

Selection and Early Career Education of Executive Officers in the Royal Navy
c1902-1939

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Abstract

This thesis is concerned with the selection and early career education of executive branch officers in the Royal Navy c1902-1939. The thesis attempts to place naval selection and educational policy in context by demonstrating how it was affected by changing naval requirements, external political interference and contemporary educational reform. It also explores the impact of the First World War and the Invergordon mutiny upon officer education.

The thesis discusses the selection of potential executive officers, exploring what methods were used, why they were used and how they were developed over time. It discusses the increasing openness of the officer corps of the Royal Navy to boys of talent, irrespective of their background; and shows that this trend was driven by political demand, fuelled by the increasing number of well educated lower middle class boys, and welcomed by many in the Royal Navy.

The thesis demonstrates that the Fisher-Selborne Scheme of officer education combined existing naval practice with recent educational developments to produce a unique and innovatory educational system. It shows how many of the assumptions on which the scheme was founded were subsequently proven to be wrong, and demonstrates its gradual dismantling through the inter-war years.

The thesis considers the development of the Special Entry scheme, initially in response to a shortage of junior officers but later as a means of broadening entry to the officer corps. It contrasts the fortunes of the two schemes in the inter-war period, in which the educational side of the Special Entry scheme was largely unaltered.

Overall the thesis seeks to place the development of the Royal Navy's systems for the selection and early career education of executive officers in context by exploring how and why they were developed and their response to the changing fortunes and shape of the Royal Navy.

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