

The President
Warrant Officers &
Chief Petty Officers Mess
HMS MERCURY

28 Mar 74

1. A meeting of MERCURY's Warrant Officers, as outlined in the Mess President's Memo of 11 Mar 74, was held in the Mountbatten Block Guest Room on Tuesday 19 Mar 74.

2. Mr Underwood, FCCY, as the President, chaired the meeting and welcomed the attendees:

Mr Alderson	FCRS	GT3
Mr Boon	FCRS	TPA
Mr Foster	FCCY	K6 Desig
Mr Fouracre	FCCY	T2
Mr Hankey	FCCY	Guest from HMS ARX ROYAL
Mr Eilbeck	FCRS	Guest from HMS ARX ROYAL
Mr Leppara	FCRS(W)	W3
Mr O'Glea	FCRS(W)	CM2
Mr Wisc	FCRS(W)	K6

Apologies were received from Mr Carfree, FCCK, who is on terminal leave, and from Mr Gilbert, FCCY, (HMS GALATRA), otherwise engaged on instructional duties in HMS MERCURY. The meeting was declared open at 1045.

3. The Chairman stated that the meeting had been called in response to requests from Warrant Officers within the Establishment. Having first obtained the permission of the Support Commander and the Captain of the Signal School to hold the meeting. Other Establishments in the Portsmouth Command had been 'sounded out', with a view to conducting similar meetings, in an effort to identify and clarify the role of the Warrant Officer as three years have passed since their introduction into the Royal Navy. The Chairman went on to say that it is hoped that in the near future a meeting of Warrant Officer Mess Presidents will take place within the Portsmouth Command.

4. The Agenda Items were as follows:

- Item 1. Title, Position and Privileges
2. Job Definition
3. Uniform and Ceremonial
4. Pay Differentials and Administrative Documentation
5. Position, Documentation and Administration within
HMS MERCURY

5. Item 1 - Title Reference: BR 1992 Annex 5B para 1.

Mr Alderson pointed out that Fleet Chief Petty Officers do have a formal title, that of Warrant Officer, in accordance with the reference, and noted that whilst the reference, in this case, is a new one, the rank has been with the Royal Navy for three years. But Warrant Officers are yet to be called by their formal title in any official documents. eg QR(RN) 1585(4)(b). FTY 51/73, DCI T767/72, et al, and local orders, MTM 30/73.

Full discussion on this point established that at the present time Warrant Officers have too many titles. e.g. An Officer is by his title or 'Sir', a CPO is a 'Chief', but a Warrant Officer can be a 'Sir', Fleet, Fleet Chief, Mr, and it is proposed that the following be accepted for consideration:

a. Official Documentation:

- i. Collectively, PCPO's be known as Warrant Officers.
- ii. Individually, PCPO's be known as 'Mr', followed by their branch title where required.
- iii. The sub-division of Rank and Rate should be: Officers, Warrant Officers, Senior Ratings, Junior Ratings.

b. In Person:

- i. As already outlined in DCI's.
It is considered, however, that if the suggestions noted in paras 5a. i, ii and iii, are accepted, a lot of the present misunderstanding and embarrassment caused by lack of knowledge, will be negated.

6. Item 1 - Position

Mr Hankey pointed out that other Services Warrant Officers are listed in the appropriate service lists. In view of the fact that the majority of Naval Warrant Officers, in particular those serving ashore, hold middle management appointments it is for consideration that they be listed at an appendix to the Navy List.

After discussion it was further considered that the Warrant Officers should also appear in Establishment Lists.

Further discussion established that the present position of the Warrant Officer is far from being clear cut. It was generally agreed that a 'Common Standard' is urgently required. So often it would seem that Warrant Officers are 'Officers when required to be' and 'Ratings at all other times'. The individual is invariably left to establish his own position in relation to his superiors and inferiors and thus his position is either abused or misused. To overcome the problems, it was suggested by Mr Wise that the initial objectives set out in DCI 923/70 should be reviewed and the DCI re-issued.

7. Item 1 - Privileges

The general problem revolves around the question 'What are a Warrant Officers privileges?' Certainly what privileges exist would appear to vary from establishment to establishment and ship to ship.

Mr Alderson noted that the progress of the Warrant Officer is closely watched by the Chief Petty Officer, since they that also aspire to become Warrant Officers will naturally take a keen interest in the attractions of the new rank, and should there be no significant increase or improvement in such items as job satisfaction, position and privileges for Warrant Officers, then effectively the lot of the Chief Petty Officer is only lowered by squeezing in a 'Super Chief', and this is surely most undesirable.

Full discussion on this point failed to raise any positive suggestions as to any major improvements in privileges for the Warrant Officer: Whilst it was generally agreed that there are few privileges that a Warrant Officer has over a Senior Rating, it is desirable to have these privileges clearly stated. For example it was noted that the only reference to Warrant Officers leave was contained in the now out of date DCI 923/70.

8. Item 2 - Job Definition

Mr Alderson introduced the item with the following statement: The introduction of the new rank brought its own problems as to the tasks and extra responsibilities that would be undertaken. It is clearly undesirable to build a job around the Warrant Officer, but he has to fit in somewhere. The basic problem stems from the fact the Warrant Officers are not Officers or Chief Petty Officers, and yet the Warrant Officer often carries out the function of both.

Mr Wise noted that where a Warrant Officer is carrying out the duties of a Divisional Officer his job is clearly defined in BR 1992. Mr Alderson went on to say that he considers it important that the status of Warrant Officers should not be enhanced at the expense of the Officers, especially those on the (SD) List.

This subject caused a lot of hot discussion, and the point of Communications Warrant Officers being appointed to Leaders as A/SCO's was raised.

The Chairman stated that some dissatisfaction is obvious from the reports of Warrant Officers doing 'Super Chiefs' jobs, particularly at sea, and that this could account for the cases of early resignation over the last two years.

Intrinsically tied up with this problem is the one of lack of job security in the Communications Branch. Many Warrant Officers, of whom very few are not married, feel the need to be able to go to a new appointment and remain in it for a full term: This would satisfy many problems, be it ego, job satisfaction or what ever, but all in turn would probably help to establish the Warrant Officer and his job definition.

It was unanimously agreed that a general guide is urgently required to define the job of a Warrant Officer other than when acting in the capacity of a Divisional Officer.

9. Item 3 - Uniform and Ceremonial

Mr Alderson said that he felt we lagged a long way behind the RAF and Army Warrant Officers standard for uniform, and felt rather disheartened to see their Officer styled No 1's and its excellent quality material.

Mr Hilbeck pointed out that one can rarely distinguish a Warrant Officer if he is wearing a Burberry.

It was generally agreed that what few modifications had been made, like the removal of cuff buttons and inclusion of the Coat of Arms on the right cuff had helped but most Warrant Officers would like to see the introduction of a better quality material for No 1 uniforms.

It was further agreed that the quality of the gold and silver braid used in present Coats of Arms is inferior to that of the original issue, and tarnishes very rapidly.

10. Item 4 - Pay Differentials

Mr Alderson asked if anyone knew the reason for Warrant Officers losing their Instructors pay, where it had been held as a Senior Rate?

Mr Hankey replied that it was not lost but included in the band differential of pay for a non-technical Warrant Officer, and also noted that non-technical branches where there is no Instructor rate were banded upwards to be grouped with Soanar Warrant Officers as a whole, so whilst we did not 'dip out', some did in fact 'dip in!'

Mr Fouracre raised the point of negative pay and incentives, and pointed out that there is a difference of 53 new pence per day between non-technical and technical Warrant Officers. In fact a 1st Class Mechanician is on the same basic rate after only 2 years as is a non-tech Warrant Officer, and that this in no way can constitute an incentive, particularly for those who qualified as Instructors.

Mr Hankey asked whether or not all Warrant Officers should be classed as 'Middle Managers' and receive the same remuneration.

In conclusion there is obviously a feeling of unrest about the differences between Technical and non-Technical Warrant Officers pay but it was considered that it was not the time or place to do other than vent ones views and feelings. However, Mr Fouracre did suggest that probably the largest single incentive is 'money'.

11. Item 4 - Administrative Documentation

Many minor points were raised by all, the majority of which can and will be corrected within the Mess. However, Mr Alderson queried the reason for warrant Officers Leave Record Cards being administered by the Regulating Staff when DCI 923/70 stated that we would no longer be required to use request forms. He further suggested that all Warrant Officers leave business, addresses on leave, notification for travel warrants and leave records be administered by the Mess President.

Mr Bilbeck suggested that perhaps there should be a room available where Warrant Officers could entertain at their ~~own~~ level and above.

The Chairman recommended that all consider the guest room, in which this meeting was being held, an ideal solution to the problem. All agreed and the Chairman said he would seek the necessary approval for any future event.

12. Item 5 - Detail within HMS MERCURY

It was suggested by Mr Alderson that many of the points raised during the meeting could be dealt with in HMS MERCURY now, such as the use of the Warrant Officers formal title in documentation; differentiation between Warrant Officers and Senior Ratings on muster lists, divisions charts, X-Ray lists etc. and further requested guidance as to which heads he should use as a Divisional Officer in HMS MERCURY. It was suggested that perhaps we should all use Officers' Heads, especially when one considers the problem of 'confronting' ones Junior Ratings in the office one minute and in the heads the next.

Again the point was raised on Lists of Officers, with HMS MERCURY. It was proposed that an appendix to the current Officers List be issued, for there are at least six Warrant Officers in MERCURY at any one time, carrying out Staff/Divisional type work who remain unlisted, and to many, unknown.

13. Any Other Business

It was noted that in the past, informal meetings were held by the Captain of the Signal School with the Warrant Officers and Chief Petty Officers in their mess. Mr Alderson asked whether these meetings might be held again in the future.

The Chairman said he would give this matter his attention.

14. There being no other business the meeting closed at 1240.