

## RN Lists and the IO Specialisation

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To the casual observer, one Royal Navy officer in uniform may appear equivalent to any other officer of the same rank. However, an important differentiating factor is the particular 'list' to which an officer belongs (or 'belonged' in the case of the former Instructor Officer Specialisation). This is because each list has an inherent set of expectations and opportunities that could greatly influence the progression and outcome of an officer's career. In this brief article, with the input from senior former RNIOs and the book 'Not Just Chalk and Talk' (Abram and Binks, 2013), I attempt to provide a succinct summary and identify relevant implications of the lists to which RNIOs (and other officers of the Royal Navy) belonged.

### Introduction of the General List

In the early 1950s, my starting point of reference, the extant officers' branches (or specialisations) were Executive, Engineering, Instructor, Supply, Medical, Dental and Chaplain. Almost all authority afloat and ashore resided in the hands of the Executive (Seaman) Officers. By 1955, however, it was decided that the Royal Navy needed to make better use of its available talent, particularly at the senior officer level.

The new **General List** was therefore introduced in January 1956 by the Admiralty, which effectively facilitated executive structures and elevated opportunities in other branches. The IO Specialisation lost its blue stripe at this point, but retained 'Instructor' in rank titles as similarly did Surgeons and Chaplains.

In recognition of the vast talent pool among IOs, Commanding Officers were directed to make full use of their powers and delegate responsibilities for general duties in ships and establishments to Instructor Officers. It was decided, however, that the special responsibilities and role of the Instructor Branch set it apart from the main officer structure and thus precluded it from forming part of the new General List.

### The Supplementary and Special Duties Lists

At this juncture, within each of the Executive (**X**), Engineering (**E**) and Supply (**S**) specialisations a substructure existed consisting of **General List (GL)**, **Supplementary List (SL)** and **Special Duties (SD) List** elements. The **SD** List was introduced for officers who were promoted from the non-commissioned ranks, but was never adopted by the IO Specialisation as those officers were assigned to the Supplementary List.

The introduction of the General List to the IO Specialisation occurred in 1978. An important stimulus to this significant change occurred during the period 1973-74, when (Instructor) Captain John Franklin sat on a small committee under Rear Admiral Frank Hearn, set up by the Director General Naval Manpower and Training, to review the structure of officers in the Royal Navy.

Their report included a recommendation for the extension of the General List to include Instructor Officers. The Second Sea Lord sent his report to the Admiralty Board, and it was approved. As a

consequence the following message was promulgated in Admiralty Fleet Order (AFO) 704/77:

*From 1 January 1978, the General List of Naval Officers will be extended to include the Permanent List of Instructor Officers with Instructor Officers losing the 'Instructor' from their rank; the Permanent List of the Instructor Branch becoming the fourth Specialisation 'I'. Instructor Officers not on the Permanent List become part of the Supplementary List in both cases an 'I' denoting their Specialisation.*

The 'fourth' I Specialisation in the quote above relates to the other 'three' Specialisations of **X**, **S** and **E**. Medical officers and Chaplains were to continue to keep their titles as in the case, for example, of Surgeon Lieutenant, who also retained their red stripes. Instructor Officers, because of their vast array of qualifications and expertise, continued to fill an increasing number of General List 'Pool' appointments.

### The Implications of Lists

The new IO Specialisation lists essentially formed a hierarchy with officers in the rank of Commander (apart from a small number of SL Commanders), Captain and Rear Admiral belonging to the General List. Other benefits included longer-term pensionable careers on the 'Permanent List', and career/appointment patterns that could facilitate enhanced promotion prospects. GL officers therefore formed the *de facto* executive of their respective specialisations.

Officers of the IO Specialisation who were on the Supplementary List usually started their careers on short term (five year) commissions and had to apply for longer-term engagements that included five-year extensions and pensionable 16-year commissions, which were subject to performance criteria and the (flexible) needs of the Service. However, transfers to the General List were available and used as an incentive for high performance and reward.

In the case of Schoolies who came up through the ranks, they did join the IO Specialisation with the advantage of a pensionable 16-year engagement already established, but their likely ceiling in terms of promotion was more limited. A reasonable expectation would be to reach the rank of Lieutenant Commander, or in rare circumstances, Commander. This was to be expected, however, as they were required to spend two years as Sub Lieutenants at an age comparable to a senior Lieutenant or even Lieutenant Commander for colleagues who had joined as graduates at about 23 years of age.

When the I Specialisation was disbanded in 1996, the roles of Schoolies fell to other Specialisations; Instructor Officers reclassified as either X(Metoc), E(TM) or E(IS). In 1999, the term 'SD' was replaced by 'Senior Upper Yardman' (SUY), with the potential for promotion to Captain (previously Commander). Lists therefore mattered as they played an important role in the careers of IOs and other RN officers.

### References

Abram & Binks, 'Not Just Chalk and Talk: Stories of Schoolies in the Royal Navy,' (2013).

### Acknowledgements

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