make proper allowances for either the navy’s needs or those of individual officers. The system was based on individual career choice in some areas, such as whether to specialise, but allowed no freedom or even little actual input by the officer concerned in such matters as to where he would serve. The basic career structure had pre-existed the First World War, but when the ‘Fisher’ system was largely discarded, what was put in its place took little account of the individual and worse, was inefficient at meeting the needs of the service. The schools were left pre-eminent far beyond when the Admiralty should have controlled them, directing what they taught to whom and for what purpose and should have managed the careers of the officers according to the needs of the navy. Not until 1935 did the Admiralty actually direct junior officers into specific specialist training, in that case as Fleet Air Arm observers. Until then, the Admiralty had let the personnel run their professional development and almost literally taken what they were given. When it came to the vast expansion during the Second World War, the temporary officers were given little choice. They were directed down a training path, but for the regular career officers the Second World War was be history before actual operational requirements were given the importance they should have had in managing their careers.

This thesis has argued that the naval executive officer between the wars was as well educated as, if not better, than his civilian counterparts and appropriately trained, and that after the stagnation of the Beatty/Madden years, education and particularly

training had moved ahead, particularly in training in leadership, such that the navy was well placed to manage a totally unexpected vast expansion of the officer corps.

There has been too much emphasis on the Britannia Royal Naval College at Dartmouth which appears to be viewed by some as some kind of spiritual heart of the navy. It was not, anymore than Eton was the spiritual home of the Conservative party or the Foreign Office. It was an in house public school that taught a broadly based syllabus. It was comparable to the better civilian public schools and actually had less of a maritime component than the merchant service colleges Pangbourne, HMS *Worcester* and HMS *Conway*. Rodger is strong in his condemnation of Dartmouth, emphasising its supposed technical bias, but, for example, completely omits any mention of the alpha stream introduced in 1935 which gave a broader education to the more academically able cadets.<sup>7</sup> While some of those who were educated at Dartmouth had a poor opinion of the education they had received,<sup>8</sup> and Marder was critical of some aspects,<sup>9</sup> such views were not universal. One ex-cadet, making an extremely valid point, said that at the time he had ‘nothing to judge it by’, but looking back ‘I thought [the standard] was very high’.<sup>10</sup>

Those condemning Dartmouth appear not to have noticed that the parallel stream of Special Entry cadets actually provide a means of auditing the Dartmouth training by comparing it against that of a broad mix of civilian public schools from which the Special Entry cadets were drawn. This thesis has noted the debate which smouldered on through the inter-war period as to which produced the better officer. This remained unresolved before the Second World War. Special Entry had been instituted in 1913 and with the length of time to achieving senior command, it would have been impossible to make a useful comparison before the beginning of the Second World War. However, examination of personnel records carried out for this thesis allows the comparison to be made – bearing in mind that the officer who entered as a midshipman in 1920 might well have served well into the 1950s. The table at Fig. 33 shows how the midshipmen from Dartmouth and Special Entry who entered in 1920, 1925, 1930 and 1935 performed measured by the navy’s own yardstick, selective promotion to commander, captain and flag rank.

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<sup>7</sup> N.A.M. Rodger ‘Training or Education’ p.18.

<sup>8</sup> Interview with Admiral of The Fleet Sir Henry Leach 28 October 2008

<sup>9</sup> Arthur J. Marder *Old Friends, New Enemies: The Royal Navy and the Imperial Japanese Navy, Strategic Illusions, 1936 – 1941* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1981) pp. 280-2

<sup>10</sup> Interview with Lieutenant Holloway, 15 December 2008.

	1920 Cadet Entry	1925 Cadet Entry	1930 Cadet Entry	1935 cadet Entry
Total BRNC Cadets (see note 1)	83	79	100	78
Cmdr (No) %	(19) 23%	(27) 34%	(19) 19%	(13) 17%
Capt (No) %	(13) 16%	(20) 25%	(26) 26%	(14) 18%
Flag (No) %	(5) 6%	(6) 8%	(6) 6%	(3) 4%
Total SE Cadets (see notes 1 & 2)	39	14	19	32
Cmdr (No) %	(18) 46 %	(4) 29%	(4) 21%	(6) 19%
Capt (No) %	(15) 38%	(5) 36%	(4) 21%	(3) 9%
Flag (No) %	(1) 3%	(2) 14%	(4) 21%	(2) 6%

Notes

1. Cadets who did not complete their training to Lieutenant for whatever reason are omitted.
2. Includes seven Direct Entry cadets.

Fig.33. Table of cadets showing ultimate rank reached by year of passing out as cadets/entry as midshipmen and whether BRNC or Special Entry cadet.

Source: 2SIPers Rec

Analysis of 20% of the total number of cadets between the wars allows for statistical analysis. A full statistical analysis of these figures has been carried out.<sup>11</sup>

Fig. 34 shows the probability of cadets from either stream of reaching selectively promoted ranks. The vertical bars show the 95% confidence<sup>12</sup> and the fact that they overlap for each rank suggests that there is no significant statistical difference but tending towards the Special Entry cadets out-performing the Dartmouth cadets. However Dr Kilminster has examined the data in great detail for each rank and has shown that ‘There are significantly more commanders from [Special Entry] than from Dartmouth’, Chi-squared  $p=0.018$ , one tailed Fishers exact test  $P=0.014$ . For captains Chi-squared does not achieve significance but the one tailed Fishers exact test was

<sup>11</sup> The author is indebted to Dr Shaun Kilminster BSc(Hons) PGCEd MSc(Psych) PhD CPsychol FSS Hon FFPM (RCPEng) who is Chairman RN Scientific Advisory Committee and Head of Medical Statistics Division, Institute of Naval Medicine who carried out the statistical analysis and provided Fig. 34. E-mail of 31 July 2012 with attached document SK4MFQR.DOCX.

<sup>12</sup> 95% confidence is usually taken as indicating statistical significance.

significant at  $p=0.04$ , thus ‘There are significantly more captains from [Special Entry] than from Dartmouth’. For flag rank the difference is marginally significant.

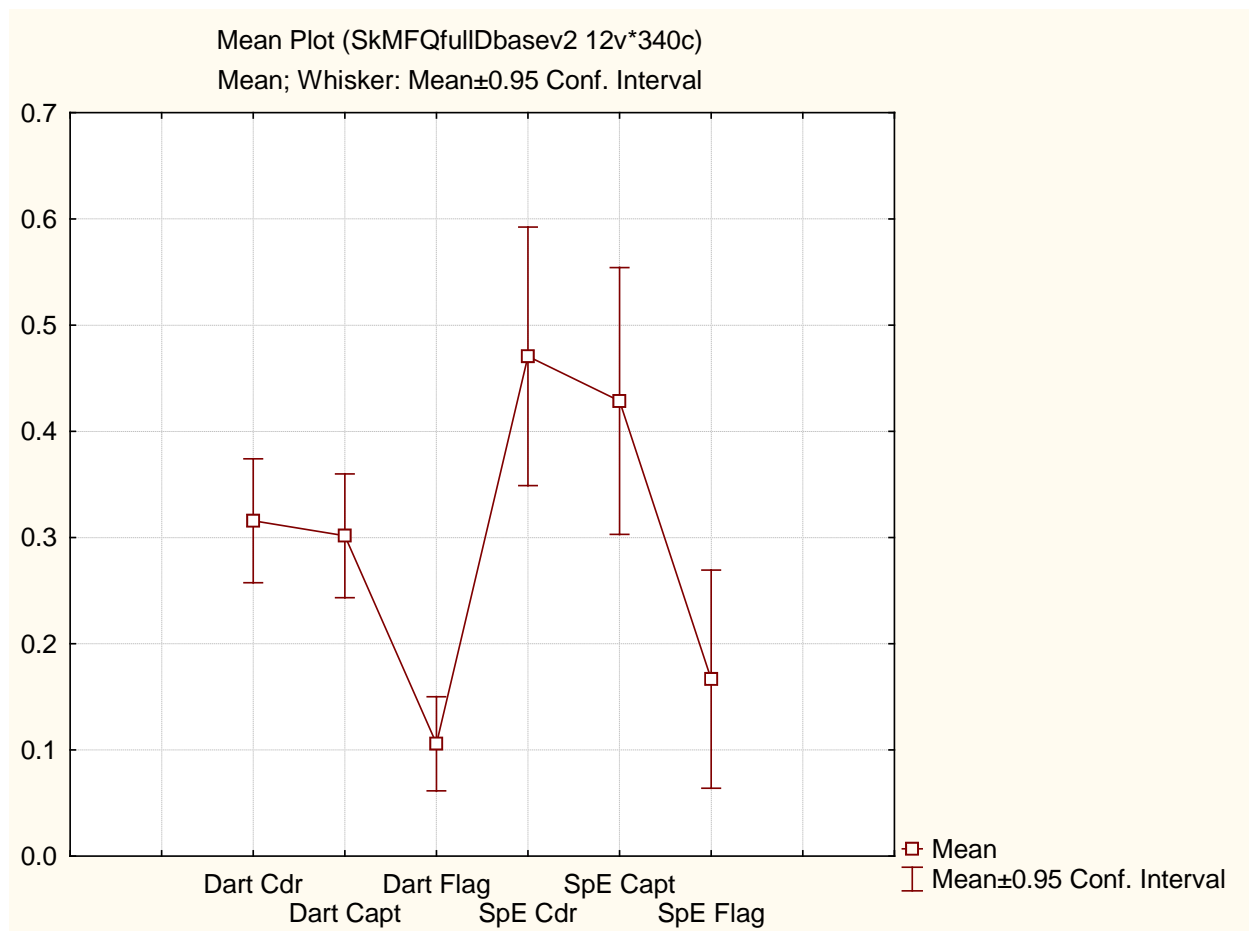


Fig. 34. The probability of a Dartmouth or Special Entry cadet reaching the specific rank of commander, captain or flag officer.

Thus, on the basis of figures that were not available until the 1950s, a Special Entry cadet performed better than his Dartmouth educated contemporary by the navy’s own measure of success, selective promotion. The difference is not marked and is only apparent after sophisticated and detailed statistical analysis. Thus Richmond’s opinion in the 1920s was correct, but can only, in truth, be described as opinion/intuition.

#### Officer further education

Rodger goes on to say that ‘[i]n the 1930s, the Admiralty at first reduced and then abolished the Sub-Lieutenants Greenwich course which represented the only, tentative, element of adult education remaining in the standard naval career.’<sup>13</sup> This is incorrect.

<sup>13</sup> N.A.M. Rodger ‘Training or Education’ p.24.

Until 1937, the course was only improved. Every six months up until 1937 the calling notices for the various sub lieutenants courses were promulgated by AFO which set out the dates for each component of the courses. Each course was two terms long throughout the period, the same as all the other sub lieutenant's courses. A change, after Madden had retired, as described earlier, was the introduction of a War Course element, including, for the first time, a discussion of the Battle of Jutland. The course content was modified in 1932 when an updated syllabus was published, but this was not a reduction, rather an enhancement.<sup>14</sup> However, the desperate need for officers described in the previous chapter led to the 'temporary' suspension of the Greenwich course in 1937 (it was stated at the time that the intention was to re-start it in 1940) but it continued for acting sub lieutenants commissioned from the lower deck and the war course element was incorporated in the gunnery course.<sup>15</sup>

Naval higher education was delivered to those with the inclination and aptitude for it, be it specialist training or staff courses. Presumably because it was not a part of the 'standard naval career' (if such a thing existed) Rodger omits mention of the year long staff course. As has been described, the Admiralty had told the officer corps that attendance was increasingly a requirement for the higher levels of the service. This course was steadily improved; for example, the introduction of a pre-reading list described earlier so that officers attending the course were better prepared. The foundation of the Imperial Defence College in 1927 under its first Commandant, Vice Admiral Richmond, suggests that broader education was not neglected. The picture at Fig. 35 shows the directing staff and the list of students of the first course.<sup>16</sup> All of the Royal Navy attendees achieved significant distinction, at least flag rank.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> AFO 413/32 *Educational Course for Acting Sub-Lieutenants (Cadet Entry) – Syllabus*.

<sup>15</sup> ADM116/97 Memorandum for the Board by the Second Sea Lord dated 14 April 1937.

<sup>16</sup> Attendees at the IDC and its successor, the Royal College of Defence Studies are now referred to as members, not students.

<sup>17</sup> It can be seen that the junior service attendees were to be quite a distinguished group as well.

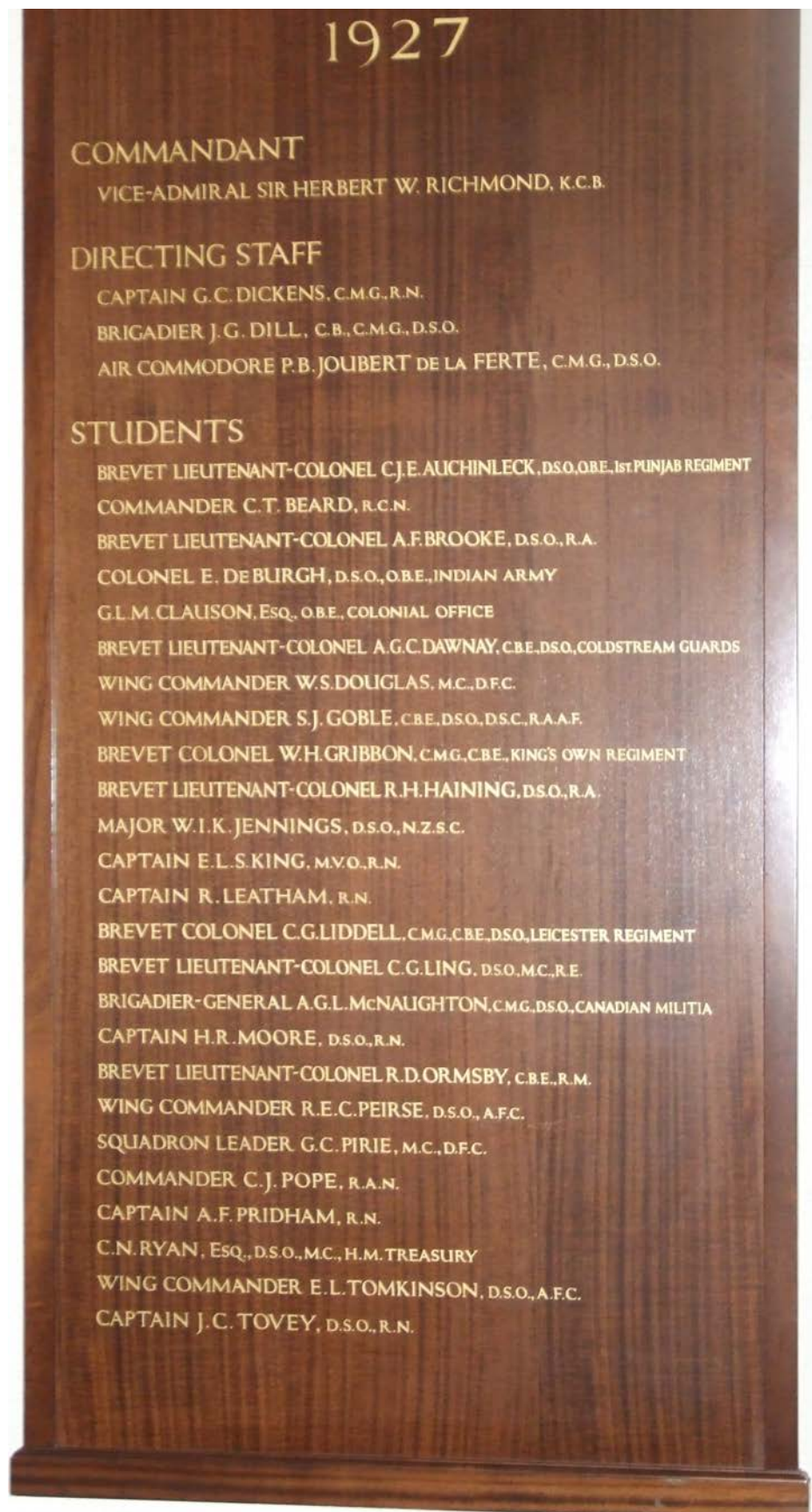


Fig. 35. The first course at the Imperial Defence College (authors collection).

Thus Rodger's opinion that until 'the final adoption between 1955 and 1960 of entry at 18 or later ... the RNVR or ex-RNVR officers were almost the only officers in

the Navy who had been educated as well as trained' is incorrect.<sup>18</sup> RNVR officers would have been educated at schools comparable to Dartmouth but would not have had the benefit of the in-house naval education afforded to sub lieutenants, or the educative elements of the specialist long courses. As they could only have attended the staff course in small numbers if at all, and would not have been senior enough to attend the IDC, an education that was not available elsewhere; the contention does not stand scrutiny.

Rodger is not alone in arguing that the navy over emphasised technical training at the expense of education.<sup>19</sup> This was very much Richmond's view. He was nothing if not consistent; he was preaching this gospel before the First World War and continued into the 1930s. However, he does seem to have carried into the twentieth century the late nineteenth century class based prejudice against engineering and technical education.<sup>20</sup> (Indeed it goes back much further than that; in 1684 Charles Goodall, then President of the Royal College of Physicians, was inveighing 'We have to deal here with a sort of men not of Academical, but Mechanick education'<sup>21</sup>) What seems to be forgotten or ignored is that the navy was a technical service; it manned its equipment whereas the army equipped its men.<sup>22</sup> Chatfield, writing in 1942 emphasised this when he said that:

[t]he Navy is ... a material Service equipped with ... the latest developments that engineering in all its great branches can conceive. To understand and to be able to use these appliances is not enough. The naval officer must have knowledge of the engineering art behind the producer, must be able to get full value out of the machine, to keep it under repair, to teach others its good and bad points and to suggest improvements. He is the skilled user of weapons. He alone can appraise their merits correctly and guide the designers and constructors as to future needs.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> N.A.M. Rodger, 'Training or Education' p.22.

<sup>19</sup> N.A.M. Rodger, 'Training or Education'.

<sup>20</sup> Sir H.W. Richmond, *Naval Training*, (London: Oxford University Press, 1933) pp. 14-22.

<sup>21</sup> J.G.L. Burnaby, *A Study of the English Apothecary from 1660-1760*, (London: Wellcome Institute, 1983) p. 4.

<sup>22</sup> Oft repeated, and of unknown provenance.

<sup>23</sup> Lord Chatfield, *The Navy and Defence: The Autobiography of Admiral of the Fleet Lord Chatfield PC GCB OM etc*, (London: William Heinemann, 1942) p. 26.

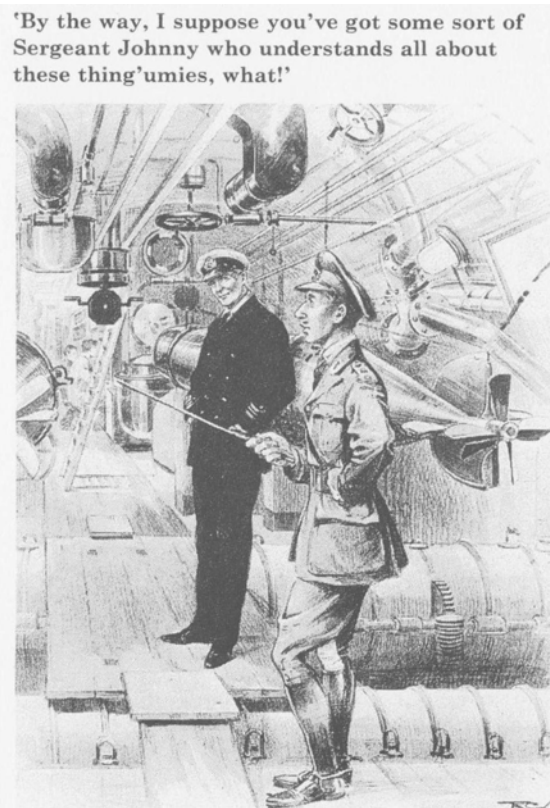


Fig.36. Army officers in combat arms relied on specialists from other corps to support their weaponry, naval officers could not. (By permission of the Royal Navy Submarine Museum)

The cartoon at Fig. 36 makes the point very well, the army did not need its officers to be technically educated, it always had a 'Sergeant Johnny' to sort matters out. The navy was an extremely technical and technologically advanced organisation, its managers or rather as it describes them, its officers, needed to have enough technical knowledge to manage its ships while at sea. The major specialist courses (gunnery, torpedo, navigation, signals) were partly training but largely educative, to the equivalent level of civilian degree courses. This debate is essentially that that has rumbled on, undecided, for years in civilian life. Reduced to basics, the debate is whether a science based or a classical education better fits a man for the higher levels of administration and leadership. The navy plumped for a technically based education, but, as has been shown, did not eschew elements of the 'liberal arts' and, from the inception of the War College in 1906, the teaching of strategy. The reality is, despite the views of Richmond et al., that the officer corps was well educated and trained.



## The RNVR Myth

The importance of the RNVR to the victory at sea was immense. It is no exaggeration to state that the Second World War at sea, and by extension the war itself, could not have been fought, let alone won, without them. However Professor Rodger has gone much further stating that ‘the Battle of the Atlantic – surely the most crucial campaign the Navy has fought this century – was almost entirely left to them’.<sup>24</sup> This is not supported by examination of the actual manning of ships fighting the Battle of the Atlantic. By May 1941 according to Lavery:

There were 37 British-manned destroyers, 30 corvettes and ten sloops in Western Approaches Command. The destroyers were largely officered by the regular Royal Navy, with occasional reservists in the junior ranks. The sloops had a combination of RN and RNR officers, but with two temporary lieutenants and nine temporary sub-lieutenants RNVR. The corvettes had 21 temporary lieutenants and 60 temporary sub-lieutenants, more than half the 140 officers on board.<sup>25</sup>

This hardly represents the RNVR constituting a majority of the officers afloat, and certainly not having the battle left to them. Looked at more broadly, even by May 1943, which probably marked the turning point of the Battle of the Atlantic,<sup>26</sup> according to the Navy List,<sup>27</sup> there were 333 executive lieutenants RNVR and 6,634 temporary lieutenants. However, looking at the numbers of more senior officers, there were only fifty RNVR (permanent) lieutenant commanders and twenty three temporary lieutenant commanders and twenty six commanders in total (of whom two were ex-Royal Navy officers and one an ex-Royal Indian Navy captain). Thus, even if all the more senior officers in the RNVR were at that time employed in Western Approaches Command, it cannot constitute having the battle left to them. As everywhere in the world that the Royal Navy fought, the RNVR officer corps provided the bulk of the junior officers (6,967 – excluding air branch – against 1,721 Royal Navy) but the leadership and command remained predominantly with Royal Naval officers. Looked at more broadly there were 491 RN commanders and only twenty six Commanders RNVR.

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<sup>24</sup> N.A.M. Rodger, ‘Training or Education’ p. 22.

<sup>25</sup> Brian Lavery, *In which They Served: The Royal Navy Officer Experience in the Second World War*, (London: Conway, 2008) p.44

<sup>26</sup> S.W. Roskill, *The War at Sea 1939-1945: The Period of Balance* (Uckfield: Naval and Military Press, 2004) pp. 376-7. Others put the turning point as early as ‘the fall’ [*sic*] of 1942, see Clay Blair *Hitler’s U-Boat War: The Hunted 1942-45* (London: Cassell, 2000) p. 48.

<sup>27</sup> Navy List for June 1943 ‘correct to 18 May 1943’.

There was one area where the RNVR did predominate as the war progressed, Coastal Forces.<sup>28</sup> In the First World War the role of the Coastal Forces (not known as such in that war) was distinguished and significant, particularly the action at Kronstadt harbour in August 1919 (*sic*) when eight Coastal Motor Boats successfully attacked two battleships and a submarine depot ship with torpedoes. Between the wars the Royal Navy neglected Coastal Forces until the First Motor Torpedo Boat Flotilla was formed in 1937.<sup>29</sup> Once the war started, Coastal Forces started a very rapid expansion and soon became a predominantly RNVR domain. With the exception of a few RN officers (and ratings) ‘[the] officers nearly all wear the wavy stripes of the R.N.V.R., and have served their time as Ordinary Seamen before obtaining their commissions. ... They have suffered heavy casualties, but their morale is unassailable.’<sup>30</sup> Initially flotillas were commanded by RN officers, but increasingly they were supplanted by RNVR officers as they became more experienced.<sup>31</sup> ‘This must have produced tensions ... [n]evertheless ... mutual respect ... quickly developed between the two factions of service officers.’<sup>32</sup> In Coastal Forces, the predominance of the RNVR and with it, their becoming the repository of a particular expertise meant they to some extent regarded themselves as being superior to RN officers and the RN learnt from them. Lieutenant Peter Dickens RN (a salt horse) was appointed in 1942 to command an MTB flotilla. He was to be one of the more successful Coastal Forces commanders retiring as Captain Dickens DSO MBE DSC RN. He recounts a later conversation with one of his commanding officers who said that I was “pretty RN and pusser”. He graciously concedes that I gradually improved:

RN people were all the better for a spell with the RNVR”, and with that I heartily concur.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> Coastal Forces comprised the Motor Torpedo Boat (MTB), Motor Gun Boat (MGB), Harbour Defence Motor Launch (HDML) and Motor Launch (ML) flotillas, but not the minesweeping and Patrol Service vessels. However, the latter were also very largely RNVR and RNR (particularly the Patrol Service) manned.

<sup>29</sup> Peter Scott, *The Battle of the Narrow Seas: A History of the Light Coastal Forces in the Channel and North Sea, 1939-1945*, (Barnsley: Seaforth Publishing, 2009) p.6.

<sup>30</sup> Peter Scott, *The Battle of the Narrow Seas* p. 10.

<sup>31</sup> The first RNVR officer to assume command of a coast forces flotilla was Lieutenant Hichens in August 1941, who was the most decorated RNVR officer of the war. See Anthony Hichens, *Gunboat Command: The Life of ‘Hitch’: Lieutenant Commander Robert Hichens DSO\* DSC\*\* RNVR 1909-1943*, (Barnsley: Pen and Sword Military, 2007)p.167.

<sup>32</sup> Trevor Robotham, ‘Introduction’ in Peter Dickens, *Night Action: MTB Flotilla at War*, (Barnsley: Seaforth, 2008) p. ix. That said, the mutual resentments were very real, see Anthony Hichens, *Gunboat Command*, p. 168.

<sup>33</sup> Peter Dickens, *Night Action: MTB Flotilla at War*, (Barnsley: Seaforth, 2008) p. 66.

However, while the ships and flotillas of the Coastal Forces were predominantly RNVR, the command of Coast Forces bases remained with the Royal Navy, as did their direction and employment with the area Flag Officers. To repeat this important point, the RNVR provided junior officers, and they were inculcated into the ways of the navy to a surprising degree. Peter Bull (then an RNVR lieutenant commander) records that after the war had ended he was leading an RNVR manned landing craft flotilla to be paid off and allow the crews to return to the UK for demobilisation and return to civilian life. Despite the impending end of their naval service, his officers were concerned about the confidential reports he was writing about them to the Admiralty.<sup>34</sup> They had been moulded by the navy and become part of the navy. Inevitably the navy had adapted to some extent to them, but the war was fought by the Royal Navy supported by the RNVR but within a Royal Naval structure.

### Leadership

The Royal Navy's biggest failing up until Field's reforms had been to eschew formal leadership training and *pari passu* to downgrade the importance of ship command as a career stage for officers. Leadership ability appears to have been assumed to be an innate class based attribute which did not need to be brought out and officers' careers were not managed in a way to develop any such potential, or even identify it. Only when the Second World War came does the Navy appear to have fully recognised that the mission command war it now embarked on made leadership and command ability far more important than it had been in the First World War, and that it did not initially have enough officers capable of exercising sea command. However, despite some individual failings, it succeeded in meeting the challenges.

In conclusion, despite some failings, the Royal Navy in the first half of the twentieth century, which embraced two major wars, was well officered. The officer corps was well and broadly educated, resilient and well trained. Their education and training had been progressively modified and adapted in the light of experience. Above all, their training was intended to and successfully did fit them for a variety of roles. If they were required to be Barnett's automata, they were fully capable of being so, and vitally, understood the necessity. If they were required to show initiative, they could and did. They were the product of a system that continually (apart from the dark days of

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<sup>34</sup> Peter Bull, *To Sea in a Sieve*, (London: Corgi Books, 1973) p.201.

Beatty and Madden which sorely tested the officer corps) evolved and improved, mindful of the past, but adapting to the future; the executive officers of the Royal Navy were fully fit for purpose despite the inadequacies of the system to administer and support them.



**TO THE NADIR AND BACK: THE EXECUTIVE BRANCH OF THE  
ROYAL NAVY 1918-1939.**

**Volume 2 of 2.**

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Maritime History October 2012.**

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**Signed:**



**TO THE NADIR AND BACK: THE EXECUTIVE BRANCH OF THE  
ROYAL NAVY 1918-1939**

**APPENDIX A**




**EXECUTIVE OFFICERS' RANK INSIGNIA**









**ROYAL NAVAL EXECUTIVE OFFICERS RANK INSIGNIA (cuff  
and cap) (see also 'Glossary')**

Note: All cuff insignia is shown as that worn on a left cuff, the 'leading edge' of the 'executive curl' is always on top at the forward end. This applies to shoulder straps etc. Admirals shoulder insignia is not shown. Non-executive branch officers had a coloured insert, the 'distinction cloth', between the gold rings, e.g. purple for engineers etc)

Rank	Cuff insignia	Abbreviation	Colloquial/slang (not used as a mode of address)	Likely appointments (Not exhaustive)
Admiral of the Fleet		AF	Flag Officer	First Sea Lord, possibly Fleet Command
Admiral		Adml	Flag Officer	First Sea Lord, Fleet Command, Area Command
Vice-Admiral		VA	Flag Officer	Command afloat, major shore command





**ROYAL NAVAL EXECUTIVE OFFICERS RANK INSIGNIA (cuff  
and cap) (see also 'Glossary')**

Note: All cuff insignia is shown as that worn on a left cuff, the 'leading edge' of the 'executive curl' is always on top at the forward end. This applies to shoulder straps etc. Admirals shoulder insignia is not shown. Non-executive branch officers had a coloured insert, the 'distinction cloth', between the gold rings, e.g. purple for engineers etc)

Rear-Admiral/ Commo dore First Class		RA Cdre	Flag Officer	Command afloat with a subordinate captain, or ashore A commodore would not wear a flag officers cap (vide infra)
Commo dore Second Class		Cdre		Command afloat without a subordinate captain or ashore
Captain		Capt	If in command, 'the old man' 'father' ( 'the skipper' was used in the First World War, but ceased to be used as such when 'skipper' was an RNR warrant rank.)	Command of a major unit (Cruiser or above), Destroyer flotilla, Chief of Staff or a directorship ashore
Comman der		Comdr  Cdr (modern)	If the executive officer of a ship 'The Bloke'	Command of a smaller unit, departmental head in a major unit

**ROYAL NAVAL EXECUTIVE OFFICERS RANK INSIGNIA (cuff  
and cap) (see also 'Glossary')**

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Lieutenant-Commander		Lieut-Comdr  Lt Cdr (modern)	'Two and a half'	Command of destroyer or submarine, departmental head
Lieutenant		Lt		Command of a destroyer or submarine, watchkeeping officer
Warrant Officer <sup>1</sup>		Warrant (specialist area, e.g. 'gunner')	Mister (used as a mode of address with surname)	Head of a specialist area, e.g. gunnery
Sub-Lieutenant		Sub-Lt	Sub (also used as a mode of address)	Under training, although in smaller ships might well hold a designated appointment, and in Second World War, might even hold a command
Midshipman <sup>2</sup> Note: worn on lapels of collar		Mid	Mid (also used as a mode of address), Snotty	Under training, but would take charge of a ship's boat etc. In Second World War used

<sup>1</sup> Subordinate officer; until 1927 wore a smaller cap badge

<sup>2</sup> Accorded officer status, but not commissioned

**ROYAL NAVAL EXECUTIVE OFFICERS RANK INSIGNIA (cuff and cap) (see also 'Glossary')**

Note: All cuff insignia is shown as that worn on a left cuff, the 'leading edge' of the 'executive curl' is always on top at the forward end. This applies to shoulder straps etc. Admirals shoulder insignia is not shown. Non-executive branch officers had a coloured insert, the 'distinction cloth', between the gold rings, e.g. purple for engineers etc)

				in lieu of a commissioned rank for an officer under 20years old
Cadet <sup>3</sup> Note: worn on lapels of collar		Cadet	Cadet (used as a mode of address) Mr (archaic, but still used)	Under training, would be given no responsibility
Royal Naval Volunteer Reserve (To illustrate braid, Lieutenant Commander shown)			'Wavy Navy' 'Temporary Gentleman'	
Royal Naval Reserve (To illustrate braid, Lieutenant shown)			'Rocky'	

<sup>3</sup> Not commissioned but wear officers cap badge

## ROYAL NAVAL EXECUTIVE OFFICERS RANK INSIGNIA (cuff and cap) (see also 'Glossary')

Note: All cuff insignia is shown as that worn on a left cuff, the 'leading edge' of the 'executive curl' is always on top at the forward end. This applies to shoulder straps etc. Admirals shoulder insignia is not shown. Non-executive branch officers had a coloured insert, the 'distinction cloth', between the gold rings, e.g. purple for engineers etc)

### CAP BADGE

(until 1927 subordinate officers wore a smaller but similar badge. Thereafter they wore the same badge)



Note: The badge shown has a 'King's Crown'. It indicates that the wearer had been commissioned by a King. An officer would continue to wear it even if a Queen subsequently ascended the throne.

## ROYAL NAVAL EXECUTIVE OFFICERS RANK INSIGNIA (cuff and cap) (see also 'Glossary')

Note: All cuff insignia is shown as that worn on a left cuff, the 'leading edge' of the 'executive curl' is always on top at the forward end. This applies to shoulder straps etc. Admirals shoulder insignia is not shown. Non-executive branch officers had a coloured insert, the 'distinction cloth', between the gold rings, e.g. purple for engineers etc)

### CAP PEAKS

All cadets, midshipmen, subordinate and junior officers up to and including Lieutenant-Commanders wore a cap with a plain black peak. Commanders, captains and commodores wore a cap with a decorated peak. This was described irreverently as 'scrambled egg' and informally, but widely used, as a 'brass hat'. (Note: The cap badge shown has a 'Queens Crown')



Admirals of all grades wore a cap with a double row of decoration.



**TO THE NADIR AND BACK: THE EXECUTIVE BRANCH OF THE  
ROYAL NAVY 1918-1939**

APPENDIX B

COHORT STUDY OF MIDSHIPMEN WHO ENTERED THE ROYAL NAVY IN  
1920, 1925, 1930 AND 1935  
INTERVIEW CONSENT FORM AND ETHICAL APPROVALS  
INTERVIEW METHODOLOGY





The Second Sea Lord (then Vice Admiral Sir Adrian Johns) gave the author permission to research Officers personal files to extract data. While ideally the personnel files made available would be used in their entirety to construct what would be a personnel database for the whole executive branch between the wars, it would be an unnecessary amount of work as the use of a cohort technique is well established in epidemiology and other branches of medicine as it allows statistical analysis, and as long as there are sufficient numbers to give the study statistical ‘power’, then the figures are as statistically reliable within the stated confidence limits as if the whole group had been studied.

Thus quinquennial cohorts have been examined. The original intention was to look at all cadets entering every fifth year, but varying entry dates precluded establishing coherent cohorts, and instead cohorts based on seniority as midshipmen were used.<sup>1</sup> Thus the personal records of midshipmen of seniority 1920, 1925, 1930, and 1935 have been examined. As described below, individual records have been anonymised. Because of the requirements for anonymisation, it is not possible to refer to an individual officer’s record by his name. Thus reference to an individual throughout this thesis is in the form ‘Second Sea Lord personal records’ abbreviated to ‘2SLPersRec’. The spreadsheets on which the data was recorded are annexed to this thesis. To avoid any possibility of breach of anonymity, when reports on an officer are referred to, they are not ascribed even to a line number on the spreadsheet as in some cases it would be the work of a few minutes to identify subject officers (to give an example; included on the spreadsheets is an officer who won a Victoria Cross commanding a submarine and went on to flag rank. That could only be one of two officers in the history of the naval service, so nothing from his personal record is quoted). Second Sea Lord’s disclosure cell have however permitted use of reporting officers names when the text of such reports is quoted; while the subject remains anonymous, Second Sea Lord holds the copyright on officer’s reports and their authorship.

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<sup>1</sup> See the glossary for an explanation of naval seniority

The total number in each cohort was:

YEAR	MIDSHIPMEN ON NAVY LIST (see note 7 )	RECORDS AVAILABLE	PERCENTAGE
1920	136	127	93
1925	119	120 (see note 8)	100
1930	140	137	98
1935	111	101	91
TOTALS	506	485	96

For each Officer, the following data was recorded:

Name (see note 2)

Date of birth\*

Whether BRNC or Special entry (see note 3)\*

Date of passing out as a Cadet\*

Date of marriage (see note 4)\*

Date of promotion to Acting Sub-Lieutenant\*

Date of confirmation as Sub-Lieutenant\*

Class of pass in each Sub-Lieutenants course (see note 5)\*

Date of award of Watchkeeping certificate\*

Date of promotion to Lieutenant\*

Date of promotion to Lieutenant-Commander\*

Date of promotion to Commander\*

Date of promotion to Captain\*

Date of promotion to Flag rank\*

Date of passing war course or after 1922 staff course\*

First and second specialist courses with dates (see note 6)\*

Date of first sea command\*

Honours and awards

Date of release from the Service\* and manner (time, Discharged Dead, Killed in Action et cetera)

Disciplinary proceedings

Remarks

Notes:

1. Those marked ‘\*’ were recorded in such a manner as to permit statistical analysis.
2. Initially used as an identifier, and then deleted to ensure anonymity.
3. The numbers of lower deck commissions and entries on the Maritime College scheme are so small as to make separate statistical analysis meaningless.
4. Despite it being a requirement, dates of marriage appear commonly not to have been notified to the Admiralty; but officers are recorded as being ‘married’ having notified the Admiralty after the introduction of the marriage allowance.
5. Failure on a Sub-Lieutenants course and retaking the examination are recorded as P (pass).
6. Undertaking examinations for command of a destroyer were regarded as non-specialist, General Service (GS) or ‘salt horse’. A distinction has to be made, as most GS did not take (or rather pass) the examinations; thus qualifying for command of a destroyer is recorded as a specialist qualification but was not officially classed as such.
7. Midshipmen of 1920 seniority could opt to be engineer officers, their records of those that did were not considered further, and were deleted from the original number of midshipmen.
8. One 1925 cadet passed out, but appears not to have become a midshipman. His records were included in those examined.

The data was originally recorded on an ‘Excel’ (© Microsoft) spreadsheet and analysed after sanitising for anonymisation by removing names etc. While all of the 1920 cohort might reasonably be assumed to be dead at the time of the study (having been born 1900-1902), this could not be assumed for later cohorts. Hence, they have been anonymised in accordance with the approval given by the Exeter University Ethical Committee. As well as permitting a cross sectional survey of each year, it allows comparisons between the cohorts, i.e. to see if the careers of midshipmen originating in 1920 varied statistically from those in later cohorts, as might be expected if the Royal Navy introduced significant changes to training or career management. In fact a very early finding was that there was no noticeable or statistically apparent change, an interesting finding in itself. At the same time individual records were scrutinised for illustrative examples which are used throughout this thesis.

## INFORMATION/CONSENT FORM FOR INTERVIEWS

### Title of Research Project

“The education, training and early career management of Royal Navy Executive (seaman) branch officers between the two World Wars”

### Details of Project

I am researching the factors that led to the marked change in the Royal Navy’s performance in the two World Wars. In the First World War, the Navy was a directed command organisation, but in the Second mission command oriented. I wish to look at changes in the way junior officers in the Executive branch were educated and trained, and whether any change in patterns of career management are evident. To do this I will be using data derived from records held by the Admiralty Library, National Archive and the Naval Secretary as well as published material. I am keen to supplement this with illustrative individual case studies of some Officers, giving their experience of the education, training and career management systems of the Royal Navy between the two World Wars.

This will be submitted to Exeter University for a PhD degree. If suitable, it may be published in part or in whole either commercially or in learned journals.

### Contact Details

For further information about the research or your interview data, please contact:

Mike Farquharson-Roberts

Tel 00 44 (0) 7785312569 or \*44 (0) 2392581689

Email [maf207@exeter.ac.uk](mailto:maf207@exeter.ac.uk) or [mfr@globalnet.co.uk](mailto:mfr@globalnet.co.uk)

If you have concerns/questions about the research you would like to discuss with the project supervisor, please contact:

Dr M Duffy [M.Duffy@exeter.ac.uk](mailto:M.Duffy@exeter.ac.uk)

### Confidentiality

Interview tapes and transcripts will be held in confidence. They will not be used other than for the purposes described above and third parties will not be allowed access to them (except in the case of legal subpoena). Before inclusion, I will forward you a copy of the material that I intend to include in my thesis or other publication for your amendment/ correction etc.

### Anonymity

I am happy to anonymise the information you give in whole or in part. If you would prefer full anonymity please indicate below, and choose a pseudonym, if in part, please indicate during the interview. Please indicate whether you wish to be anonymous below.

**PLEASE CIRCLE YES / NO**

**IF YES**            *Pseudonym to be used* :.....

**IF NO**            *Name of interviewee:*.....

*Signature:* .....

### Consent

I voluntarily agree to participate and to the use of my data for the purposes specified above. I can withdraw consent at any time by contacting the interviewers.

**TICK HERE:**

**DATE**.....



Navy Command

Second Sea Lord and Commander in  
Chief Naval Home Command  
Navy Command Headquarters  
Director Naval Personnel  
Disclosure Cell  
West Battery  
MP G-2  
Room 48  
Whale Island  
Portsmouth  
Hampshire  
PO2 8DX  
Telephone: 023 9262 8779/8781  
Military Net: 93832 8779/8781  
Fax: 023 9262 8660  
E-mail: andy.godfrey671@mod.uk

Reference: DNPERS/AJG  
Your Ref:

Surgeon Rear Admiral M A Farquharson-Roberts CBE  
(via e-mail)

Date: 06 August 2010

To whom it may concern,

**Authority to Disclose (Identify by Name) Naval Reporting Officers for the  
Purposes of Academic Research/Thesis**

In my official capacity I hereby authorise Surgeon Rear Admiral M A Farquharson-Roberts CBE to disclose, where necessary in support of his academic research/thesis, the names of naval officers, their rank, service number, seniority and naval appointment - data already in the public domain for naval officers via official publication in the 'Navy List'.

Furthermore, this authority is extended to include (where necessary to support his academic research/thesis) the equivalent information for naval ratings/RM other ranks – exemption from withholding/protecting that data being claimed under Data Protection Act 1998 Exemptions from Subject Access: Research, History & Statistics.

**From:** Melling, Joseph [J.L.Melling@exeter.ac.uk]  
**Sent:** 06 August 2010 14:28  
**To:** Mike Farquharson-Roberts  
**Cc:** Duffy, Michael; Fusaro, Maria; Melling, Joseph  
**Subject:** RE: Ethical matter

Dear Mike

It looks as if you have taken reasonable precautions but do get everything in writing even if it is by email

Assuming you are not naming people who might be offended (or their close relatives) then you should be fine

best of luck

Jo Melling

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**From:** Mike Farquharson-Roberts [mfr@globalnet.co.uk]  
**Sent:** 06 August 2010 12:42  
**To:** Melling, Joseph  
**Cc:** Duffy, Michael; Fusaro, Maria  
**Subject:** Ethical matter

Dear Professor Melling

You will remember that I am a part time PhD student researching executive officers of the Royal Navy between the two world wars. I have been in email consultation with my supervisors who said that you are, as it were, my next port of call, as the departments Ethic's Officer.

I have been given access by the Second Sea Lord to personnel records on the condition that references to the subjects are anonymised. My submission to the Univeristy ethical committee was approved on that basis.

I am currently writing about officers promotion. This was done on the basis of confidential reports on Form S206 normally rendered annually, or six monthly if eligible for promotion ('in zone'). This would be written by the officer's immediate superior (his 'first reporting officer') with further comments by the next one up the chain of command ('Second reporting officer') and finally by the command Flag Officer . They were confidential at every level from the level below. Officers would only be given a 'flimsy' (so called because written on thin paper) which had short abstracts of the positive comments from the S206 proper. Subjects at most would be shown their S206 by the first reporting officer (and that, from personal experience, very briefly!).

Promotion was then decided by six monthly promotion boards under the aegis of the Second Sea Lord.

Proceedings/minutes of the promotion board were (and are) destroyed as soon as the Second Sea Lord approved their recommendations. Thus I am in the position of trying to work out from the officers 206's why apparently deserving officers were not promoted. I have a couple that I wish to use where giving the name of the reporting officers would be extremely useful, specifically an officer reported on by Admiral Philip Vian. He was widely known as a very hard and demanding taskmaster, but despite his very high opinion of the subject officer, he was not promoted.

Second Sea Lord's office are, in their own words, 'very relaxed about this' - Vian is long dead - as long as the anonymity of the reportee is preserved. They are confirming this in writing.

Will the written consent of Second Sea Lord's office (I have asked them to confirm that they hold copyright etc) be sufficient?

Mike Farquharson-Roberts

## INTERVIEW METHODOLOGY

Before embarking on the oral history interviews, the author informally discussed his methodology with Professor Anna Green in the context of an annual review and the relevant literature was consulted then and subsequently.<sup>2</sup> Potential interviewees were identified either by direct approach or by advertisement in *Navy News* or *The Naval Review*. The purpose of the interview was explained and after informal consent was obtained formal consent was sought using the forms set out above.

Only one officer approached for an interview declined a face to face interview because of his infirmity (Vice Admiral Sir Louis Le Bailly), but he engaged in a significant correspondence, which has been cited. He died soon thereafter. One officer was interviewed but it was apparent to the author (who is medically qualified) that he had early dementia and that formal written consent etc was inappropriate. The material obtained was not used.

Interviews were conducted at the officers' homes. Invariably they were charming hosts and provided appropriate refreshment. Interviews well exceeded the time planned for them. The question arises as to whether the author having been a naval officer and being able to speak 'navy' was an advantage. In the authors opinion it was, and the shared naval experience not only made conversation easier, the interviewees opened up more as it became apparent that author and interviewee shared experiences and service acquaintances. For example, Admiral of the Fleet Sir Henry Leach having originally said that an hour should cover everything, continued for five hours, and gave a fascinating exposition which has informed the authors thinking on command and control at the Battle of Jutland.

A similar question arises from the author's career experience as a medical practitioner. In the author's opinion, forty years experience of doctor/patient interaction were an undoubted benefit when it came conducting interviews.

When the interviews were complete, the author transcribed his notes and sent them to the interviewee for correction/amendment and comment and final signature of



the consent form. Most added extra comments; in particular Sir Henry Leach strengthened and underlined some his strictures on Dartmouth. He also included some further thoughts on Jutland. The author then wrote and thanked each interviewee for their hospitality and for their time.

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<sup>2</sup> Robert Perks and Alistair Thomson (eds) *The Oral History Reader* (London: Routledge, 1998); Anna Gree and Kathleen Troup (eds) *The Houses of History: A Critical Reader in Twentieth-Century History and Theory*, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1999).

**TO THE NADIR AND BACK: THE EXECUTIVE BRANCH OF THE  
ROYAL NAVY 1918-1939**

**APPENDIX C**

**BRANCHES OF THE EXECUTIVE BRANCH**



This thesis has considered the aviation and general service branches in some detail. For completeness, the other branches are here briefly described. Unless specifically given otherwise, references can be assumed to be to the study of Second Sea Lord's personnel records or data derived from them.

### The Gunnery Branch

Gunnery became a specialisation for officers in the middle of the nineteenth century. A combination of history and the perception that the gun was the arbiter of the naval battlefield gave gunnery a pre-eminence, if only in the eyes of gunnery officers. Of the 458 midshipmen studied for this thesis, representing 20% of the entrants to the navy between the wars, forty (9%) undertook gunnery training and of those, twelve went on to qualify after the long course, as so called 'dagger G'.

### The Torpedo Branch (T)

From its invention in the latter part of the nineteenth century, the locomotive torpedo was the 'coming weapon' of naval warfare.<sup>1</sup> Its influence on tactical thinking and on the actions of commanders far outweighed what its actual capability in surface warfare turned out to be; it came to be the weapon of the submarine, the invisibility of its launching vessel conferring on it the advantage of surprise. The new weapon spawned its own officer specialist branch (who, curiously, did not serve in submarines). At the same time as the torpedo, the navy started to make use of electricity for lighting and power, and responsibility for electrical installations was given to the torpedo branch as both were seen to be technical. In the early 1920s responsibility for 'electricity' was given to the engineering branch and the latter spawned a separate electrical branch in due course.

Of the 485 midshipmen studied for this thesis, representing 20% of those who became midshipmen between the wars, only twenty eight (6%) qualified as torpedo officers. However, how was the required torpedo expertise provided for the Fleet? In destroyers, even Home Fleet destroyers, one of the Lieutenants borne would be designated the torpedo officer and undergo training courses to 'qualify them for all the

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<sup>1</sup> 'Torpedo' was originally used to describe what is now regarded as a sea mine, or immobile explosive device.

duties of a Lieutenant including Gunnery and Torpedo Control'. The twenty seven day No 18 gunnery course and the ten day No 9 Torpedo course were deemed sufficient for this until 1926 when the torpedo component of the course was reduced to five days, designated a 'Refresher Course' because they had undergone torpedo training as a Sub-Lieutenant. In contrast, the specialist course was one year.<sup>2</sup> This suggests that either torpedo officers were being grossly over-trained, or their training was directed at broadening them into staff officers. The truth was probably somewhere in between. In the event when it came to war, RNVR officers undertook the duties in even Home Fleet destroyers perfectly satisfactorily.<sup>3</sup>

The branch was later merged with the Anti-Submarine (AS) branch to become the TAS branch. Roskill states that 'in 1933-34 a serious shortage of ... applications to specialise in the Torpedo branch' arose.<sup>4</sup> This does not appear to have led to any public attempt (e.g. by promulgating an AFO) to recruit more, whereas, as has been shown, this was done to meet a shortage of observers (which Roskill does not mention). In fact there had been a documented shortage of Torpedo officers (and Gunnery officers) in the early 1920s when '[t]he Naval Members of the [Admiralty] Board [were] unanimously of the opinion that it [was] most undesirable that there should be any departure from the present policy of taking for Specialist duties only those Officers who volunteer for them'.<sup>5</sup>

### The Signals Branch (S)

Signal (or more properly signals and wireless officers) had a dual function. They were responsible for communicating a commander's orders and wishes to his subordinates. As historically this had been done by flag signal, their appointments were as, for example 'Flag Lieutenant to...'. Confusingly the title of 'Flag' became attached to other officers on an admiral's staff who did not have a signals role, e.g. the flag captain was commanding officer of the flagship, the reference being to the admiral as a 'Flag Officer' one entitled to fly his flag at sea to designate his command role. An important and officially subsidiary role of the flag lieutenant was as personal factotum to the flag

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<sup>2</sup> AFO 281/26 *Gunnery and Torpedo Control Duties in Destroyers – Refresher Courses*.

<sup>3</sup> Anon: 'Joe Fowells: Torpedo officer who sent five tons of 'Stalin's gold' to the seabed after a bitter battle in Arctic waters' (Obituary) *The Daily Telegraph*, 11 September 2010.

<sup>4</sup> Stephen Roskill, *Naval Policy Between the Wars: The Period of Reluctant Rearmament*, (London: Collins, 1976) p. 241.

<sup>5</sup> ADM 167/64. Minute by Second Sea Lord dated 29 December 1920.

officer, carrying out largely social duties. Unfortunately, at times these duties became seen as more important; Lieutenant Commander Seymour was Admiral Beatty's flag Lieutenant (but was not a signals specialist) and while he performed his social duties to Beatty's entire satisfaction, Beatty later described him as having lost him three battles due to inept performance of his signalling duties.

Signals officers were seen as being close to the centre of affairs, but the social duties were not to everyone's taste.<sup>6</sup> As a 'tribal mark', signals officers would sport a white handkerchief, as required by dress regulations. However, instead of it being carried/worn protruding from the top pocket of the uniform reefer jacket, it was carried ostentatiously dangling from within the left cuff of that jacket. Of the 485 officers studied, twenty specialised in signals, i.e. 4%.

#### The Navigation Branch (N)

The role of navigating officer in a ship (the appointment) was lineally descended from the sailing master. Of the 485 officers studied, twenty six became navigation specialists, i.e. 5.4%. It tended to appeal to those of a mathematical bent.<sup>7</sup>

#### The Anti-Submarine Branch (A/S)

The Anti-Submarine branch appears to have been the most neglected branch between the wars, but it only came into existence in 1923 with the publication of the syllabus for the first course to be held at Greenwich.<sup>8</sup> There was obviously a fairly low take up of places as, unlike most specialist courses, volunteers were regularly sought thereafter.<sup>9</sup> Only eight of the 485 officers studied underwent AS training, i.e. 1.6%. Franklin shows there as having been about fifty two AS officers in 1939, but it is uncertain from his data how many of these had undergone the full specialist training and how many the shorter courses such as those for destroyer commanding officers.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Interview with Admiral Sir William O'Brien 22 April 2008.

<sup>7</sup> Interview with Captain SMW Farquharson-Roberts RN 24 April 2008.

<sup>8</sup> AFO 3035/23 *Anti-Submarine Course – Syllabus*.

<sup>9</sup> For example see AFO 150/25 *Anti-submarine [sic] Course – Call for Volunteers*.

<sup>10</sup> George Franklin, *Britain's Anti-Submarine Capability 1919–1939*, (London: Frank Cass 2003) pp. 36–39.

### The Hydrographic Branch (H)

The hydrographic survey branch was small, but with an illustrious history. It was responsible for surveying and producing and updating admiralty charts, and, outside the remit of this thesis, gave invaluable service during the Second World War particularly in support of amphibious operations. It required a very particular type of officer, who would be at sea for extended periods, often in small groups as the only officer. The records studied include one whose religious beliefs (Plymouth Brethren) led him to live 'a monastic and secretive life', which his commanding officer felt incompatible with his duties, specifically in small ships and groups, and he was reverted to general service, specifically to serve in large ships.<sup>11</sup> Unlike other branches, once entered, it was unusual to undertake general service appointments (unless formally reverted to general service, i.e. leave the branch). Progression and promotion, including to command and to flag rank was within the hydrographic branch. Of the officers studied, eleven volunteered for and undertook hydrographic specialist training.

### The Physical and Recreational Training Branch (P&RT)

The P&RT branch does not sit easily in the executive branch, but nor does it in any other. It existed to deliver physical training to members of the navy and oversee and organise sport. Most of the actual physical training was undertaken by ratings, but there was a requirement for officers to administer the branch. Of the officers studied, five volunteered for and undertook specialist P&RT training. While to some degree a professional backwater, and some undoubtedly took it as an easy career option, even, perhaps losing sight the nature of the branch itself – one officer's report read 'the drawback is his appearance – red in the face and portly'<sup>12</sup> – one of those studied became the captain of a cruiser after the war. Another P&RT specialist, out with the study, was Vice-Admiral Burnett. He specialised in 1911, but commanded destroyers during the First World War, returning to specialisation in June 1918, and then had appointments in and out of specialisation as lieutenant-commander, commander and captain, before spending most of the Second World War in a variety of Flag appointments afloat, culminating in being vice admiral commanding the 10<sup>th</sup> Cruiser Squadron on Arctic convoys.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> 2SIPersRec.

<sup>12</sup> 2SLPersRec.

<sup>13</sup> The Navy List (various).

## The submarine service – ‘The Trade’ (SM)

Why the submarine service is known to this day as ‘The Trade’ is unknown, but it predates the First World War. The first use of the term appears to be by Kipling writing in 1914, but he uses it as if it was well established.<sup>14</sup> Certainly in the Edwardian era being ‘in trade’ was still a pejorative term implying a degree of social unacceptability. It probably arose because officers serving in submarines had necessarily to get their hands (and a lot else besides) dirty; submarines were a cramped, uncomfortable, insanitary, and above all dangerous environment; significant numbers of submarines were lost in accidents between the wars. As is the nature of such terms, ‘the trade’ became a badge of pride.<sup>15</sup>

Unlike the other branches, the Submarine Service had far fewer opportunities and appointments for officers as they became more senior, indeed there were few appointments for lieutenant commanders, and most of those were in command or as staff officers. The result was significant numbers of lieutenants and lieutenant commanders returned to general service, most usually because they were either not recommended for submarine command or because having been recommended, they then failed the qualifying course for command, latterly known as ‘the perisher’.

Submarine service was popular because its very nature encouraged *esprit de corps* and allowed initiative in way unthinkable in the major units of the Grand Fleet. In 1920, there was one call for volunteers for officers to join the submarine service.<sup>16</sup> Otherwise it appears to have remained popular - despite the drawbacks - between the wars, fifty nine of the officers studied qualified as submariners. Interestingly it seems to have become more popular as war approached, twenty one of the 1935 cohort undergoing training of whom ten were to be killed in action during the Second World War.

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<sup>14</sup> ‘They ply their grisly blindfold games/In little boxes made of tin .../ That is the custom of “The Trade”’.

<sup>15</sup> Such, for example, as ‘the contemptible little army’.

<sup>16</sup> AWO 2804/20 *Officers for Submarine Service – Volunteers*.



## Conclusion

What will be apparent from the foregoing brief examination of the various specialisations is the disparity between them in terms of their relationship to the structure of the rest of the navy. It has been said that the executive branch was in three parts, the submarine service, the Fleet Air Arm and the rest, with little movement between them. This is manifestly untrue. Because of the very nature of the submarine service, with more officers required at the more junior level than there were appointments for as lieutenant commanders, there was in peace time a steady flow of senior lieutenants back to general service from the submarine service and to a lesser extent, the Fleet Air Arm. Indeed there is one instance among the studied officers of a qualified submarine commanding officer, who might be expected to stay in the branch, reverting to general service and another qualified submariner progressing to command of a 'TBD'. This flow was less, but still apparent, among Fleet Air Arm officers; two of the studied officers failed pilot and observer courses respectively and reverted to general service and commanded destroyers. They were the only two course failures recorded among all of those studied who undertook specialist training. Additionally, some officers, supposedly among 'the rest', who were effectively sequestered from the rest of the service such as hydrographic and P R&T officers actually advanced in General Service.

# TO THE NADIR AND BACK: THE EXECUTIVE BRANCH OF THE ROYAL NAVY 1918-1939

## APPENDIX D

### OFFICERS TRAINING RECORD AND CERTIFICATES

This appendix reproduces the record of experience of Douglas Henry Everett kindly made available by his grandson Robert Robson. They are included to show the nature of the documentation, not to illustrate the career of the subject, but as Rear Admiral D.H. Everett CB CBE DSO is deceased and this is included with the full consent of his surviving relative, it has not been anonymised.

As can be seen this document, form 'E.190', was introduced in 1910. The instructions on the second page have a surprisingly modern ring to them, stating that two copies were to be maintained and one was to be kept by the named officer, whose responsibility it was to ensure it was completed.

It will be seen that the records are repeatedly annotated in red ink indicating that a given section does not apply in war time due to 'AMO [Admiralty Monthly Order] 3176/17'.<sup>1</sup> This formalised restrictions on training imposed by the exigencies of war.

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<sup>1</sup> AMO 3176/17 *Midshipmen's Certificates (Form E. 190)*.

E.—190. (Established—February, 1910.)  
(Revised—April, 1915.)

*See A.M.O. 3176/17.*

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RECORD and CERTIFICATES OF  
Mr. *Douglas Henry Everett*  
during his service as Naval Cadet, Midshipman  
and Acting Sub-Lieutenant, including Results of  
the Examination for the Rank of Lieutenant.

---

C.W.  
Sta. 4332/15.  
Sta. 10006/15.

[7390] 39242/D1001 1000 11/15v G & S 108 123



Signature in full of the Officer to whom these Certificates relate.

*Douglas Henry Everett*

### CONTENTS.

1. Naval Cadet Passing-Out Certificate.
2. Certificate on leaving Training Cruiser.
3. Record of efficiency in all branches ("Former Service").\*
4. Qualifying Certificate—Boats and Signals.
5. Do. do. Engine Room Duties.
6. Do. do. Navigation Observations.
7. Certificates of examinations in Seamanship, Navigation and Pilotage, Gunnery, Torpedo and Engineering.

N.B.—This form is to be kept in duplicate for every Officer until he has passed for the rank of Lieutenant, and is to be passed from ship to ship, addressed to the Commanding Officer. It is to be handed to the Officer when he is due for examination for the rank of Lieutenant and produced by him at his professional examinations.

One copy is to be forwarded to the Admiralty when the results of all the examinations are recorded in it, the other is to be retained by the Officer.

The attention of Officers is called to the fact that they are themselves responsible for obtaining all the Certificates, &c., required throughout their service, and that applications should not be made to the Admiralty for copies of Certificates, unless every other means of obtaining them has failed or Certificates have been lost in unusual and exceptional circumstances.

\* Vide "Record of Efficiency in all Branches," page 5.

Number on Books of R.N. College, Dartmouth 2056

In Pursuance of the Orders of the Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty,

Mr. Douglas Henry Everett

Naval Cadet, borne on the books of:— FROM TO

Royal Naval College, Osborne .. .. "Bowway" Cadet

" " " Dartmouth .. .. 15<sup>th</sup> April 1915 . 4 May 1916

has been examined in the subjects of the authorised curriculum, and has been awarded a

Third Class in the Subjects of the College Course.

His conduct under training has been satisfactory.

He can swim.

He receives the following allowance of sea time in months:— Nil

Date of Birth	16 <sup>th</sup> June 1900
Date rated Midshipman	15 <sup>th</sup> August 1916.

*N. Caldwell*

REAR ADMIRAL  
R.N. College, Dartmouth.

Date 4<sup>th</sup> May 1916



See A.M.O. 3176.17

Certificate on Leaving Training Cruiser.

R.N. College  
Keyham

This is to certify that Mr. D. H. Everett, Naval

Cadet, has been through a course of training on-board this ship. <sup>at</sup> College

His knowledge and ability are:—

- Officers like qualities — V.G.
- In Seamanship — Good
- In Navigation — V.G.
- In Pilotage — V.G.
- In Gunnery — & Torpedo Good
- In Torpedo and Electrical Work — } Good
- Ship Construction & Explosives }
- In Engineering — Not in Course
- In Journal — Good

He has shewn great attention to his work, and his

conduct has been V.G.

Given <sup>at</sup> on-board His Majesty's Ship R.N. College Keyham, this

10<sup>th</sup> day of August 1916.

W. Mansell, Captain.

## Record of Efficiency in all Branches ("Former Service").

1. Awards for ability as an Officer in all branches ("Former Service"), viz.—Seamanship, Navigation and Pilotage, Gunnery, Torpedo and Engineering, are to be assessed at intervals of six months from commencement of time as Midshipman, and on leaving the ship, provided not less than three months have elapsed since the last assessment.

2. On becoming an Acting Sub-Lieutenant the awards for Seamanship and Navigation are to cease; those for Gunnery, Torpedo and Engineering are to be continued until the Officer passes in those subjects.

*Does not apply in War Time. A.M.O. 3176/17.*

3. Should the date of assessment come before an Officer has been three months in the ship, the award is to be deferred until three months have expired.

4. The award is to be made in marks, full marks being 100 in each subject. The award is to be governed by the percentage of marks required for the different classes in the several examinations for the rank of Lieutenant, thus—

In Seamanship, Gunnery and Torpedo.—

First Class—85 or more

Second „ —65 to 84 inclusive

Third „ —50 to 64 „

In Navigation and Pilotage:—

First Class—80 or more

Second „ —65 to 79

Third „ —50 to 64

In Engineering:—

First Class—70 or more

Second „ —55 to 69

Third „ —40 to 54

Regard is to be had throughout to the age and seniority of the Officer.

5. Should it be considered that an Officer is not up to the standard of efficiency of a third class in any subject, he may be given marks below that class.

6. When the Officer presents himself for examination for the rank of Lieutenant, the mean of all these awards, each subject being taken separately, will count in the examination in that subject as "Former Service."

7. These marks are to be in no way influenced by his conduct, but are to represent his Commanding Officer's opinion of his efficiency as an Officer in the actual performance of his practical duties.

8. As it is impossible for the Commanding Officer to have personal knowledge of each Officer's proficiency in all subjects, he is to take to his assistance in assessing the marks the Officers responsible for each instruction, viz.:—the Executive, Navigating, Gunnery, Torpedo and Engineer Officers.



# RECORD OF EFFICIENCY.

## SEAMANSHIP.

Ship	Period of Service in Ship	Number of days in the Department during the period	Marks	Signature of Executive Officer	Captain's Initials
"Zealandia"	4. 9. 16		86	R. D. Davinport	R.D.
	15. 12. 16				
"Resolution."	1. 7. 17	30	90	H. A. Foster	H.A.
	17. 12. 16 } 60 20 5. 17 }				
"	1. 7. 17	14	90	H. A. Foster	H.A.
	1. 7. 17 } 60 1. " 17. }				
"	2. 11. 17	25	90	H. A. Foster	H.A.
	1. 5. 18 } 60				

Total Marks \_\_\_\_\_

Mean . . . . . \_\_\_\_\_



RECORD OF EFFICIENCY.

NAVIGATION AND PILOTAGE.

Ship	Period of Service in Ship	Number of days in the Department during the period	Marks	Signature of Navigating Officer	Captain's Initials
<i>Zealandia</i>		<i>4-9-16</i> <i>16-12-16</i>	<i>85</i>	<i>Ph B. Smith</i>	<i>RED</i>
<i>"Resolution" 17.17.</i>	<i>17. 12. 16.</i> <i>30. 6. 17.</i>	<i>59</i>	<i>90</i>	<i>Quinn</i>	<i>SM</i>
<i>"</i>	<i>1. 7. 17.</i> <i>1. " 17.</i>	<i>48</i>	<i>75</i>	<i>Quinn</i>	<i>SM</i>
<i>"</i>	<i>2. 11. 17.</i> <i>1. 5. 18.</i>	<i>45</i>	<i>80</i>	<i>Quinn</i>	<i>SM</i>

Total Marks \_\_\_\_\_

Mean .... \_\_\_\_\_

# RECORD OF EFFICIENCY.

## GUNNERY.

Ship	Period of Service in Ship	Number of days in the Department during the period	Marks	Signature of Lieutenant (G)	Captain's Initials
Zealandia	4. 9. 16		85	Ghichston	R.P.
	16. 12. 16				
"Resolution"	17. 12. 16 } 20. 0. 17 }	0	100	B.P. [Signature]	B.P.
	1. 7. 17 } 1. 11. 17 }				
"	1. 7. 17 } 1. 11. 17 }	21	100	B.P. [Signature]	B.P.
"	2. 11. 17 } 1. 5. 18 }	18	100	B.P. [Signature]	M.P.
			4 285		
			2 96		
			49		

Total Marks \_\_\_\_\_

Mean . . . . . \_\_\_\_\_



RECORD OF EFFICIENCY.

TORPEDO.

Ship	Period of Service in Ship	Number of days in the Department during the period	Marks	Signature of Lieutenant (T)	Captain's Initials
"Zealandia"	4-9-16 16-12-16		90	R. H. Brookhals	R. H.
"Resolution"	17. 12. 16 } 30. 6. 17. }	Nil	86	G. N. Dace	G. N.
" "	1. 7. 17 } 1. 11. 17. }	0	85	G. N. Dace	G. N.
" "	2. 11. 17 } 1. 5. 18 }	17	80	G. N. Dace	W. H.

Total Marks 341 170  
 Mean . . . . 85 34

# RECORD OF EFFICIENCY.

## ENGINEERING.

Ship	Period of Service in Ship	Number of days in the Department during the period	Marks	Signature of Engineer Officer	Captain's Initials
Zealandia	4. 9. 16 to 6. 12. 16	Nil 9 lectures of 1 hr's duration	-	W. H. Glassford	R. W. E. H.
	17. 12. 16 to 30. 6. 17				
Resolution	17. 12. 16 to 30. 6. 17	15	90	A. P. S. Dupen	E. H.
"	1. 7. 17 to 1. " 17	Nil.	-	Arthur P. Dupen	P. H.
"	2. 11. 17 to 1. 5. 18	20	90	G. P. Messer	W. H.

Total Marks

Mean



See A.M.O. 3176/17.

QUALIFYING CERTIFICATES.

BOATS AND SIGNALS.

This is to certify that Mr. \_\_\_\_\_, Midshipman,  
has qualified in the following subjects:—

- (1) Handling of boats under oars and sail.
- (2) Handling of boats under steam.
- (3) Semaphore and Morse.

\_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_ Captain, H.M.S. "\_\_\_\_\_"  
 \_\_\_\_\_ \*H.M.S. "\_\_\_\_\_"  
 \_\_\_\_\_ \*H.M.S. "\_\_\_\_\_"

Date.

\*Two Officers of the Military Branch.

See A.M.O. 3176/17.

## QUALIFYING CERTIFICATES.

### BOATS AND SIGNALS.

This is to certify that Mr. \_\_\_\_\_, Midshipman,

has qualified in the following subjects:—

- (1) Handling of boats under oars and sail.
- (2) Handling of boats under steam.
- (3) Semaphore and Morse.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Captain, H.M.S. " \_\_\_\_\_ "

\_\_\_\_\_  
\*H.M.S. " \_\_\_\_\_ "

\_\_\_\_\_  
\*H.M.S. " \_\_\_\_\_ "

Date.

\*Two Officers of the Military Branch.



See A.M.O. 3176/17.

## QUALIFYING CERTIFICATES.

---

### ENGINE ROOM DUTIES.

---

This is to certify that Mr. \_\_\_\_\_, Midshipman,  
has satisfactorily carried out the duties of—

- (a) Stoker Petty Officer of a Stokehold;
- (b) Stoker Petty Officer of an Engine Room;

and that he has satisfactorily taken charge of—

- (a) An Engine Room;
- (b) All the Boiler Rooms.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Engineer Officer.

Approved, \_\_\_\_\_ Captain, H.M.S. "\_\_\_\_\_".

Date.

See A.M.O. 3176/17.

QUALIFYING CERTIFICATES.

NAVIGATION OBSERVATIONS.

This is to certify that Mr. \_\_\_\_\_, Midshipman,

has completed the prescribed list of observations, as specified in the King's Regulations, and

that the books containing the worked-out observations have been sent to the Office of the

Director of Naval Education for inspection.

First set sent in \_\_\_\_\_

Second set sent in \_\_\_\_\_

Navigating Officer or }  
Naval Instructor }

Navigating Officer or }  
Naval Instructor }

Captain \_\_\_\_\_

Captain \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_



**Certificate of Examination in Seamanship for the Rank of Lieutenant.**

Sec A.M.O. 3176/17.

Mr. \_\_\_\_\_, Midshipman, having been examined in Seamanship by this Board for the rank of Lieutenant, and having produced the prescribed certificates, viz. :—

- (1) Qualification in handling boats;
- (2) Qualification in Morse and Semaphore;

is declared to have sufficient knowledge to take charge, as Officer of the Watch on deck, of a ship of war at sea, and to perform satisfactorily such duties as may be required of an Officer of the rank of Lieutenant, and is hereby awarded a \_\_\_\_\_ Class Certificate.

Signature. Rank.

\_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

**Oral Examination :—**

	Full Marks.	Marks awarded.
Rigging, etc. . . . .	75	
Anchor work . . . . .	125	
Rule of Road . . . . .	100	
Officer of Watch duties . . . . .	250	
Organisation . . . . .	150	
Signals . . . . .	150	
Journal . . . . .	50	
Former Service . . . . .	100	
Total	<u>1,000</u>	

For a First Class . . . 850 marks.  
 „ Second Class . . . 650 „  
 „ Third Class . . . 500 „

*Not to be filled in at present.*  
*A.M.O. 3176/17*

**Certificate of Examination in Navigation and Pilotage for  
 the Rank of Lieutenant.**

**Preliminary Examination at Sea.**

This is to certify that Mr. \_\_\_\_\_, Midshipman,  
 having been examined by this Board, is declared to have qualified in navigation and pilotage for  
 the rank of Lieutenant, subject to passing a further examination in pilotage at the Navigation  
 School.

Signatures { \_\_\_\_\_ (N.)  
 \_\_\_\_\_ (N.)  
 Captain.

Date \_\_\_\_\_

	Full Marks.	Marks awarded.
Section I. —Reckoning and observations .. .. .	250	
Section II. —(a) Theoretical navigation and nautical astronomy (120); (b) Tides (15); (c) Compasses (15) .. .. .	150	
Section III.—(a) Winds, currents and passages .. .. .	30	} 200
(b) Chronometers .. .. .	30	
(c) General system of buoyage, etc. .. .. .	30	
(d) Use of charts and sailing directions .. .. .	20	
(e) Fixing positions and shaping courses .. .. .	20	
(f) Tides and Tide Tables .. .. .	20	
(g) Compasses .. .. .	25	
(h) M.B., B.C.I., and Grant's Manœuvring Board .. .. .	25	
Former Service .. .. .	100	
<b>Total .. .. .</b>	<b>700</b>	

350 marks are required to qualify; no classes will be awarded.  
 The examination in Sections I. and II. is written, in Section III. by viva voce.

*N.B. —The examination in Section I. Section II. (a) and Section III. (a), (b) and (c) is final.*

**Examination at Navigation School.**

Acting ~~Sub~~-Lieutenant Douglas Henry Everett. MBE. R.N.  
 having been examined for the rank of Lieutenant on completing  
 the prescribed course at the Navigation School, is declared to  
 have qualified, and his marks taken in conjunction with those  
 for former service entitle him to a Second Class Certificate.

Date February 19<sup>th</sup> 1921 .

*referred*  
 Captain.  
 H.M. Navigation School.

	Full Marks.	Marks obtained.
I. Magnetic Compass & Terrestrial Magnetism.	60.	19
III. Chronometer Work.....	30.	14
IV. Meteorology, Winds and Currents.....	30.	17
VI. Tides.....	70.	32
VII. Ship and Fleet Work.....	110.	73
VIII. General Navigation and Pilotage.....	200.	151
Officer of Watch Duties (at Signal School)	100	93
<b>Total.</b>	<b>600</b>	<b>399</b>
Former Service.....	50	41
<b>Grand Total.</b>	<b>650</b>	<b>440</b>

For a First Class	520	Marks.
" Second "	422	"
" Third "	325	"



*Not to be filled in at present*

*A.M.O. 3176*

Certificate of Examination in Gunnery for the Rank of Lieutenant.

Preliminary Examination at Sea.

Acting Sub-Lieutenant \_\_\_\_\_  
 having been examined in Gunnery by this Board for the rank of Lieutenant, is awarded the following marks:—

Signature	Rank
_____	H.M.S.
_____	H.M.S.
_____	H.M.S.

Subject	Full Marks.	Date	Marks awarded.
Duties of O.O.Q. (Drill . . . . . 75)	150		
(Remainder . . . . . 75)			
Fire Control . . . . .	75		
Hydraulics . . . . .	75		
Ammunition . . . . .	50		

**Final Examination in Gunnery School.**

<sup>Acting</sup> Sub-Lieutenant *Douglas H. Christie*  
 having been further examined for the rank of Lieutenant on completing the prescribed course at the Gunnery School, is declared to have qualified, and his marks, taken in conjunction with those awarded at the previous examination, entitle him to a *2nd* Class Certificate.

*John*

Date *16/8/21* *Sub-Lieut bond 144 for* CAPTAIN, H.M.S. "EXCELLENT."

Subject.	Full Marks.	Marks obtained.
Gun Drill	50	31
Stripping	50	44
Field Training	60	49
Ammunition	50	38
Hydraulics	50	36
Turret Drill	50	45
Range Finder	20	14
Fire Control, Theoretical	40	33
"    "    Practical	30	26
Director	50	42
Lecture Subjects and Note Book	100	65
Former Service	50	48
Total.....	600	448

For a 1st Class... ..480 Marks  
 .. " 2nd .. ..390 ..  
 .. " 3rd .. ..300 ..

*Note to be filled in at present*

*A.M.O. 377*

Certificate of Examination in Torpedo for the Rank of Lieutenant.

Preliminary Examination at Sea.

Acting Sub-Lieutenant \_\_\_\_\_ having been examined in Torpedo by this Board for the rank of Lieutenant, is awarded the following marks:—

Signature.	Rank.
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

Date \_\_\_\_\_

*Oral Examination:—*

	Full Marks.	Marks Awarded.
Whitehead—Part I. . . . .	100	
"    Part II. . . . .	100	
Director . . . . .	60	
Mining . . . . .	60	
Electrical Work . . . . .	180	
Former Service . . . . .	100	
Total. . . . .	<u>600</u>	

To qualify, 300 marks.

EXAMINATION IN TORPEDO SCHOOL.

Sub } Lieutenant **Douglas H. Everett**  
 Acting }

having been examined for the rank of Lieutenant on completing the prescribed course at the Torpedo School, is declared to have qualified, and his marks, taken in conjunction with those for former service, entitle him to a **Second** Class Certificate.

*CR Payne*

Captain of Torpedo School.

Date 21<sup>st</sup> Jan. 1921

	Full Marks.	Marks Awarded.
Electrical High Power Viva Voce . . . . .	150	<u>122</u>
"    Low Power " " . . . . .	50	<u>35</u>
Mining . . . . .	200	<u>96</u>
Torpedo Control " " . . . . .	200	<u>96</u>
Whitehead . . . . .	400	<u>253</u>
Total . . . . .	<u>400</u>	<u>34</u>
Former Service . . . . .	40	<u>287</u>
Grand Total . . . . .	<u>440</u>	<u>287</u>

For a First Class . . . . .	352 marks.
"    Second Class . . . . .	286 " "
"    Third Class . . . . .	220 " "



*Not to be filled in at present*

*AMO. 3176/17*

## Certificate of Examination in Engineering for the Rank of Lieutenant.

This is to certify that Acting Sub-Lieutenant \_\_\_\_\_,  
has been examined in Engineering by this Board for the rank of Lieutenant and is hereby awarded  
a \_\_\_\_\_ Class Certificate.

NOTE.—(It is to be understood that the Certificate that the Officer is qualified to perform  
satisfactorily such duties as may be required of a Junior Engineer Officer, is to be obtained after  
completing the prescribed period of Engine Room duty as a Sub-Lieutenant).

Signature.	Rank.

Date \_\_\_\_\_

	Full Marks.	Marks awarded.
Engineering Note-Book .. .. .	100	
<i>Written Examination</i> .. .. .	400	
<i>Oral Examination—</i>		
Main Machinery .. .. .	50	
Boilers .. .. .	50	
Auxiliary Machinery and Steamboats .. .. .	50	
Duties of Engineer Officer of the Watch at sea and of Engineer Officer of the day in harbour .. .. .	90	
Examinations, adjustments, repairs, and minor mishaps to machinery and boilers .. .. .	160	
Former Service .. .. .	100	
Total .. .. .	1,000	
For a First Class ..	700 marks.	
„ Second Class ..	550 „	
„ Third Class ..	400 „	

See A.M.O. 3176/17

Certificate of having completed a period of  
Engine Room duty.

\_\_\_\_\_

This is to certify that Sub-Lieutenant \_\_\_\_\_  
has completed a period of \_\_\_\_\_ months' duty in the Engine Room Department of  
this Ship and is considered capable of performing the duties of a Junior Engineer Officer.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Engineer

Approved,

\_\_\_\_\_  
Captain H.M.S. " \_\_\_\_\_ "

Date, \_\_\_\_\_





# **TO THE NADIR AND BACK: THE EXECUTIVE BRANCH OF THE ROYAL NAVY 1918-1939**

## **APPENDIX E**

### **KEY ADMIRALTY PUBLICATIONS**

#### **Admiralty Fleet Order 2315/32**

#### **Confidential Admiralty Fleet Order 2023/32**

These two publications are the most important policy statements on training made by the Admiralty between the two World Wars. The context of their being disseminated and quite lengthy extracts are included in the text of the thesis in Part 2 Chapter three. In view of their importance they are here reproduced in full. Of note, at the end of AFO 2315/32 is a list of preceding AFOs that were cancelled, which can be taken as being indicative of a major change.





Section 2.—PERSONNEL, PAY, SERVICES, DISCIPLINE, etc.

2315.—Junior Officers—Training.

(C.W. 7042/32.—30.9.1932.)

SECTION I.—GENERAL.

The scheme of training of junior officers has been under consideration, and certain modifications of the present system have been found necessary in the light of experience of the past few years.

1. The objects which the training must achieve are:—

- (a) General Education.
(b) Acquisition of Professional Knowledge.
(c) Development of Officer-like Qualities.

2. General Education.—A general education is necessary to form a foundation on which subsequent professional knowledge can be built. It must be general in nature and should not specialise on the side of science and mathematics beyond what is needed as a basis for the technical courses for the rank of Lieutenant.

3. Acquisition of Professional Knowledge.—The ultimate purpose of professional knowledge is to enable a Lieutenant to carry out the normal duties of his rank. Except for seamanship and the elementary knowledge during the course for the rank of Lieutenant. The objects of the courses for professional knowledge required to that which is absolutely necessary.

4. Officer-like Qualities.—After the acquisition of elementary professional knowledge, the conditions requisite for the development of officer-like qualities for these three points, which form the most important training of all, to be emphasised that although professional knowledge is an important factor in the power to command, it is in itself insufficient, and must not be allowed to prejudice the training in officer-like qualities.

5. It has, therefore, been decided that the training of junior officers is to be considered as falling into three periods, each with its primary object being revised.

1st Period.—As Cadet, when education is the primary consideration. For the Dartmouth Cadet, the education should be general in character except for such elementary professional instruction as is necessary before he goes to sea.

2nd Period.—As Midshipman, when the development of officer-like qualities is the primary consideration. During this period, the elementary professional knowledge already acquired is applied and developed in carrying out the duties of an officer.

3rd Period.—As Acting Sub-Lieutenant when the acquisition of professional knowledge is the primary consideration, and general education is continued.

SECTION II.—TRAINING CRUISER.

7. It has been decided to reintroduce a sea-going training cruiser for Cadets, Dartmouth Cadets, on completion of their training at Dartmouth, and to send to this ship for two terms instead of going direct to ships of the main Fleet, as at present. The training of Special Entry Cadets and Paymaster Cadets now carried out in H.M.S. "Heron" will also be transferred to the sea-going training cruiser and continued on the present lines.

8. The objects of the training of the Dartmouth Cadets in the cruiser are:—

- (a) To give them practical experience in seamanship and navigation.
(b) To give them that elementary practical instruction in gunnery, torpedo and engineering which is necessary to enable them to carry out their duties as Midshipmen in a sea-going ship.
(c) To give them an insight into the conditions under which men of the lower deck live and work.

SECTION III.—MIDSHIPMEN.

9. Under the present regulations, there has been a tendency to concentrate on the attainment of a definite standard of technical knowledge to the detriment of training in officer-like qualities and power of command. To correct this, the regulations governing the training of Midshipmen have been revised. Commanding Officers are to ensure that the instruction is practical, and are to check any tendency to concentrate on mechanical details.

10. General.—The responsibility for the training of Midshipmen at sea rests with the Commanding Officer.

11. The primary object of the period of service as Midshipman is to be regarded as an officer. For this purpose the Midshipman is to be regarded as an integral part of the ship's organisation, and his duty as an officer is to take precedence over all other work. Subject to this he will require some technical instruction, practical and theoretical, to enable him to carry out his duties, and to keep his mind active and his knowledge progressive.

12. All instruction is to be given by or under the immediate supervision of an officer.

13. The various syllabuses are given in Appendix A to this Order.

14. The duties of Midshipmen are to be changed periodically with the object of giving as wide experience as possible. This particularly applies to plotting and control duties on which comparatively large numbers of Midshipmen are necessarily employed. Continuous employment of individual officers on these duties, to the possible exclusion of duties more calculated to develop their powers of initiative and command, is not in the best interests of the Service, or of the officers themselves.

15. The technical instruction, practical and theoretical, is to be limited to that necessary to enable a Midshipman to carry out his duties, which involve a general knowledge of the ship and its armament. No attempt is to be made to take him over the whole ground which will be covered later by the Sub-Lieutenant's courses. As a general rule the theoretical instruction is to be given by the Instructor Officer.

16. Midshipmen have to prepare for the seamanship examination for the rank of Lieutenant. In addition, certain periods are laid down during which the Midshipmen are to be given special training, viz:—

Table with 2 columns: Activity and Paragraph reference. Engine room ... Paragraph 22. Air course ... Paragraph 23. Destroyers ... Paragraph 24.

They should be detailed as Signal Midshipmen when cruising with the Fleet or when, for other reasons, the experience is likely to be of value to them.

17. When the ship is at sea, provision is to be made to enable Midshipmen to correct it by taking their own observations and working them out at the time. Each Midshipman is to keep a navigation work book, in which all his observations are to be recorded, and all computations connected with them or with his keeping of the reckoning are to be made in the first instance.

(C2273)

On completion of 12 months' service at sea as Midshipman, this book is to contain not less than six astronomical fixes of the ship as specified below:—

- (a) Two altitudes of the sun, one being on the Meridian.
(b) Two altitudes of the sun, one being near the Meridian.
(c) Two altitudes of the sun, neither being on or near the Meridian.
(d) One altitude of the sun, and one of another celestial body, neither being on the Meridian.
(e) Two altitudes of celestial bodies other than the sun (preferably taken during twilight) at approximately the same time.
(f) An altitude of any celestial body and a bearing of a terrestrial object.

Note.—The arrangement employed in the Admiralty Manual of Navigation, Vol. I, is to be adopted in the working out of all observations.

One month before his examination in seamanship for the rank of Lieutenant, the work book is to contain a second set of six fixes, taken on dates subsequent to that on which he completed 12 months' service as Midshipman.

The Instructor Officer will supervise observations and check computations. He will select six fixes from those obtained as suitable to complete the minimum number required, being guided by the note to this paragraph. He will sign each "Fix" as taken and worked by the Midshipman in question as free from errors, and as in satisfactory agreement with the official position of the ship at the time.

On completion of each set of fixes he will sign a certificate in each officer's navigation work book to the effect that a complete set of observations between the appropriate dates has been taken and marked out correctly and has been checked by him.

Commanding Officers will inspect the books from time to time and will produce them at the periodical inspection of the ship and when so ordered by the Flag or Senior Officer.

In the event of the work done being found unsatisfactory, the officer will be required to take and work more observations before promotion to the rank of Lieutenant.

Note.—

The object of this regulation is to ensure to Midshipmen actual experience of practical navigation and to enable them to acquire sufficient skill in the various operations to induce confidence in their own results. It is also desired to cultivate a habit of working neatly and systematically under practical conditions.

The work done should not, however, be regarded as unsatisfactory on account of errors which have been discovered and corrected. Star fixes are of the first importance. They should be taken in the appropriate to the occasion. The six fixes should be selected for their reliability and as into the navigation work book should be disallowed.

Fixes should be worked out as soon as taken. Form S.411a has been abolished.

18. They are to be given instruction in French or other modern language at least once a week when tuition is available (see King's Regulations and Admiralty Instructions, Article 370 (4)).

19. Repeating and Deckyard Periods.—Full advantage is to be taken of these periods not only for instruction, but also for placing Midshipmen in charge of working parties and giving them definite responsibilities in connection with the work according to circumstances.

20. Record of Progress.—Form E.190 is being revised to enable more information of the officer's duties and training to be recorded. As regards seamanship, the records in the form must be sufficiently detailed to form a close guide to future instruction. Instructions for the completion of the form will be found on it.

21. Former Service Marks.—On two occasions, viz., six months before, and just before the seamanship examination for the rank of Lieutenant, the Commanding Officer is to allot marks (former Service marks) for officer-like qualities and power of command (including leadership, ability, attention to duty), but not for professional knowledge. Maximum marks on each occasion are 100. The sum of the two awards is to be included in the marks allotted in the seamanship examination.

Note (i).—The scale of marks is to accord with the scale employed in the seamanship examination, viz:—

Table with 2 columns: Class and Marks. First class ... 85 or more. Second class ... 84-70. Third class ... 83-60. Below third class ... under 60.

The allocation of former Service marks below 90 on any occasion does not in itself entail failure in the seamanship examination.

Note (ii).—Assessments may be made at shorter periods (minimum three months) when a Midshipman's appointment is changed during the last 12 months of his service as such. Should the date of assessment come before an officer has been three months in the ship, the award is to be deferred until three months have expired.

22. Engineering Training.—Object.—The object of the engineering training of Midshipmen is to provide knowledge of the conditions obtaining in the machinery departments, of the organisation of the engine room department, and of the limitations to which machinery is subject. Detailed knowledge of machinery is not required.

Routine.—Midshipmen are to carry out two months' engineering training divided into two periods. During these periods the Midshipmen are to be attached to the engine room department, and are not to be considered available for action stations or divisional drills. "Action stations" provide an opportunity for Midshipmen to study ship construction as applied to action repairs, and to obtain practical instruction in pumping, flooding and draining.

Engineering training is to include engine room watchkeeping at sea; the periods must be so arranged as to provide opportunity for this.

Note.—Exceptions to this may be made at the Captain's discretion during periods of war routine or on special occasions.

23. Air Course.—All Midshipmen are to undergo a course of three weeks' duration in elementary Naval aeronautics in an aircraft carrier. The course is to be taken as soon as possible after attaining four months' seniority. The names of those who are unable to take the course as Midshipmen are to be specially reported to the Admiralty on discharge to shore courses, in order that arrangements may be made for them to undergo the course after appointment as Sub-Lieutenant. The routine of instruction is to be arranged by the Commanding Officer of the carrier, who will detail officers to carry it out, every opportunity being taken to give Midshipmen practical experience of work connected with aircraft. As far as possible, the course is to be held during periods of Fleet training, and, where practicable, not more than eight Midshipmen are to be included in any one course.

Note.—The course may be reduced to two weeks at the discretion of the Commander-in-Chief should lack of flying facilities necessitate it.

24. Destroyer Course.—Midshipmen serving on stations where destroyer training can be arranged are to be detailed by the Commander-in-Chief to undergo a period of three to four months' training in destroyers during the year immediately preceding their last six months' service as Midshipmen.

25. Journals.—A Journal (S.519) is to be kept by each Midshipman during the whole time of his service as such, and is to be produced at the examination for the rank of Lieutenant. It should afford an opportunity for the officer to write clear and intelligent accounts and appreciations of current events, including Fleet exercises. It should include sketches, the number of which will depend on the aptitude and duties of the officer concerned. Compulsory sketches should not exceed two a month.



SECTION IV.—COURSES FOR THE RANK OF LIEUTENANT.

23. The object of each course has been laid down so as to limit the extent of professional knowledge required to that which is absolutely necessary.

24. The various syllabuses have been modified, in some cases the subjects have been re-grouped, and the percentage of marks required for certification have been revised.

25. Objects of Courses for the Rank of Lieutenant:—

- EDUCATIONAL COURSE.—To enable the Acting Sub-Lieutenant to obtain the maximum benefit from the professional instruction he will subsequently be given.
Note.—During the period at R.N. College, Greenwich, acting Sub-Lieutenants are given an Introductory War Course.

- GENESY. (i) To inculcate officer-like qualities. (ii) To fit an officer to undertake the following duties of a Lieutenant at sea, viz.:— (a) O.O.Q. of a turret or hand-worked gun. (b) O.O.Q. in a destroyer, sloop, etc. (c) Splicing, Bate or T.S. Officer in a capital ship or cruiser. (d) H.A. Control Officer. (e) Officer in Charge of a platoon ashore.

- TORPEDO. To enable an officer to— (i) Have sufficient knowledge of the torpedo and searchlight armament of a ship for the purposes of control, and to carry out the duties of a Control Officer. (ii) Have sufficient electrical knowledge to carry out the duties of O.O.W. and O.O.Q. (iii) Have sufficient knowledge of explosives, depth charges, mines and P.V.s, and minesweeping to perform Lieutenant's duties in a small ship.

- NAVIGATION AND PILOTAGE. To fit an officer to carry out the navigational and pilotage duties of an Executive Officer as laid down in King's Regulation and Admiralty Instructions, Article 184, clause (2), viz.:— "Officers liable for Navigating Duties.—All Executive Officers are liable to be called upon to perform navigating and pilotage duties in His Majesty's ships."

- DIVISIONAL COURSE.—To fit an officer to carry out the duties of Divisional Officer and O.O.W. in his duties with personnel, and to develop characteristics of leadership and physical fitness. SIGNAL COURSE.—To fit an officer to carry out the duty of Signal Officer in a ship.

- 26. The present courses are to be modified as shown hereunder:— GUNNERY. Services to be re-grouped for examination purposes as follows:— (i) Gunnery, comprising section leading, field training, gun drill, target drill and general gunnery. (ii) Fire control, comprising fire control, H.A. control, director, rangefinder and fittings. (iii) Material subjects, comprising stripping, hydraulic, ammunition and machine gun.

Percentages for Certificates. 1st class 85 per cent. of total marks. 2nd class 75 per cent. of total marks. 3rd class 60 per cent. of total marks. Sixty per cent. must be obtained to qualify, and a minimum of 50 per cent. in each group.

TORPEDO. To remain as at present laid down in O.U. 5419, Torpedo Training Manual, 1930.

Percentages for Certificates. 1st class 85 per cent. of total marks. 2nd class 75 per cent. of total marks. 3rd class 60 per cent. of total marks. Sixty per cent. must be obtained to qualify, and a minimum of 50 per cent. in each group.

NAVIGATION AND PILOTAGE. Survey section to be deleted and sections on Tides and Meteorology combined in one section.

- Sections will thus be:— (i) Compass. (ii) Astronomical Navigation. (iii) Practical Chart Work. (iv) Tides and Meteorology. (v) Ship and Fleet Work. (vi) Charts and Buoyage.

\* Examined at R.N. College, Greenwich. Percentages for Certificates. 1st class 80 per cent. of total marks. 2nd class 70 per cent. of total marks. 3rd class 60 per cent. of total marks.

Sixty per cent. must be obtained to qualify, and a minimum of 50 per cent. in each section, except in (iv) Tides and Meteorology, where 40 per cent. minimum must be obtained. King's Regulations and Admiralty Instructions will be amended in due course.

APPENDIX A.

MIDSHIPMEN.

SYLLABUS OF INSTRUCTION AFLOAT. SEAMANSHIP.

Object.—To provide an officer with a groundwork of seamanlike knowledge.

- I.—Rigging ... (a) Rigging and fittings. (b) Hawsees, steel and hemp. (c) Tackles and boats falls. (d) Boat gear. (e) P.V. fittings and methods of getting in and out. (f) Sheers and derricks. II.—Anchor Work ... (a) Anchor work in all its branches. (b) General knowledge of permanent moorings. III.—Rule of the Road ... Thorough knowledge. IV.—Officer of the Watch, etc. (a) K.R. and A.I., Chapter XXXII. (b) General duties at sea and in harbour. (c) Handling the ship, effect of rudder and screws. (d) Station keeping. (e) Man overboard. (f) Life-saving apparatus. (g) Boat work. (h) Minesweeping. General knowledge of method known as the "A" sweep.

- Section. Instruction. V.—General ... General knowledge of:— (a) Internal organisation of the ship's company. (b) Messing and berthing arrangements. (c) Procedure on Commissioning. (d) Stationing of hands for the principal evolutions. (e) General duties of the Accountant Branch in the ship. VI.—General ... General knowledge of:— (a) Destroyer work. (b) Target work.

SYLLABUS OF INSTRUCTION OF MIDSHIPMEN IN SIGNALS.

- VII.—1. V/S.—Signal Manual. (a) Colours of flags and pendants. Uses of substitutes. (b) Plates of formations and orders. (c) Chapter I. Articles:— 4 25 44 11 26 46 16 28 47 17 30 61 18 31 62 (paras. 8 to 18 only). 19 34 70 20 33 68 23 40 77 24 43 81 (in conjunction with V/S Instructions, Arts. 150 and 152). (d) Chapter II. "Use of distinguishing signals." (Fair knowledge). (e) Chapter III. "Organisation of a Fleet." (Fair knowledge). (f) Chapter IV. "Instructions for the conduct of a Fleet." (g) Chapter V. "Instructions for the conduct of cruisers." (h) Chapter VI. "Instructions for the conduct of destroyers and destroyer screens." (Arts. 161 to 168). (i) Chapter VII. "Instructions for the conduct of signalling." (Arts. 182 to 187). (j) Chapter VIII. "Manoeuvring signals." (k) Chapter IX. "Instructions for the distribution of gunfire signals." (In conjunction with Aircraft Appendix—fair knowledge.) General principles only. (l) Chapter X. "Signals to be made or displayed on certain occasions." (Arts. 225 to 230, 237, 242, 245 and 282. Slight knowledge of Arts. 238, 241, 243, 246, 248 and 249). (m) Chapter XI. "Distinguishing Lights, Position Lights, Speed and Helm Signals." (n) Chapter XII. "Drafting and despatch of messages." (Arts. 282 to 286). (o) Instructions for the use of the Fleet Code. (p) Principal meanings of flags and pendants. (q) Knowledge of arrangement of Equal Speed Signals and how to look them up. (r) Knowledge of how signals should be looked up, and publications supplied to the Signal Department and told briefly what each contains, and by what type of ship or vessel they are used.

Fleet Code, Vol. I. ... Miscellaneous ... Midshipmen should be shown all the various books and publications supplied to the Signal Department and told briefly what each contains, and by what type of ship or vessel they are used. (C3273)

- Section. Instruction. VII.—1. V/S.—continued. Practice Signalling (a) To make and read semaphore at the rate of 12 words a minute (to make with hand flags, and to read with hand flags and mechanical). (b) To read a standard flashing exercise at the rate of 8 words a minute. 2. W/T ... (a) Appendix A to Handbook of W/T, 1931. (b) A knowledge of the naval and commercial W/T organisation on the station on which the Midshipman is serving to include method of:— (i) Communication to and from Admiralty. (ii) Communication to and from ships on other stations. (iii) Communication to and from ships on the same station. (c) General capabilities of D.F.

VIII.—Ship Construction

- 1. Construction ... General and local stresses induced in ship's structure. Materials used and their fastenings. General disposition of structural material. Midship sections of battleship and cruiser. Compensation for local loss of strength. Supports to gun mountings. Corrosion—preservation of ships. 2. Watertight sub-division. Transverse and longitudinal watertight bulkheads. Decks and double bottoms. Watertight sub-division of a battleship and a destroyer. Maintenance of watertight sub-division. 3. Pumping, flooding and draining arrangements. Fresh water, salt water and sanitary services. Method of transferring oil for correction of trim or heel. 4. Ventilation ... Systems of ventilation. Methods of ventilating living spaces, machinery spaces, wash-places, and other typical compartments. Types of open air inlets and discharges. 5. Theoretical ... Meaning of the terms—Buoyancy, displacement, tons per inch immersion, centre of buoyancy, Centre of flotation. Curves of displacement and tons per inch. Change of mean draught on proceeding from salt to fresh water. Approximate formulae. Types of equilibrium. Conditions for the stable equilibrium of a floating ship. Metacentric height. Typical values. Features governing heights of G. and M. Effect on rolling. Inclining experiment. General effect of free water. Trim. Moment to change trim one inch. Change of trim due to (a) shifting weight; (b) adding or removing weight; (c) flooding a compartment. Approximate formulae. Stability at large angles. Curve of stability, range, stability statement. Maintenance of stability and seaworthiness. Flooding boards. 6. Protection against attack by gun, torpedo, mine and aircraft.

**VIII.—Ship construction—continued.**

7. General design.—Requirements to be met in various classes of warship, Influence of armament, protection, speed, endurance, seaworthiness, stability, strength and habitability on the design.

**SEAMANSHIP EXAMINATION.**

**Examiners.**—The Board of Examiners will consist of three or more officers not below the rank of Commander, of whom one at least shall be a Captain. The Board will be appointed by the Commander-in-Chief.

**Requirements of Examination.**—To determine whether the candidate has sufficient knowledge to take charge as Officer of the Watch in a ship of war at sea, and to perform satisfactorily such duties as may be required by a Lieutenant, R.N.

Subject.	Marks allotted.
I.—Rigging	Oral 75
II.—Anchor Work	Oral 100
III.—Rule of the Road	Oral 75
IV.—Officer of the Watch	Oral 150
V.—Organisation	Oral 100
VI.—General	Oral 50
VII.—Signals	W/T Practical Paper 30 Signal Paper 30
VIII.—Construction	Practical 40 Paper 100
Journal	50
Former Service	200
	1,000

**Notes.**—Papers in Signals and Construction to be set under the direction of Commander-in-Chief.

**Certificates.**  
The following marks are required:—  
For a 1st class certificate ... 85 per cent.  
" 2nd " ... 70 "  
" 3rd " ... 60 "  
50 per cent. in each subject is required to pass.

A statement showing the total marks and class of certificate awarded is to be forwarded to the Admiralty.

**GUNNERY.**

**Object.**—To teach the knowledge of gunnery subjects required by a Midshipman in the performance of his duties as such.

**Note.**—The officers should receive instruction as indicated hereunder so far as may be applicable to the ships in which they are serving.

**SECTIONS AND INSTRUCTION.**

- I. Gun Drill.**  
To be able to drill and take charge of the gun's crew, and to perform the duties of any number at a hand-worked gun in the ship.  
To be able to line up, set and read off director instruments at the gun.
- II. Stripping.**  
To understand the action of a hand-worked breech mechanism and of the component parts of the mounting at which gun drill was taught.

**III. Field Training.**  
R.N. Handbook of Field Training, 1926:—  
(a) To be able to drill a section with detail in Part I.  
(b) " " " " " " without detail in Part II.  
(c) To be able to carry out Part IV, Sect: 1-20.  
(d) To understand the different formations of a platoon.

**IV. Machine Gun.**  
(a) To understand the action of a Lewis gun.  
(b) To be able to use a Vickers Maxim gun (see Note (iii)).

**V. Ammunition.**  
(a) To be able to differentiate between the various types of shell and cartridges supplied to the ship and to know their purposes.  
(b) Manner of handling and setting fuzes with which the ship is supplied.  
(c) Method of operating the flooding, drenching and magazine ventilating systems fitted in the use of the cooling system.  
(d) Regulations relating to the use of the cooling system.  
(e) Naval Magazine and Explosive Regulations—General knowledge of Chapters I-VII.

**VI. Hydraulics.**  
In ships with non-transferable mountings—General arrangement of the mounting.

**VII. Turret Drill.**  
The principal duties of the various numbers of turrets' crews at drill.

**VIII. Rangefinding.**  
(a) Practical rangefinding.  
(b) Tests of rangefinders.

**IX. Fire Control.**  
(a) Definition of terms.  
(b) Use of instruments in the ship.  
(c) Standard method of passing orders.  
(d) Principles of range and bearing plotting.  
(e) Control procedure so far as it concerns getting essential information to main and secondary armaments.  
(f) Use of spotting rules and general knowledge of their application to a handworked armament.  
(g) Elementary knowledge of the control procedure for high angle fire, as carried out in the ship.

**X. General Gunnery.**  
(a) Responsibilities of O.O.Q. (as laid down in O.U. 2255).  
(b) General organisation of ship for action and cruising stations.

**XI. Sighting.**  
(a) Functions fulfilled by gun sights and manner of use.  
(b) Use and misuse of optical instruments.

**XII. Director.**  
(a) Knowledge of differences between director and quarters firing.  
(b) To be able to line up instruments.

**XIII. Shooting.**  
Purposes of instructional appliances used in the ship. (See Note (ii)).  
**Notes.**—  
(i) Musketry and pistol courses to be carried out at the same time as ship's company.  
(ii) Sub-calibre firing to be carried out if opportunity offers; also six rounds of full calibre at the gun at which they have been drilled.  
(iii) Annual firing with machine guns to be carried out if possible.

**TORPEDO.**  
**Object.**—To teach the knowledge of the torpedo subjects required by a Midshipman in the performance of his duties as such.

**I.—Torpedo Department.**  
To understand the functions performed by the torpedo department in relation to the general organisation of the ship.

**II.—Electrical.**  
To enable a Midshipman to carry out his duties:—  
(i) At action stations.  
(ii) On watch at sea and in harbour.  
(iii) At evolutions.  
(a) Operations involved in putting on and taking a dynamo off the ring main.  
(b) Outline of system of distribution of current for lighting and power.  
(c) Arrangement of main switchboard. Duties of watchkeeper.  
(d) Control of magazine and navigation light systems.  
(e) Temporary lighting. Outline of system of alternative supply of power in action.  
(f) Principle of operation of motor controllers and starters, and practical control of motors employed in the ship.  
(g) Method of switching on, preparing and adjusting searchlights for burning.  
(h) General arrangement of L.P. supply system.  
(j) General arrangement of fire, torpedo and S/L control circuits. Outline of working principles of instruments. Lining up.  
(k) General arrangement of gun firing circuits (local and director) and torpedo firing circuits.  
(l) General arrangement and brief working principles of instruments employed for internal communications. Manipulation of those instruments, including navyphone and telephone exchanges.  
(m) General rules to be observed in the handling of electrical equipment, and the necessary action in the event of fire or flooding.

**III.—Explosives.**  
To enable a Midshipman to carry out his duties:—  
(i) In charge of a boat in which a demolition party is embarked.  
(ii) With the organisation for landing a demolition party for service ashore.  
(a) General description and typical uses of explosives supplied to the ship.  
(b) Fitting primers and charges.  
**Note.**—Practical demolition to be carried out if possible.

**IV.—Paravanes and Depth Charges.**  
To enable a Midshipman to carry out his duties:—  
(i) When working P.Vs.  
(ii) On watch at sea.  
(a) Outline of principles of working of P.Vs. and depth charges.  
(b) Uses of P.Vs. and depth charges.

**V.—Whitehead.**  
To enable a Midshipman to carry out his duties:—  
(i) At torpedo action stations.  
(ii) In charge of a boat recovering torpedoes.  
(a) General idea of the torpedo, including the war-head, pistol, collision head, and recorder, with an elementary knowledge of the functions of the various parts and fittings.  
(b) General layout of S.F. and A.W. tubes, firing arrangements, safety arrangements and air supply.

**V.—Whitehead—continued.**  
(c) General idea of the performance of existing torpedoes.  
(d) An idea of the work involved in charging, preparing for running, and adjusting the torpedoes carried in the ship.  
(e) Recovery, treatment after running, handling and transport of torpedoes.  
(f) Drill at torpedo tube. If possible, "light" torpedoes should be fired and recovered by Midshipmen themselves.

**VI.—Torpedo Control.**  
To enable a Midshipman to carry out his duties in connection with torpedo control.  
(a) Theory of torpedo sights, T.C. discs and clear range indicators.  
(b) Restrictions on torpedo fire.  
(c) Effects of error.  
(d) Best firing position.  
(e) Duties of torpedo control and firing officers.

**Theoretical Instruction.**  
Theoretical instruction in Electricity and Magnetism should aim at consolidating principles learned at Dartmouth and amplifying them as necessary in their application to the foregoing syllabus.

**NAVIGATION AND PILOTAGE.**

**Objects.**—(i) To enable a Midshipman to carry out his duties in a ship and to take the observations as laid down.  
(ii) To form a practical basis for his subsequent courses as Sub-Lieutenant.

**I.—Compass.**  
(a) Swinging ships. Precautions before swinging. Swinging by reciprocal bearings, bearing of distant object, and by azimuths of heavenly body.  
(b) Magnetic compasses. Chetwynd's improved liquid compass and bimble. Appliances supplied. Removal of a bubble.  
(c) Principle and use of gyro compasses used in H.M. ships.

**II.—Astronomical Navigation.**  
(a) Explanation of terms in terrestrial navigation. Conversion of courses and bearings. Obtaining deviation by bearings by shore objects.  
(b) Approximate formula for rhumb line. Working the reckoning by traverse table and by plotting.  
(c) Mercator's chart. Meridional parts. Accurate formulae for rhumb line.  
(d) Great Circle distance and true bearing by calculation. Description of how a ship may follow approximately the Great Circle. Composite track. General principles of construction of gnomonic charts. Method of plotting approximate Great Circle track on Mercator chart.  
(e) Explanation of terms in Astronomical Navigation. Projection of celestial sphere on planes of:—  
(1) Observer's meridian.  
(2) Observer's horizon.  
(3) Equator.

Zone time. H.A.M.S. and H.A.T.S.  
H.A. + R.A. = R.A.M. = H.A.M.S. + R.A.M.S.



Section.	Instruction.
II.—Astronomical Navigation—continued.	(f) General theory of position lines and the value of a single position line. Choice of bodies for fixing by a cut.
	(g) General theory of corrections to sextant altitudes of a heavenly body.
	(h) Position lines by observation of sun or star when not on the meridian.
	Position lines by observation of planet or moon when not on the meridian.
	Position line by observation of Polaris.
	(i) True bearing and deviation by altitude and time azimuths. Use of azimuth tables.
	(j) Position by two astronomical observations.
	(k) Distinction between maximum and meridian altitudes. Finding approximate zone or D.W. time of meridian passage of a heavenly body.
	(l) Finding what bodies pass meridian between two given times and which are suitable for observation.
	(m) Position line by meridian altitude of any heavenly body.
	(n) Approximate times of theoretical and visible sunrise, sunset, moonrise, moonset, and duration of twilight.
	(p) Choice of bodies for observation. Identification of stars and use of star globe.
	(q) Theory and use of sextant, Vernier, artificial horizon and station pointer.
III.—Chronometer	(a) Management and care of chronometer and watches.
	(b) Supply, stowage and safe distances from electrical appliances.
	(c) Value of daily comparisons.
	(d) Obtaining errors by W/T and time ball. Enumeration of other methods and their respective reliabilities.
	(e) Rating chronometers.
	(f) Calculation of the epoch.
IV.—Meteorology	General knowledge of:—
	(a) Distribution of atmospheric pressure over the earth's surface and causes of variation of such pressure.
	(b) Cause of wind and effect of the earth's rotation upon its direction.
	(c) Permanent winds. Trades. Westerlies. Their effect upon ocean passages.
	(d) Periodic winds. Monsoons. Land and sea breezes.
	(e) Laws of storms and elementary weather forecasting.
	(f) Synoptic charts.
	(g) Storm signals.
	(h) Currents. Principal currents of the world. Causes of currents.
	(i) Meteorological instruments. Barometers, aneroid and aneroid, to read, adjust and correct. Barograph. Thermometers, ordinary, maximum, minimum. Hygrometer.

Section.	Instruction.
V.—Surveying	Nil.
VI.—Tides	(a) Elementary theory of effect of the sun and moon.
	(b) Tidal definitions.
	(c) Progress of tidal undulation.
	(d) Admiralty tide tables:— To find the Times and Heights of H.W. at any place from:— (i) Standard Ports in Tide Tables, Part I. (ii) Tidal Differences in Tide Tables, Part II. (iii) From non-harmonic constants or tidal differences, as shown on pages 22-27 inclusive, Tide Tables, Part II.
	(Note.—No knowledge of harmonic constants is expected.)
	(e) Tidal streams. Practical use of tidal atlas and tides and tidal streams, British Isles.
VII.—Ship and Fleet Work.	(a) Definitions. Advance, transfer, etc.
	(b) Keeping the dead reckoning at manoeuvre.
	(c) The mooring board and Battenberg course indicator.
	(d) Forming on a moving ship.
	(e) Anchoring on a ship already anchored.
	(f) Strategical and tactical plotting.
VIII.—General Navigation	(a) Practical use of charts, sailing directions, and the various books, tables, etc., supplied.
	(b) All methods of fixing position by terrestrial objects, including W/T D.F. Shaping course. Allowance for current. Navigation in fog.
	(c) Practical use and management of all navigational instruments and appliances supplied.
	(d) Practical application of Sections VII and VIII in picket boat or drifter, as opportunity offers.

## Theoretical Instruction.

Section I (c).  
Section II.  
Section VI.—(a), (b) and (c).

## OBSERVATIONS.

As laid down in paragraph 17 of this Order.

## DESTROYER TRAINING.

Midshipmen serving on stations where destroyer training can be arranged are to be detailed by the Commander-in-Chief to undergo a period of three to four months' training in destroyers during the year immediately preceding their last six months' service as Midshipmen.

2. *Objects of the Training.*—The objects of this period of training are, primarily, to enable Midshipmen to gain experience in the duties of officers, and thereby to develop character, sense of responsibility, leadership and self-reliance. The training is also intended to give Midshipmen opportunities of putting to practical use the instruction given in their former ships, and to provide opportunities for instruction in subjects which are peculiar to destroyers and subjects in their general work which can be learnt more easily in destroyers than in large ships.

3. *System of Training.*—During the time the Midshipmen are in destroyers, their training should be directed in such a manner as to give them an insight into destroyer life and to train them to undertake the duties of Sub-Lieutenant in a destroyer. This should go a long way towards the attainment of the primary object of their appointment to destroyers. The Midshipmen are to be regarded as part complement of the destroyer, and are to be given responsible practical work to do; in addition, when time is available without prejudice to their training as officers, systematic instruction should be given in the subjects outlined in the ensuing paragraphs, but it is to be impressed on Midshipmen, on joining a destroyer, that they are expected to acquire, by their own efforts rather than by formal instruction, knowledge of all subjects which their service in destroyers affords them opportunity of studying.

4. Midshipmen are not to remain in destroyers when they are refitting.

5. Subject to compliance with the main objects laid down in paragraph 2, opportunity should be taken to give the following training and instruction:—

(a) *General Duties.*—To keep Second Officer of Watch at sea and Second Officer of Day in harbour, and as far as possible to be allowed to carry out the duties themselves. When opportunity offers, to take charge of watch drills and such duties as streaming and hauling in targets, anchor work, hoisting boats, handling wires, hoisting torpedoes, etc. To acquire a general knowledge of officers' duties, drafting Service reports, ships' fittings, anchors, cables, hawsers, boats, etc.

(b) *Tactics.*—To be given every opportunity to study tactics, and to attend discussions thereon when suitable. Handling destroyers and station keeping, conduct of destroyers during day and night attacks. Asdic screening, minesweeping. Organisation of flotilla. Flotilla and divisional movements.

(c) *General Knowledge of Ship.*—General lay-out of a destroyer, showing all compartments and their use; management of machinery under way; pumping, flooding and drainage system.

(d) *Navigation and Pilotage.*—Duties of the officer detailed for navigation in a destroyer, e.g., correction of charts, working of dead reckoning, fixing the ship, strategical plotting, etc.

(e) *Gunners.*—Destroyer gunnery organisation and fire control, the types of firings carried out by destroyers annually. To take charge of a section or a platoon when small arm companies are landed. Routine of magazine inspection in destroyers.

(f) *Torpedo and Electricity.*—Torpedo control, use of depth charges, control of searchlights, handling of H.S.M.S., the electrical equipment of a destroyer, excluding technical details.

(g) *Signals.*—Two flashing exercises a week and two semaphore exercises a week to be arranged by Captains (D) when flotilla is in company, or by Senior Officer of detached units.

6. *Reports by Commanding Officers of Destroyers.*—On conclusion of a Midshipman's service in a destroyer, the Commanding Officer is to report confidentially in writing to Captain (D) on the Midshipman's officer-like qualities, his progress in seamanship, gunnery, torpedo and navigation, and is to suggest assessments in accordance with the instructions in Form E.190. (See also paragraph 8 below.)

7. *Examinations.*—In order further to ascertain the progress made by the Midshipmen, flotilla oral examinations are to be arranged by Captain (D) shortly before the conclusion of Midshipman's destroyer training period.

8. *Record of Instruction and Progress.*—The progress of the Midshipmen, except in engineering, based on the reports of their Commanding Officers and examining officers, is to be assessed on Form E.190 by Captains (D) on conclusion of the period of training in destroyers, provided approximately three months have been served in destroyers.

9. *Reports to Commanding Officers of Midshipmen's Own Ships.*—The reports by Commanding Officers of destroyers and the results of the oral examinations are to be forwarded by Captains (D) to the Commanding Officers of Midshipmen's own ships for their information, through the usual channels, or as the Commander-in-Chief may direct. A copy at the same time is to be forwarded to the Commander-in-Chief.

10. *Reports to Admiralty.*—Reports are to be rendered to the Admiralty in all cases when Midshipmen are detailed for destroyer training, showing the names of the Midshipmen concerned and the destroyers to which they are sent, and the dates of joining and discharge.

(A.F.O. 980/27 and 900/31.)

(A.F.O. 78/30, 1723/30 and 901/31 are cancelled.)

Section 2.—PERSONNEL, PAY, SERVICES, DISCIPLINE, etc.  
2023.—Training Policy.

(C.W. 6238/32.—26.8.1932.)

Their Lordships have had under consideration the question of the training of the Fleet, and Their investigations have led to the conclusion that the all-round efficiency of the Naval personnel may not always have received due attention owing to over concentration upon training in the use of weapons and material. In this mechanical age there is liable to be a tendency to over-estimate the importance of the machine at the expense of the efficiency of the personnel.

2. Their Lordships therefore wish to draw attention to the principles on which the training should be based as indicated in the Naval War Manual.

3. The second paragraph of the Naval War Manual points out that success in war depends more on moral than on physical qualities. It goes on to state that—

“The development of the necessary moral qualities is, therefore, the first object to be attained in the training of the Navy. Next in importance are organisation and discipline, the training of the mind and body, and the proper use of weapons. The final essential is skilful, resolute and understanding leadership.”

The last paragraph of the Manual states:—

“Naval training, therefore, has two aims, each of which must receive its due share of time and thought:—

On the one hand SKILL—to maintain and to use material.

On the other hand MORALE—the driving force which governs the keenness to learn and the effort to employ.”

4. Morale, as here used, includes all those personal qualities such as initiative, resource, leadership, enthusiasm and discipline, which are essential for the efficient use of men, whereas skill covers the use of material whether in the form of a fleet or a machine.

5. In Their Lordships' view the efficiency of the Fleet depends primarily upon the possession of a personnel endowed with those qualities that are essential to success in war, and then upon the ability of this personnel to use the material provided.

6. In the work of the Fleets, much time and thought has been devoted to the development of skill, which can be gauged by tangible results. Morale, which should be the constant pre-occupation of all Commanding Officers, is liable to be taken too much for granted and may not therefore have received the consideration that its importance demands.

7. A very high standard of armament efficiency has been aimed at and achieved, but the armament drills which are necessary to attain this high level of skill have absorbed so much time and energy that little has been left over for other forms of training. In consequence, there has been a tendency to neglect the basic training of the individual.

8. The First Lord in his speech on the Navy Estimates summed up the situation very clearly:—

“We have already had reports from six Commanders-in-Chief on this subject. The most remarkable feature of these reports is their unanimity regarding the existence of certain main defects in the Naval Service. I can sum up these defects by saying that for years past so much attention has been given at sea to achieving the highest possible degree of weapon efficiency and maintaining the Fleet in a state of almost immediate readiness for battle, that the broader aspects of training the personnel have suffered in many directions. If I may put it as a layman to laymen, the balance between training men to work machinery and training men to become seamen and all that that implies has been upset. It is nobody's fault; it has grown up almost unconsciously and



inevitably in these days of mechanisation, and I think it is primarily due to two things—too short commissions and too frequent changes of officers and men during these commissions. I do not want the House to think that I am in any way asking for a lower standard of efficiency in weapons or material. Quite the contrary, for I believe that the highest degree of efficiency is attained only when the balance of training in material and morale is properly adjusted. Two main results have been produced by this dis-equilibrium of training. The first is that discipline and morale have suffered, because intensified fleet training has left insufficient time to develop in officers and petty officers the arts of leadership and the power of command, and a too centralised system of fleet command, a too highly organised routine, tends to crush initiative, and fails to provide opportunities for the development of individuality."

9. In this connection it is Their Lordships' view that while weapon skill can be achieved by an intensive period of drill, the development of the qualities of leadership and initiative requires years of application of a system designed with that end in view.

10. From the point of view of human capacity, Their Lordships consider that it is possible to attempt too much in peace. To use an analogy—a professional boxer will always keep himself in condition, but when he has a fight in prospect, he goes into strict training. To attempt to keep himself always at fighting pitch would lead only to staleness or physical breakdown.

11. Similarly, the highest weapon skill calls for great physical and mental exertion, and to maintain it continuously, except under the impulse of some great driving force such as war, is no more possible with the fleet than with a man. The result can only be staleness, which automatically reduces efficiency.

12. It is therefore Their Lordships' desire that for the present the training of the Fleet shall be based on a policy of giving precedence to the development of the personal qualities of individuals.

13. Though by this it may appear that a lower standard of efficiency than has heretofore been aimed at is being accepted, it is considered that the greater attention given to the individual will increase the general efficiency.

14. As an indication of the lines on which it may be possible to put this policy into practice, it is the intention that—

- (i) Adequate time should be given to newly commissioned ships for "shaking down" (four weeks) as a preliminary to a "working up" period (two weeks).
- (ii) Adequate opportunity should be given to Commanding Officers for the training of their officers and men.
- (iii) Decentralisation should be encouraged so as to give more responsibility and more opportunity for the exercise of command and initiative.

15. Steps are now being taken to reduce changes in personnel during a commission as far as practicable, and this, in conjunction with recognised "shaking down" and "working up" periods, will, it is considered, enable the efficiency of the armament to be maintained without the necessity of so many armament drills, but in any case Their Lordships consider that some of the time now given to these drills must be devoted to the training of the individual.

**2024.—Royal Marines—Promotion, etc., of Non-Commissioned Officers**

**TO THE NADIR AND BACK: THE EXECUTIVE BRANCH OF THE  
ROYAL NAVY 1918-1939**

**GLOSSARY**





AFO	<p>Admiralty Fleet Orders. Until 1923 these were known as ‘Admiralty Weekly Orders’ (AWO). They were issued in sequence, with an individual numerical designator, followed by a year designator, e.g. 256/29 was the 256<sup>th</sup> AFO of 1929. On rare occasions, AFOs would be issued with a suffix letter, e.g. AFO 3015a/ 30. Its content, in this case establishing a ‘Committee to look at methods of Officer Entry’, bears no relation to AFO 3015/30 concerned with ‘Commanders Air course’. Each weekly set would comprise AFOs (sic, despite the implied repetition of the plural) under various headings; the first ‘FLEET ORGANISATION, EXERCISES, NAVIGATION ETC’, the second containing personnel matters ‘PERSONNEL AND INTERNAL ORGANISATION OF THE SHIP, etc’, or latterly ‘PERSONNEL, PAY, SERVICES, DISCIPLINE, etc’. Confidential Admiralty Fleet Orders (CAFOs) were published separately, but numbered in the same sequence as the AFOs, and would be indicated by their number only in the AFO weekly publication as having been ‘<i>published confidentially</i>’. If marked with an ‘*’, they were ‘communicated to the press’.</p> <p>Each AFO includes below its title a file number from the originating department for example AFO 632/27 has ‘(C.W.2278/27. – 11.3.1927.)’ [brackets in the original] which in this case indicates that it originated with the ‘Commission and Warrant’ section that managed officers careers. Sometimes this has allowed the original file to be found.</p> <p>All AFOs are indexed by capitalisation within the titles, hence some apparently odd capitalisations that are seen. More highly classified AFOs containing communications and cryptographic matters were issued in separate sequences.</p>
Articles of War	<p>The Articles of War date back to the mid seventeenth century and were later incorporated into the Naval Discipline Act (qv). They comprised a varying number of articles which had to be displayed permanently in all HM Ships and Establishments and read monthly to the assembled ships company. Apart from the First Article which</p>

	concerns religious observance, the rest are concerned with penalties for misconduct in war etc.
Bearing (referring to manpower)	The number of men actually serving in the ship, or 'borne' (on the ships books).
BR	Book of Reference. A numbered series of mostly technical manuals on every conceivable topic of possible relevance to the naval service. Even the Bible and Book of Common Prayer were issued as BRs.
Braid	See distinction lace.
BRNC	The Britannia Royal Naval College at Dartmouth. Often referred to colloquially as 'Dartmouth'.
CW1	First form in the 'Commission and Warrant' series. This form being 'raised' (i.e. completed in a specific case) was, after Field's reforms, the first stage on the route to commissioning a rating.
Commander	A rank. With the definite article, the executive officer (qv) or second in command of a ship or establishment under a captain.
Commanding Officer	The officer of whatever rank appointed in command of a seagoing ship, colloquially referred to as 'the captain' irrespective of rank.
Commission	1. Document, signed by the sovereign, which 'constitute and appoint[s]' an officer in the Royal Navy, from which 'a commissioned officer'; see also 'Warrant'. 2. A warship is described to as being 'in commission'. A ship's commission was initiated by the reading of a commissioning warrant. Only after it had been formally read to the ships company could the ship wear a white ensign (qv).
Complement	A ships complement is the officially authorised list of billets or jobs in that ship. A ship might have a peace complement and a war complement; the latter inevitably larger. She would thus need to be 'brought up to' her war complement on mobilisation. See also 'Bearing'.
Executive Officer	'An' executive officer refers to a member of the executive branch. 'The' executive officer of a ship or shore establishment was the senior member of the executive branch borne (subordinate to the commanding officer and excluding any staff officers) and second in

	command of the ship or shore establishment. See also 'X'.
Foc'sle	Abbreviated from 'Forecastle' the foremost part of the ship. Originally and properly an enclosed space, but often used to describe the foremost part of the upper deck of a ship.
GS	Not an official designation, but used informally to indicate a non-specialist or 'General Service' officer, referred to informally as a 'salthorse'.
Gunroom	An annex to the wardroom for junior officers (and cadets if borne (qv.), midshipmen and Sub-Lieutenants) which was run as a separate mess. The senior Sub-Lieutenant – the 'Sub of the Gunroom' - was president, i.e. in charge of it.
(the) hands	The lower deck (qv.) component of the ships company. Used in formal orders e.g. 'Call the hands' (time to wake up) and informally.
Hawse pipe	Steel tube leading from the foc'sle to the side of the ship through which the anchor cable passed. Going up by the hawse pipe was a slang term used for a rating ascending from the lower deck (qv.) and becoming an officer.
'In' - vs - 'On'	A man, officer or rating, served 'in' a ship, not 'on' it. Use of the latter term was taken as being indicative of not knowing the service and its ways.
Lower Deck	'The Lower Deck' is and was a term used to describe ratings, i.e. non-officers. It is derived from the accommodation/living space for ratings being on the lower decks of a ship (in the Merchant Service the accommodation for ratings was in the foc'sle). In the Royal Navy, officers were traditionally accommodated in the after end of the ship, and were sometimes referred to as being 'down aft'. See also 'Wardroom'. (Note: In the submarine service, 'down aft' has a totally different connotation, referring to the engine room and related compartments).
Mess	A mess is a living space (but see 'potmess'). These are segregated by rank and rate, junior officers messing in the gunroom (qv.) if the ship was large enough to warrant one, officers in the wardroom (qv.) mess. Senior ratings had a separate mess and junior ratings messes, which except in the very smallest ships, were segregated by branch,

	e.g. the 'stokers mess'. No-one – officer or rating - would enter another's mess except by invitation unless on duty e.g. for formal rounds.
Navy List	A very useful source document which, during the period covered by this thesis, was published monthly. As well as an alphabetical list of all Royal Naval Officers and those on the retired list, it lists officers by branch and seniority, and Commands, ships and establishments with the key officers. As well as entry regulations it additionally it lists academic prizes, scholarships etc open to officers and their offspring.
Naval Discipline Act	The Naval Discipline Act, often referred to as the 'NDA' was the legal basis for the existence of the Royal Navy. Unlike its sister Army and Air Force Acts it did not have to be passed annually by parliament, and was infrequently revised. It includes the 'Articles of War' (qv.).
Part of ship	A ship was traditionally divided into parts, commonly fore, middle (or top or main) and mizzen, and further sub-divided into port and starboard. Originally, landsmen, i.e. not entered as seaman, were called waist men or waisters (sp.), referring to the midship portion of the ship, its waist. The general usage, derived from sailing ships, was still used during the period. Latterly the term has been used colloquially to describe a person's area of responsibility, and/or area of duty. Hence an order (used to this day), 'Hands to work part of ship' or as a denial of responsibility 'Sorry, not my part of ship'.
Potmess	Originally a dish made up of multiple ingredients and/or leftovers. Qualified with the prefix either 'proper' or 'right' to indicate severity it was/is commonly used to describe confusion or disorganisation.
Private ship	A ship not part of a unit such as a flotilla or squadron. This usually implied detached service.
Pusser	With a definite or indefinite article, pusser describes a supply officer, but confusingly, dependent on context, 'the pusser' can refer to the whole navy. Expressed as a possessive, i.e. 'pusser's' describes naval equipment e.g. a 'pusser's burb' was a naval issue raincoat (burberry). As an adjective, it was used to describe an individual with a very naval outlook or behaviour, 'He is really pusser', or to

	describe the correct way to carry out an evolution, manoeuvre etc.
Quarter Deck	By the period covered by this thesis, the aft-most weather deck of a warship. Only accessed by officers or ratings if on duty ('dutymen'). Hence its use as a term for being an officer, even in official correspondence (see also 'hawse pipe' and 'lower deck').
Quarterly report	If an officer transgressed he could be placed on 'Quarterly Report' – often referred to colloquially as 'quarterly'. The process was initiated by his Commanding Officer, and the reports would take the form of Confidential S206's (qv.) rendered to the Admiralty. The Commanding Officer (who might well not be the one who had initiated the process) could in any report recommend that the process be ceased, which had to have the approval of the Admiralty Board. However, if the officer's performance had not improved sufficiently after one year, i.e. four reports, the matter would be considered by the Admiralty Board. They could, and did, then dismiss the officer from the Service, without appeal.
Required on Board	An officer could be 'Required on Board' for duty for a varying length of time. As such, he could not go ashore except on duty and certainly not on leave. Technically, this was not a punishment...
S206	Form in the 'S' (for seagoing units) series. This was the confidential report on an officer. It underwent two major revisions during the period.
Scheme of Complement	See 'Complement' and 'Watch and Quarter Bill'
Seniority	Every officer was and is either senior or junior to every other officer in the service. If they are of differing ranks, the distinction is obvious. For those of the same rank, the date that they were promoted to that rank indicates which of them was the senior. If promoted on the same day, then the officer's name that appears before the other in the 'Navy List' is the senior. An increase in seniority could be awarded to cadets for academic distinction (termed 'Marks for former service') or decreased as a punishment by court martial. Seniority could affect pay and was used to decide eligibility for selective promotion, see 'zone'.

Union flag	The national flag of the United Kingdom. When flown by a warship in commission from the jack staff (the flagpole at the bows) it is termed the Union Jack. It is also the flag of an Admiral of the Fleet, if worn at the foremast head.
Wardroom	The officers mess. Properly the term referred to the dining area, the remainder being the 'wardroom ante-room'. Officers were automatically members of the wardroom mess, and the executive officer was normally mess president. Except in very small ships the commanding officer was not a member of the wardroom; he messed by himself.
Warrant	1. A document issued by the Admiralty which appoints a Warrant Officer. 2. A 'punishment warrant' was used to institute a significant punishment beyond the powers of a ships commanding officer.
Watch and Quarter Bill	This listed the Officers and ratings of a ship against the jobs they were required to do at various times and states. See also Complement.
Watch on, stop on	Continuously on duty.
White ensign	The flag of the Royal Navy, comprising a red cross of St George on a white ground with a Union flag in the upper canton next to the mast. Worn (not flown) at the stern or from the foremast at sea. If worn at the foremast head and either yard arm by a ship going into action, termed 'Battle ensigns'.
Zone	Officers who were eligible for selective promotion by virtue of their seniority (qv) falling between promulgated dates was termed as being 'in zone'. Once more senior, he was termed 'over zone' or 'passed over'. There were rare instances of over zone promotions, particularly in the Fleet Air Arm immediately before the Second World War, but they were more common during the war.

**TO THE NADIR AND BACK: THE EXECUTIVE BRANCH OF THE  
ROYAL NAVY 1918-1939**

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Captain S.M.W. Farquharson-Roberts RN (*interview 24 April 2008 at his home in Hampshire and subsequent correspondence*). Note: this officer is a distant relative of the author.

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