

研究会記録

Conceptualising Discipline in the Royal Navy in the Era of the Great War

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【概要】

4月23日（金）、ローラ・ローウェ博士（英国エクセター大学歴史学部・海軍史担当講師）を迎えて、研究会が開催された。ローウェ博士は、社会学の観点から英国海軍の歴史について研究されており、本研究会では、次のような発表がなされた。

第1次世界大戦における英国海軍の「規律」に関する研究は、あいまいかつ主観的であり、その内容を明確に定義することは非常に難しいものである。「規律」という言葉には複数の意味があるが、概ね「罪と罰」、「秩序維持」という2つの領域に関する内容である。

本発表では、「規律体系」、「懲罰体系」、「自己規律」、「訓練指導体系」といった4つの分野に関して述べられている。結論として、海軍における規律は、士気を維持する手段であり、常に変貌する概念であり、軍隊生活においては非常に大きな位置を占めているものであった。

To date this subject has suffered from imprecision in the definition of terms. This applied as much to contemporary discussions as to the subsequent histories. Any study of 'discipline' must naturally address these ambiguities. Words like 'unrest,' 'indiscipline' and 'loyalty' are deeply problematic. As the Admiralty quickly discovered one man's 'unrest' was another's 'disquiet'. It is an ambiguous and subjective term which cannot be easily allotted a definitive definition.

This paper raises several semantic difficulties. Perhaps the most prominent amongst them is 'discipline.' Alongside 'indiscipline' and varying euphemisms for 'unrest', it appears regularly in the various sources, official and unofficial, published and private, and regardless of rank. However, it lacks a clear meaning. The definition given in the Oxford English Dictionary spreads over three pages. It is both noun and verb, and is attributed with twelve distinct definitions.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Of which the most relevant to this thesis are: '3.a.) Instruction having for its aim to form the pupil to proper

In order to understand the RN as an institution, and the way in which it coped with the pressures of war, it is necessary to investigate what is meant by 'naval discipline'. Throughout the sources the word 'discipline' is used with a multiplicity of meanings and many inter-linked, yet distinct, definitions can be discerned. These cover the spectrum of the dictionary definitions given by the Oxford English Dictionary and fall into two categories: 'crime and punishment' and 'good order'.

This paper will refer to these varying definitions as follows:

- (1) the 'disciplinary system' – i.e. the various naval laws by which the men had to abide
- (2) the 'penal system' – i.e. the punishments meted out for infractions of the disciplinary system
- (3) 'personal discipline' – i.e. the self-imposed attitude to service life
- (4) the 'evolution and conduct system' – i.e. the means whereby the general air of cleanliness and smartness was maintained onboard and in base establishments

Where the term 'naval discipline' is used it will refer to these four definitions collectively.

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conduct and action; the training of scholars or subordinates to proper and orderly action by instructing and exercising them in the same; mental and moral training; also used *fig.* of the training effect of experience, adversity, etc. ... 3.b.) *spec.* Training in the practice of arms and military evolutions; drill. Formerly, more widely: Training or skill in military affairs generally; military skill and experience; the art of war. ... 4.) The orderly conduct and action which results from training; a trained condition. ... 5.a.) The order maintained and observed among pupils, or other persons under control or command, such as soldiers, sailors, the inmates of a religious house, a prison, etc. ... 5.b.) A system or method for the maintenance of order; a system of rules for conduct. ... 7.a.) Correction; chastisement; punishment inflicted by way of correction and training. ... 1.) *trans.* To subject to discipline; in earlier use, to instruct, educate, train; in later use, more especially, to train to habits of order and subordination; to bring under control. ... 2.) To inflict penitential discipline upon; to scourge or flog by way of penance or mortification of the flesh; hence, by extension, to chastise, thrash, punish.' (*OED*, Second Edition)

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This paper will also consider the function of each of these kinds of discipline as well as what the existence of so many competing definitions can indicate about the nature of naval discipline. What can be clearly discerned is that naval discipline was all pervading. It touched every aspect of service life. In its widest sense naval discipline should be seen as a lived experience. It was the essence of service life and the men lived and breathed it every day of their service period, and its legacy frequently stayed with them on their return to civvy street. Discipline was fundamental to service life, both for the RN as a social body and as a fighting unit. It governed social interaction as much as action stations. Naval discipline was dynamic and changing. Already by 1914 its emphasis had shifted away from harsh repression, although humiliation had not yet been eradicated. At its base level discipline was what determined whether, in the heat of battle, officers could be sure of the obedience of their men. It was the morale of the men which determined whether they would willingly enter the fray in the first instance.

If discipline is a lived experience, then it follows that morale must be equally organic and malleable. 'Morale', of course, was not commonly used in the contemporary literature. The mental or emotional condition of individuals or a group 'with regard to confidence, hope, zeal, willingness, etc.'<sup>2</sup> was more frequently referred to in terms of 'discipline'. If the men were 'well disciplined' (i.e. if they were smart and quick to obey) it could be inferred that morale was 'good'. There have been many books and articles exploring the factors affecting morale in other fighting forces.<sup>3</sup> These range from the temporal to the spiritual via abstract notions of 'confidence'. According to Irvin L. Child the morale of the individual is linked to that of the organisation in which he serves.

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<sup>2</sup> *OED*, Second Edition

<sup>3</sup> There are numerous books and articles of which the following is a small selection: Horn, *Mutiny on the High Seas*; Leonard V. Smith, *Between Mutiny and Obedience: The Case of the French Fifth Infantry Division During World War I*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994); Sheffield, *Leadership in the Trenches*; Fuller, *Troop Morale and Popular Culture, Facing Armageddon: The First World War Experienced*, ed. by Hugh Cecil and Peter Liddle, (London: Leo Cooper, 1996), papers in Part IV Soldier Morale. *The Oxford Companion to Military History* outlines the factors necessary for the maintenance of morale as follows: 'belief in a cause; good training; trust in leaders; honour; good logistics ... ; pride in the unit; and a sense of being treated fairly. The 'primary' ... group ... is widely perceived as being of vital importance, for soldiers do not usually fight for queen, cause, or country, but rather so as not to let down their mates.' (*The Oxford Companion to Military History*, ed. by Richard Holmes (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), p.600)

The Oxford Companion to Military History describes the relationship between the two as follows:

Unless the individual is reasonably content he will not willingly contribute to the unit. He might mutiny or desert, but is more likely simply to fail to work wholeheartedly towards the goals of the group. High group morale, or cohesion, is the product in large part of good morale experienced by members of that unit. That state of morale of a larger formation such as an army is the product of the cohesion of its constituent units. The possession by an individual of morale sufficiently high that a soldier is willing to engage in combat might be described as 'fighting spirit'.<sup>4</sup>

Clausewitz argued that morale was the product of two constituent parts: 'mood' and 'spirit'. Mood was transient, a product of the fighters' temporary situation which could change by the day. Spirit was that which enabled a fighting force to keep its cohesion in the most testing of conditions. He argued that spirit was created by the waging of victorious wars and by testing a fighting force to its limits.<sup>5</sup> However, the RN had not been involved in full-scale fighting for a century and so had had to employ a surrogate means of maintaining its spirit. This was done by invoking the spirit of the Nelsonian navy – revisiting its glories and making contemporary personnel feel an integral part of historic victories. Discipline and ritual were substituted for fighting experience. The First World War tested the spirit of the RN under extreme conditions and found it fundamentally solid.

With these definitions of discipline in mind, attention can be focused on the other semantic difficulties surrounding 'indiscipline' and 'unrest'. Like the fleet's grievances themselves, the language used to describe it was equivocal and ambiguous. Whilst the most commonly used words to describe the situation in the Fleet were 'grievances', 'discontent', 'unrest', 'dissatisfaction' and 'disappointment', there were other less common and less exacting phrases: 'feeling of uncertainty', 'distrust', 'irritation', 'feel

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<sup>4</sup> *The Oxford Companion to Military History*, p.599

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.599-600

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keenly', 'strong feelings', 'very pronounced feeling', 'worries' and 'injustices'. These were amongst the many ways of conveying the mood of the Fleet, as it was presented to the Admiralty. Where one submission said there was no unrest, another reported the exact opposite. That such discontinuity existed only serves to highlight the subjective nature of the term 'unrest', and the importance of the conditions on individual ships. It is obvious that opinion as to what constituted unrest was the preserve of the individual reporting it, but the ambiguity surrounding the language selected to express it made the transmission of these ideas even more complex. Not only was the selection of words highly subjective, the interpretation of it was equally so. When HMS Actæon reported 'unrest' her commander may have meant something very different to the meaning which the Admiralty took from it. Nor was this ambiguity confined to reports to the Admiralty. The service presses also developed their own language. Each publication talked in terms of 'grievances', 'complaints' and 'unrest'. Each ascribed a different meaning to these terms, and the disparity of interpretation clouded the issues which underlay the language of representation.

How then can these semantic issues be broken through? This paper suggest some new terminology to help guide us through these concepts. Firstly 'unrest' is a scale of dissatisfaction which ranges from minor grouching at one end to full-blown revolution at the other. It is necessary to begin the scale with 'grouching' because no organisation can ever be perfect. It was a dull ship with nothing to grouse about, and a dangerous ship where a limited level of grouching was not tolerated.<sup>6</sup> Every sailor, every ship, every squadron, and every navy sat somewhere along that scale. However, there are few, if any, clear linguistic demarcation points to show exactly where each of these should be placed along this scale. As has been seen, one man's 'disquiet' was another's 'discontent'. Attention must therefore turn secondly to 'indiscipline'. Individual incidents of 'indiscipline' occur because of the underlying 'unrest', and by looking at

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<sup>6</sup> One of the first stories I ever heard (says "The Rambler" in *The Daily Mirror*) was of a certain dream-ship, where everything was perfect, Skipper and Officers all that could be desired, food plentiful, accommodation excellent, work light. Yet no one was happy abroad (*sic*) her; she was a miserable ship, and one Old Shellback explained the situation thus: "'Eving (*sic*) 'elp the poor bloke wot (*sic*) serves in that bloomin' packet. There ain't nothink (*sic*) to grouse in 'er, miserable ship she is.' *The Bluejacket and the Fleet* – 'It must have been a "sad ship!"' September 1914, p.165

these incidents the level of unrest can be gauged.

What then can be used to assess the seriousness of each incident? It is dependent not only on the incident itself, but also on its wider political context, both national and international, and more importantly on how it was perceived. Thus, for example, an Admiralty proclamation that assorted incidents represented a serious level of unrest is as indicative of Their Lordships' fears as it is of the actions or intentions of the agitators or the strength of the movement from which they sprang. With this lack of precision and consensus surrounding the language of unrest, it is necessary to devise a scale by which the 'seriousness' of indiscipline (i.e. whereabouts on the unrest scale it falls) can be judged. One measure would be the level of politicisation present during the incident. Another is how widespread the incidents were, not simply in terms of the numbers of men involved, but also in the geographical spread of incidents. It should be asked whether the incident was isolated, or whether other similar incidents or issues were raised elsewhere, or whether it tapped into events beyond the confines of the RN. The means by which the incident was carried out was also crucial – whether it was individual or collective action, how well coordinated it was, whether it was respectful or militant in tone. The implication of any incident, or series of incidents, for the RN as an institution must also be considered in any such assessment. It is by using these measures to assess the seriousness of incidents that an assessment of the level of unrest – whether it is minor, moderate or serious – can be made.

As we have seen, naval discipline is constructed of four distinct but interlinking elements. I want here to will explore three of them (namely the disciplinary system, the penal system and the evolution and conduct system) and investigate responses to them. It is necessary to understand the way in which these systems worked, how they were developed, and how they were perceived, because they underpin the ethos and identities of the senior service. In addition, a number of grievances were directed against these systems.

These systems evolved with the service. They were a product both of ethos and practicality, and enshrine in institutional terms the paternalistic attitude of naval leadership and transmitted through training. These systems placed officers and higher

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command in the position of strict, but basically benign, fathers using their judgement to guide and control their sons – thereby institutionally infantilising ratings. As will be shown it was not the harshness of punishments but their humiliating nature and the constraints of certain regulations which generated resentment.

Naval law was a many-layered entity and was derived predominantly from two publications, the Naval Discipline Act (NDA),<sup>7</sup> which was also known as the Articles of War, and King's Regulations and Admiralty Instructions (King's Regulations).<sup>8</sup> Elements of these two publications were combined to form the Manual of Naval Law and Court Martial Procedure,<sup>9</sup> to provide a not entirely exhaustive reference book. Copies of the NDA and King's Regulations were carried on all naval ships,<sup>10</sup> and were theoretically available for consultation by any member of the ship. Ratings like Writer Robert Jeffrey certainly felt that naval writers knew more about the regulations than the officers, and said he was often consulted about the punishments it was possible to award for particular offences.<sup>11</sup> This is hardly surprising when one considers the sheer number of rules and regulations. The NDA comprised 101 different articles in the 1866 edition, with amendments following regularly. In 1913 King's Regulations came in two volumes and spanned over 1,489 pages.<sup>12</sup> It covered topics as diverse as 'ceremonies and distinctions'<sup>13</sup> and 'physical training'.<sup>14</sup> Whilst the majority of areas covered by King's Regulations should be considered as guidelines for behaviour, transgression from which would not necessarily result in court martial, there were certain articles which could be seen as offences against naval discipline and which were tried and punished accordingly. All offences against the NDA could theoretically be taken to courts martial; however, in practice, this was not always done, and many officers

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<sup>7</sup> Originally published in 1866 (29 & 30 Vict c. 109)

<sup>8</sup> *The King's Regulations and Admiralty Instructions For the Government of His Majesty's Naval Service* (London: HMSO, 1913) – originally published in 1844

<sup>9</sup> J.E.R. Stephens, C. E. Gifford & F. Harrison Smith, *Manual of Naval Law and Court Martial Procedure in which is embodied Thring's Criminal Law of the Navy. Together with the Naval Discipline Act and an Appendix of Practical Forms*, 4th edition, (London: Stephens & Sons, 1912)

<sup>10</sup> And many would have also carried a copy of the Manual of Naval Law and Court Martial Procedure

<sup>11</sup> IWM Sound Archives, Accession No. 757 – Jeffrey, Robert John,

<sup>12</sup> Volume One was 543 pages and Volume Two (which was the index to the first volume) was 543 pages in length

<sup>13</sup> *King's Regulations*, pp.8-46

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, p.316

demonstrated great discretion in dealing with offenders.

Regulations covered every area of a serviceman's life. With such a variety of actions governed by one regulation or another it was perfectly possible to transgress one or other of them almost inadvertently. The vastly complex nature of the regulations could on occasion make them difficult to administer but it was equally difficult for an alleged offender to negotiate his way through. Despite the many hundreds of regulations available this thesis will concentrate only on those which drew most comment in this period, namely those governing combination and the presentation of grievances.

Perhaps the most famous of these – certainly the most infamous on the lower decks – was Article 11 of King's Regulations. Article 11 governed combinations and read thus:

All combinations of persons belonging to the Fleet formed for the purpose of bringing about alterations in the existing Regulations or customs of His Majesty's Naval Service, whether affecting their interests individually or collectively, are prohibited as being contrary to the traditions and practice of the Service and injurious to its welfare and discipline. Every person is fully authorised individually to make known to his superior any proper cause of complaint, but individuals are not to combine either by the appointment of committees or in any other manner to obtain signatures to memorials, petitions or applications, nor are they collectively to sign any such documents.<sup>15</sup>

It was the ultimate catch-all, and had it been rigidly enforced might well have precipitated a massive manpower shortage in the Senior Service. With such restriction in place what action could be legitimately taken to bring a grievance or complaint to bear?

According to the terms of the Naval Discipline Act:

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<sup>15</sup> *King's Regulations*, Article 11, p.3



37. Every person subject to this Act who shall have any cause of complaint, either of the unwholesomeness of the victuals or upon any other just ground, shall quietly make the same known to his superior, or captain, or commander-in-chief, and the said superior, captain, or commander-in-chief shall, as far as he is able, cause the same to be presently remedied; and no person subject to this Act upon any pretence whatever shall attempt to stir up any disturbance, upon pain of such punishment as a court-martial may think fit to inflict, according to the degree of offence.<sup>16</sup>

This stance was reinforced in the second layer of naval law. King's Regulations laid down the way in which a localised complaint could be brought. In the first instance, after a lapse of twenty-four hours from the alleged incident, the complainant could request to see the Captain to whom he would make his complaint verbally. Should the Captain refuse to or be unable to remedy the complaint the complainant could 'respectfully request' that his complaint be given in writing and forwarded to the officer commanding the squadron in which he served. He would then be given another twenty-four hours to reconsider his decision and was allowed the advice and assistance of an officer. This officer would, at the same time, warn the complainant that 'should there be no reasonable grounds for his complaint, he is liable to be treated as having made a frivolous or vexatious complaint, which is an act to the prejudice of good order and naval discipline.' Should the officer commanding the squadron in which the man was serving refuse to or be unable to remedy the complaint, the complainant could subsequently forward his complaint to the Commander-in-Chief and finally to the Secretary of the Admiralty. The Article offered one small consolation: 'Although the superior authority to whom the matter has been submitted may not see fit to alter the ruling of the Captain, the latter is not justified in dealing with the appeal as a breach of discipline, and is only to do so when expressly authorised by such superior authority.'<sup>17</sup> According to the terms of Article 9,<sup>18</sup> only the method set down in Article 8 would be recognised as a legitimate method of representation. Neither ratings nor officers were permitted to look to outside sources to vent grievances which remained

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<sup>16</sup> The Naval Discipline Act (29 & 30 Vict. c. 109)

<sup>17</sup> *King's Regulations*, Article 8, p.5

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, Article 9, pp.5-6

within the boundary of established and legal service procedure.<sup>19</sup>

This is not to say that they did not look to outside sources, merely that such action was unofficial and could result in severe punishment. Although the unofficial circumvention of this system on occasion was generally tolerated by Their Lordships,<sup>20</sup> it did not induce them to reform the system.<sup>21</sup> The Board were keen to retain the status quo. They were adamant that the system then in place was more than adequate to deal with grievances, and that it was simply misunderstood! The paternalism of the system for dealing with grievances was further enshrined during the war with the introduction of the 'Little Father' scheme devised by a civilian member of the Board, Dr Macnamara.<sup>22</sup> Whilst not revoking Articles 8, 9 or 11 of King's Regulations he proposed modification to Article 720, Instructions to Captains, stressing their duty to be 'ever mindful of the welfare of those serving under them, bringing to the notice of their superiors any possibly justifiable complaints.' Upon becoming aware of any grievance he should call representatives to him and ask for the grievance to be stated, and 'if he thinks it has any substance undertakes to pass it on to the Flag Officer, who, being imbued with the same spirit, will take care that it comes to [the Board].' Suffice to say that the 'Little Father' scheme was not well received.

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<sup>19</sup> Ibid., Article 14. pp.6-7

<sup>20</sup> In as much as little effort was made to locate and punish the authors of pre-war Loyal Appeals. In 1917 a hectographed circular was issued. Master-of-Arms J.W. Scrivens and PO W. Vale were court-martialled over it; however in their statement of defence they claimed: 'A former Magna Charter having been put forward by the lower Deck Benefit Societies and believed to have been received and replied to by the Admiralty, it was considered that the spirit of Article 11. K.R.A.I. could be adhered to in a loyal manner by bringing the questions before the Captain as the Senior C.P.O. and P.O. after enquiries have been made as to the genuineness of documents A. and A.1. received.' Despite the subsequent conviction of Scrivens and Vale, the Board conceded that the men may have had reasonable grounds for believing that the Admiralty had recognised and responded to previous Loyal Appeals (see Chapter Six for information about the Loyal Appeals), though Plummer noted that 'Strictly speaking ... the Admiralty have not condoned breaches of Article 11 by receiving and considering their annual appeals; they have merely used the documents thus received in order to inform themselves of the aspirations of the lower deck.' Scrivens and Vale were convicted because of the manner in which this particular appeal was made, but it is obvious from the Admiralty's minutes that there was a certain ambiguity surrounding the issuing of an appeal. (see TNA, ADM 156/35 – statement of defence (found with the minutes of proceedings) & Admiralty minutes in relations to the court martial, J.A.F. 5 November 1917 & Plummer 23 November 1917)

<sup>21</sup> See Section Two for more detailed discussion.

<sup>22</sup> TNA, ADM 178/157 – Macnamara's memorandum, 21 December 1917

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There was a third, slightly more ambiguous, layer to naval law. Regulated by Captain's Standing Orders, this shipboard 'law' was local to each ship at the Captain's discretion. Such regulation governed aspects of daily life such as when and where the men might be permitted to smoke. These were the 'laws' which determined the evolution and conduct aspect of naval discipline, and were frequently a source of petty annoyances.

Petty Officers (POs) functioned as a social and disciplinary bridge between officers and men; Sheffield has outlined the crucial role played by Non-Commissioned-Officers in the army discipline system.<sup>23</sup> In many respects naval POs served a similar function. Just as in the army they had the effect of distancing the officers from some elements of naval discipline, and their implementation of the regulations could be instrumental in whether or not a ship was a happy one. They also provided a social bridge in a number of respects: they were an important source for officers about the mood of the lower decks and through them the officers had seen a glimpse of lower-deck life. Life in officer training establishments was harsh and exacting, and it was POs who were responsible for the majority of the instruction. It was a PO who drilled the boys, a PO who took them for physical training, seamanship and practical shop work, though they would have civilian instruction for school lessons. It had been a PO who bellowed instructions at them. A PO who taught them that, for a few years at least, these sons of the great and good were the lowest form of life in the Senior Service. The PO may have addressed his young charges as 'sir', but the PO was very much in charge. It mattered not if the cadet was the son of a king – they were treated exactly the same.

There were two separate forms of dealing with alleged offences, and two corresponding forms of punishing them. The first system was known as defaulters' table. This would be a daily parade of those who had transgressed more minor naval laws. The defaulter would come before the captain to answer the charge, and more often than not receive punishment. Such 'trials' were referred to as 'summary' and produced 'summary punishments'. Though the offences were relatively minor, the punishments which could be awarded were relatively harsh, though no longer brutal. They could also be deeply humiliating, and it was summary punishments which were the subject of

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<sup>23</sup> Gary Sheffield, *Leadership in the Trenches: Officer-Man Relations, Morale and Discipline in the British Army in the Era of the First World War* (Hampshire: Macmillan, 2000) pp.3-4

particular grievances. The second form of trial was a formal court martial,<sup>24</sup> at which more severe punishments could be awarded. As was so often the case there was a discrepancy between the letter of the law and its implementation; between the way the service actually ran and the way it wanted to be seen. For example it was still theoretically possible to award the death penalty summarily (though in practice this would have been unthinkable), and a cat-o'nine-tails was carried on each warship until 1939 despite its use being suspended in 1881.<sup>25</sup>

It has been argued elsewhere that naval punishments were particularly harsh,<sup>26</sup> and certainly sailors faced detention for actions not even considered offences in civilian courts,<sup>27</sup> or which would have been considered very minor offences. It is also true that naval men were subject to much more regulation of their daily life than were their civilian counterparts. There was no discipline in a factory that was comparable with that given to Seaman Edward Pullen, who was required to kneel down and worship his kit bag every day for seven days because he had left it out when 'all in the starboard watch' had been piped.<sup>28</sup> However, the naked brutality of the Georgian and early Victorian navy had disappeared, and the punishments awarded for serious offences were in accord with civilian standards. In 1914 the Admiralty debated whether it would be advisable for punishments to be increased during the war. They concluded that 'the state of war did not per se call for an increase in severity of punishments, though it gave power to do so if required,'<sup>29</sup> and went as far as to reduce the punishment for desertion.<sup>30</sup> Yet corporal punishment for boys (those under eighteen years of age) and midshipmen remained.<sup>31</sup> It was awarded for a variety of minor

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<sup>24</sup> In wartime provision was made for an additional form of trial, the 'disciplinary court' – for details see Chapter Eight.

<sup>25</sup> Anthony Carew, *The Lower Deck of the Royal Navy 1900-1939: Invergordon in Perspective* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1981), p.31

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, p.xv

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, p.xv

<sup>28</sup> Mr Pullen's comment about this incident was 'I thought to myself this was a stupid idea really, but that was naval discipline.' (IWM Sound Archives, Accession No. 692 – Pullen, Edward)

<sup>29</sup> TNA, ADM 1/8397/360 – details of a letter from the Commodore of Chatham Barrack to the Secretary of the Admiralty, 8 October 1914

<sup>30</sup> TNA, ADM 1/8397/360 – letter from Commander-in-Chief the Nore to Secretary of the Admiralty, 9 October 1914

<sup>31</sup> In civilian life only those under sixteen could be subjected to corporal punishment.

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offences, most notably smoking, and, at the training establishments for both boy seamen and cadets, it was administered with a large degree of ritual. The other boys were assembled and the boy to be punished was brought before them in a tight pair of duck pants.<sup>32</sup> He was tied to a vaulting horse and one of the senior instructors would administer the prescribed number of cuts with the cane whilst the commander of the establishment and a medical officer looked on to ensure it was conducted in line with regulations.

It was possible for officers to exercise an element of discretion in punishing the men. Many veterans gave testimony to that effect. Ex-ratings talked of the sympathy with which they were on occasion treated – though they were also good at remembering incidents when they had been treated unfairly! Some officers also wrote of the discretion they employed.

The single most frequently mentioned punishment was 10A. This was awarded summarily for minor offences and could last for up to fourteen days. Whilst under punishment men performed extra drill or duty, would eat away from their mess mates under the supervision of an officer, and would have to stand facing the wall for an hour at a time. It was the pointlessness of such activities and the lack of respect it showed to the men who suffered it which generated most resentment. Sailors were men, and if they were to be punished then it should be as men and not in the manner of errant schoolboys.

Dis-rating could also be awarded summarily, as could the loss of a good conduct badge. Whilst the latter may have been preferential to a court martial, the former could cause real hardship and its impact could be felt for many years because it affected pensions as well as pay. In no other profession could such harsh punishment be awarded so easily for such minor transgressions. Even on leave men were subject to humiliation because of the institutional attitude of the navy, and the all-pervasive nature of naval discipline. Shore patrols would berate men in front of their friends, families and

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<sup>32</sup> Duck pants were the thinnest uniform trousers a boy possessed, and the maximum pain possible could thus be guaranteed. Some recalled a round loop being placed over the bottom to ensure that the strokes fell in one particular, small place (IWM Sound Archives, Accession No. 758 – Willis, Reginald – he was describing the punishment given to a boy convicted of sodomy)

sweethearts for minor uniform infringements.

The system of naval law and the disciplinary system reinforced many of the wartime grievances, but here I will look at the responses of the ratings to the systems, and examine what the disciplinary system meant to them.

Here, I need give a brief, explanatory word about the sources used. The majority of this information comes from recordings of interviews with veterans held in the Imperial War Museum's Sound Archive. The project was commenced in the 1970s and was designed to create a record of the life and experiences of lower-deck men before such information was lost from living memory. Potential candidates for interview were first issued with a questionnaire and interviewees were selected from there. Approximately 50 of these questionnaires have survived in the museum's records. The interviewers were guided by the following list of topics: background and enlistment, training, dress, ships, work, mess room life, rations and victualling, discipline, traditions and customs, foreign service, home ports, pay and benefits, naval operations, effects of the war, family life, and post-service experiences.<sup>33</sup> The project continued to grow and further interviews were carried out later, some with ex-officers.<sup>34</sup> Although sometimes self-contradictory, the surviving questionnaires and the interviews provide an incredibly rich source of information.

All respondents and interviewees were asked how they found the 'discipline' of the Royal Navy, both during training and at sea. It is from these responses that the various usages of the word 'discipline' were discernable. The various responses used all the definitions without preference and without exclusivity. To these men 'discipline' was as nebulous and engulfing as the 'traditions and customs' which they lived and breathed. Some historians, most prominently Andrew Gordon, have argued that the disciplinary system and the evolution and conduct system stripped the service of

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<sup>33</sup> Imperial War Museum Department of Sound Recordings, *Oral History Recordings: Lower Deck 1910-1922* (London: Imperial War Museum Department of Sound Recordings, 1982), p.3

<sup>34</sup> For further details of the way in which the interviews were planned and conducted see David Lance's preface to the catalogue of the oral history recordings *Oral History Recordings: Lower Deck 1910-1922*

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initiative.<sup>35</sup> Whilst this is a compelling argument in terms of the command culture of the Senior Service, it is not a sentiment that was shared by all the ratings. Although not an area which received much mention at all, there were those who found naval discipline offered them room to exercise personal initiative. For Seaman Albert Masters, discipline made 'a man more self reliant'<sup>36</sup> However, when we consider the comments of men on other aspects of naval life, it can be concluded that Masters' views represent the minority.

When discussing the disciplinary system and the penal system, almost all the men who responded to the questionnaire or who were interviewed, drew a distinction between the systems in place in training ships and those once they commenced sea-going service, with the latter being preferable. Responses to questions about 'discipline' whilst training elicited responses ranging from 'happy enough'<sup>37</sup> to 'cruel and hateful',<sup>38</sup> with the majority tending towards the 'pretty grim' end of the scale. For men like William Bailey 'fear appeared to be the keynote of naval discipline.'<sup>39</sup> However, not all those who felt discipline to have been harsh thought it a bad thing. When asked whether they thought their treatment necessary some responded that it was important because it prepared them for their later lives in the service, both in terms of climate<sup>40</sup> and 'to comply with the "Articles of War"'.<sup>41</sup> What this says about their later treatment is interesting in itself, in part because it demonstrates the level to which such treatment was accepted as par for the course. There were others who thought that such 'discipline' would benefit the 'youth of today'! Attitudes to naval discipline during sea-service were slightly different. Respondents generally considered it to have been very strict, but fair.

The evolution and conduct system also provoked wide-spread comment. A number of

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<sup>35</sup> Andrew Gordon, *The Rules of the Game: Jutland and British Naval Command*, (London: John Murray, 2002 (1<sup>st</sup> Ed. 1996)) pp.155-192

<sup>36</sup> IWM Sound Archives, Accession No. 720 – Masters, Albert William

<sup>37</sup> IWM Document Archives, Accession No. Misc 101 (1583) – Buck, Frank James

<sup>38</sup> IWM Document Archives, Accession No. Misc 101 (1583) – Blanche, Percy D.

<sup>39</sup> IWM Document Archives, Accession No. Misc 101 (1583) – Bailey, William Arthur David

<sup>40</sup> IWM Document Archives, Accession No. Misc 101 (1583) – Bailey, William Arthur David – who asserted that training had to be tough because of the very harsh conditions (climatic etc.) faced during the war.

<sup>41</sup> IWM Document Archives, Accession No. Misc 101 (1583) – Blanche, Percy D.

historians have devoted considerable and useful effort to demonstrating the perceived importance of spit and polish.<sup>42</sup> They have shown that in some quarters of the pre-war navy, the level of shine on the ship's brass work was taken as a measure of the efficiency of its captain and his readiness for promotion. Although many sailors themselves liked a smart ship,<sup>43</sup> some of these exercises caused much irritation. HMS Leviathan was away from Britain for months at a time and suffered at the hands of a collection of poor officers. The captain seemed determined to irritate his crew with a series of pointless tasks such as that of Sunday 23 January 1916 when

after evening quarters the "Focastlemen" of both watches were fell in to clear up Deck properly. "Marcus" [the captain – sometimes referred to as the 'Human Whistle Pipe'<sup>44</sup>] having discovered 1 Orange Pip loafing underneath the turret, so we all armed ourselves with telescopes & magnifying glasses & succeeded in finding, 1 Match Stick, 2 Orange Pips, & 1 Small piece of toffee paper, & him making such a clamour on the focastle as if we had cleared ship for action.<sup>45</sup>

In some respects the evolution and conduct systems showed their malleability during the war, producing some improvement for the men. Zealous spit and polish was largely abandoned during the war. Brass work glinting in the North Sea sun made a ship an easy target, so the practice fell by the way for the duration. Cleanliness was still essential, but shininess was considered less important – temporarily at least. The fact that this petty and irritating part of the disciplinary system was removed by the necessities of a unifying national emergency helped to increase its effects. Wartime punishments were not more severe than their peace-time counter-parts; in fact certain offences which might have received harsh penalty in peacetime were actually treated more leniently in war because Their Lordships appreciated the increased pressures

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<sup>42</sup> Gordon, *The Rules of the Game*, pp.155-192; Lionel Yexley, *The Inner Life of the Navy*, (London: Pitman, 1908); Carew, *The Lower Deck*, pp.xv-xvi

<sup>43</sup> After all part of the reasons given for mutiny on HMS *Amphitrite* was the dirty state of the ship – TNA, ADM 156/19 for report into the mutiny

<sup>44</sup> IWM Document Archives, Accession No. 03/14/1 – Jenkins, W.A. – Thursday 6 January 1916

<sup>45</sup> IWM Document Archives, Accession No. 03/14/1 – Jenkins, W.A. – Sunday 23 January 1916



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under which war routines placed the men.<sup>46</sup>

How the disciplinary system was administered – and consequently the men’s opinions of it – was acknowledged as being largely dependent on the officers of any given ship. A fair and generous officer could often negate the more petty effects of the system itself by employing discretion and empathy. As Leslie Horton recalled simply ‘one Captain looked on things differently to another.’<sup>47</sup> Moreover, many cited the calibre of the officers as the principal determining factor in whether or not a ship was a ‘happy’ one.<sup>48</sup>

Officers were not alone in the administration of ‘discipline’. Equally important to the enforcement of naval law, and indeed of the regimentation of daily life, were the ship’s police. ‘Jaunties’,<sup>49</sup> as they were collectively known, came in for colourful criticism. Because Jaunties were automatically granted petty-officer rank on appointment many veterans remembered them as the men too stupid to reach petty-officer rank within their own branch.<sup>50</sup> The majority of men thought the ship’s police had too much power

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<sup>46</sup> TNA, ADM 178/15; TNA, ADM 1/8485/74; TNA, ADM 1/8397/360; and TNA, ADM 1/8479/22

<sup>47</sup> IWM Document Archives, Accession No. Misc 101 (1583) – Horton, Leslie B. – though he also added ‘But the rules of a days pay and days leave for one hour late was too severe. I have seen this applied when a man has been only 10 minutes late.’

<sup>48</sup> To take just one example recalled in his memoirs by Gilbert Bickmore, a clerk on HMS *Weymouth*. Bickmore’s first job on joining the squadron in the Adriatic was to act as the clerk at the court martial of several officers and CPOs of HMS *Newcastle*: ‘The Captain of the “Newcastle” was a rabid teetotaler and had restricted the drinks of his officers to such an extent as to render them almost mutinous. He had locked up the Ward-room wine stores, and only opened the bar for half an hour each night, allowing his Officers only one drink each, and that under his personal supervision. The result was only to be expected. When they went ashore, the officers made up for lost time, and drank too much. Six of them were before the court for drunkenness and neglect of duty. Their Paymaster had kept no books of account for six months, and was suffering Delirium Tremens. This state of affairs had spread to the crew, and the Gunner, Chief Victualling Petty Officer and the Master-at-Arms were all also charged with selling the crew’s rum ration to them at 2d a tot, instead of supplying the free issue. The result of the court martial was that all the Officers were dismissed from their ship, which was probably the kindest thing that could have happened to them, for they were able to get away and make a fresh start. ... H.M.S. Newcastle left the squadron and no-one was sorry to see her go.’ (IWM Document Archives, Accession No. 85/26/1 – Bickmore, Dr. G.H.)

<sup>49</sup> Sometimes spelt ‘Jhonty’

<sup>50</sup> Many of the respondents to the questionnaires and the interviewees took this view – as Percy Blanche put it ‘They were recruited from men who had failed in their own particular branch. “Bullies”, “illiterate”, & subject to the whims of the Commander or CO.’ (IWM Document

and were not averse to abusing it, and some even believed they took bribes. For others they were ‘JOKERS ... Chief Jhonty Sinclair ... [was a] human cess-pool ... who ... lived to make people unhappy.’<sup>51</sup> ‘Snivelling’ and ‘oppressive’<sup>52</sup> also featured in some descriptions, along with ‘swine’.<sup>53</sup> They were not without their defenders; however, these were distinctly in the minority, and the most glowing praise this body of men can be said to have received was ‘they were fair.’<sup>54</sup> Only the larger ships carried ship’s police. They were responsible for ensuring all the various rules and regulations were upheld and for bringing miscreants before the officers. The extent to which bribery and corruption were an endemic part of the system was a matter of opinion, although one man, Telegraphist William Halter, recalled the court martial of a regulation officer who had been caught ‘selling’ the best jobs.<sup>55</sup> Many of the testimonies believed that ship’s police regularly took bribes to turn a blind eye and others stated that they had never come across any such thing.<sup>56</sup>

Some men recalled efforts to use the complaints procedure laid down in the official regulations. One such memoirist was Charles Allen who had cause to bring a complaint whilst serving on HMS Patrol towards the end of the war. Whilst in harbour the signalmen, of whom Allen was one, were required to undertake flashlight exercises. These could only be undertaken at night, and since the days were long the exercise could not be commenced until after 11pm. This meant that men of the middle watch were unable to sleep before 4.15am and were then required to go on duty again at 6.30am. One of his fellow signalmen refused to do the exercise one night and was duly put on Report. Allen was ‘shaken’ when he heard that the only way to get the offender

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Archives, Accession No. Misc 101 (1583)). Others talked about the police with equal venom in interviews. Signalman George Haigh believed men who were not good at their job became either ship’s policemen or physical training instructors; though he did meet one pleasant ship’s policeman called Butler when he was on *Dido*, Haigh always wondered why he had become a policeman! (IWM Sound Archives, Accession No. 735 – Haigh, George Ernest)

<sup>51</sup> IWM Document Archives, Accession No. Misc 101 (1583) – Adam, Arthur George

<sup>52</sup> IWM Sound Archives, Accession No. 769 – Dunn, James

<sup>53</sup> IWM Sound Archives, Accession No. 758 – Willis, Reginald

<sup>54</sup> IWM Document Archives, Accession No. Misc 101 (1583) – Buck, Frank James

<sup>55</sup> IWM Sound Archives, Accession No. 721 – Halter, William

<sup>56</sup> Proportionately more veterans remembered bribery and corruption amongst the police, than did not. For example Edward Pullen, William Halter, and James Dunn (IWM, Sound Archives, Accession Nos. 692, 721 & 769 respectively) recalled bribery and corruption amongst jaunties, whereas William Parsons (IWM, Sound Archives, Accession No. 736) did not.

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off was to put forward a collective grievance (the complaint being frequently undertaking this exercise so late at night). Allen 'had heard of such similar grievances failing dismally with resultant "Time" in the Detention Quarters at Chatham, [and] it was understood generally that it was no use kicking against the brickwall (sic) of strict Naval Discipline, nobody who took this risk ever won.' The ship's signalmen appeared before 'Gordon Campbell, resplendent (for once) in his full regalia' at the defaulter's table. Each came forward in turn to state the same grievance. Despite threatening to 'decorate the mast with signalmen' should there be any recurrence of the incident, he came down on the side of the signalmen; 'the strict Naval Discipline had gone by the board with this man, we had won our case, the charge against Dean [the original miscreant] was dismissed and everybody was happy, especially the stokers, who greeted us with subversive cheers as we came off the Quarter Deck.'<sup>57</sup> Allen's tale not only reinforces the idea that discipline, applied with discretion, was remarkably effective, it highlighted the fear that presenting even a personal grievance generated. How much more difficult must it have then been to present a grievance against naval policy.

It was the 'silly' or humiliating punishments which generated most comment.<sup>58</sup> Many ex-servicemen mentioned 10A specifically, and many others commented on the caning of boys. None of the men expressed any concerns at the serious punishments awarded; only those they regarded as humiliating, petty or unnecessarily harsh for minor infractions of the rules. All focused on summary punishments rather than those awarded at court martial. Of course, the disciplinary system and its rules and regulations had its supporters.<sup>59</sup> Writer Robert Jeffrey, whose job as a captain's clerk meant he closely observed the administration of 'discipline' onboard, believed that

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<sup>57</sup> IWM Document Archives, Accession No. PP/MCR/301 – Allen, C.F.S.

<sup>58</sup> IWM Document Archives, Accession No. Misc 101 (1583) – men like William Humphries found punishments in training ships 'Childish. Some Instructors (P.Os) were bullies on *Impregnable*, they used ropes end to drive boys up [ladders] like herd of cattle. For having one extra turn of lashing on hammock I was hit in the face with bag of soap and threatened. I thought them about 10 years out of date.' Others recalled individual punishments they had received.

<sup>59</sup> Even William Parsons who felt some punishments were designed to humiliate, used the same kind of discipline which he had experienced when he gained his commission. When Parson's punishment book was returned from the Admiral, it invariably said that he should reduce some of the punishments; though, Parsons in turn, thought the Admiral was too soft. (IWM Sound Archives, Accession No. 736 – Parson, William Allen)

discipline was well handled, with each man having recourse to appeal if he felt himself to have been treated unjustly. Jeffrey felt that defaulters table was taken as a 'matter of course. The man who came up knew why he was there and he took it for granted that he would be punished according to his offence and that was it.'<sup>60</sup> Seaman Arthur Ford believed that 'they weren't trying to ram [discipline] down your throat ... they weren't looking for trouble.'<sup>61</sup> Edward Pullen went even further: 'if it hadn't been for the naval discipline it would have been hell onboard.'<sup>62</sup>

The navy's efforts to 'make the punishment fit the crime' also provoked some comment. Some men recalled incidents where men caught spitting on the upper decks were required to walk around with a spittoon (sometimes called a 'spitkin') tied around their neck.<sup>63</sup> Some men contrasted the 'degrading' spectacle of 10A with reports that the German navy made its sailors use their punishment time productively by learning English!<sup>64</sup> It is indicative of the strength of feeling engendered by petty restrictions and the humiliation which some punishments were intended to induce, that they were commented upon by the ex-sailors nearly sixty years later.

The nominally rigid systems which made up naval discipline had, in practice, much room for discretion, and ratings' responses to them were frequently dependent on how that discretion was used. The importance of strict discipline – both for the efficiency of the ship and for the comfort of those living on it – in a fighting force was recognised by the men. The strictness of the system in dealing with serious offences went largely un-remarked. The areas of naval discipline which received most attention were those which infantilised a man. These are particularly important because of the universality of such grievances. They were not confined to a minority of men, but instead show a common strand of grievances. We can see then that 'discipline' had a variety of meanings constructed through men's lived experience. These various types of discipline provided a model through which men could live their lives and understand

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<sup>60</sup> IWM Sound Archives, Accession No. 757 – Jeffrey, Robert John

<sup>61</sup> IWM Sound Archives, Accession No. 719 – Ford, Arthur William

<sup>62</sup> IWM Sound Archives, Accession No. 692 – Pullen, Edward

<sup>63</sup> IWM Document Archives, Accession No. Misc 101 (1583) – S.J. Cole; IWM Document Archives, Accession No. 78/47/1 – Lieutenant Commander R.B. Fairthorne; IWM Sound Archives, Accession No. 736 – Parson, William

<sup>64</sup> IWM Sound Archives, Accession No. 735 – Haigh, George Ernest

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their experiences. Naval discipline was both a cause of unrest and a means of maintaining morale. It was an evolving concept and one which, for many, was the most prominent aspect of their service lives.