

PERSONNEL AND INTERNAL ORGANISATION OF SHIP.

*1058.—Naval Air Work—Volunteers for, other than for Air Observation—REPORT.

(C.W. 3850/24.—25.4.1924.)

Volunteers are required for the Naval Air Work of the Fleet, under the arrangements approved by H.M. Government, by which, to the extent of 70 per cent., the Officer personnel of the Royal Air Force employed in the Fleet Air Arm may be provided from Naval Officers attached temporarily to the Royal Air Force for specified periods.

2. Officers volunteering must be of the rank or relative rank of Sub-Lieutenant or Lieutenant, and must be not above the age of 28 on 1st July, 1924. Sub-Lieutenants must have obtained their watchkeeping certificates. In the main, Officers selected will be of the Executive Branch, but a small number of (E) Officers and Officers, Royal Marines, who satisfy the conditions as to relative rank and age, are also required. Officers before selection will be required to pass a medical examination.

3. Officers who apply are required to volunteer for service in the Fleet Air Arm, involving attachment to the Royal Air Force for certain periods, the duration of which will be decided by the Admiralty from time to time. Officers who volunteer will not be required to undertake a second or subsequent period of attachment, except with the consent of the Officer concerned. For the present, it is intended that the periods of attachment and General Naval Service shall be approximately as follows:—

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| A.—1st Period : Air | Four years, which will include a period of training. |
| B.—2nd Period : General Naval Service. | Two years. |
| C.—3rd Period : Air | Two years for 50 per cent. of the Officers who have completed A—the rest remain in the General Naval Service. |
| D.—4th Period : Air | Two years for 60 per cent. of the Officers who have completed C—the rest remain in the General Naval Service. |
| E.—5th Period : General Naval Service, or Air, as required. | For remainder, if any, of Lieutenant-Commander's time, for all Officers who have completed D. |

4. Appointments of attached Officers will be made by the Air Ministry on the nomination of the Admiralty.

5. Naval or Marine Officers attached to the Royal Air Force will be granted Air Force rank during attachment, the initial rank granted being that of Flying Officer, and will be eligible for advancement in the Royal Air Force, irrespective of their rank in the Royal Navy. They will continue to wear the uniform of their Naval or Marine rank, but will wear also a distinguishing badge indicating that they are attached to the Royal Air Force for service in the Fleet Air Arm.

6. They will continue during the attachment to draw their Naval full pay, and will receive in addition an allowance of 6s. a day. This allowance may be drawn in addition to (E) pay or to G.T. or other similar continuous specialist allowance. It will be paid during attachment under the general conditions laid down for submarine allowance (Article 1372, Clauses 2 and 3, K.R. and A.I., K.R. 17/23). During the periods of Naval General Service, however, when the Officers cease to be attached to the Royal Air Force, the allowance for flying duties will not be payable.

7. When attached to R.A.F. Establishments on shore, they will either be accommodated and rationed, or will be eligible to receive in lieu, in addition to Naval full pay and flying duties allowance, where applicable, lodging and provision allowances at the Naval rates.

8. When embarked during periods of attachment, their flying duties will be considered as equivalent to specialist duties. They will therefore have the rank and status and authority of their Air Force rank when they are engaged in specialist air duties; at other times, when they are engaged in General Naval duties, they will have their Naval or R.M. rank, status and authority. They will be available for ship duty in addition to flying duty, and in order to emphasise this, they will, when appointed to a carrier or other of H.M. Ships, receive an appointment from the Admiralty as well as an appointment from the Air Ministry.

9. Attached Officers will, as stated in paragraph 5, be eligible for advancement in the Royal Air Force under R.A.F. Regulations, irrespective of rank in the Royal Navy or Royal Marines, and such advancement will be determined by the Air Ministry, in consultation with the Admiralty.

10. The promotion in the Royal Navy or Royal Marines of R.N. and R.M. Officers serving in the Fleet Air Arm will be governed by Naval or Marine Regulations, and this service will be considered to be as good service towards promotion as if they had served in any other specialist branches. Naval and Marine Officers who have had six or eight years' air experience will be favourably considered for employment in the higher posts in the Fleet Air Arm, both ashore and afloat.

Consequently, an appreciable proportion of such Officers who receive promotion to Commander and above in the Royal Navy or equivalent rank in the Royal Marines will be required for attachment to the Royal Air Force in higher ranks.

In addition, there can be little doubt that, with the continued development of Naval air work, air questions must enter more and more largely into Naval staff work, and a knowledge of such questions, obtained by actual experience of air duties, must become a very valuable asset for a War Staff Officer, even if it does not become a necessity.

11. Commanding Officers are to bring this Fleet Order to the notice of all Officers concerned and, in doing so, they should draw their special attention to the following points:—

(a) Officers will not, during any part of the periods of attachment, lose their association with the Royal Navy. They will, as stated in paragraph 5, continue to wear Naval or Marine uniform and, except for the initial period of training, they will normally be employed on Fleet air work. It has been arranged that no Naval or Marine Officer attached to the Royal Air Force shall be appointed to a non-Naval unit without the express consent of the Admiralty, and such consent would only be given in exceptional cases, and then only if the Officer himself is willing.

(b) Attached Officers when appointed to carriers or to one of H.M. Ships will, as indicated in paragraph 8, be employed, as far as practicable, on ship duties as well as on Naval air duties, and they will therefore be in a position to keep up their knowledge of other Naval duties. Time in such an appointment to a sea-going ship will count as time at sea for the purpose of qualifying for promotion.

(c) All reports, confidential or otherwise, on attached Officers serving in units of the Fleet Air Arm will be signed by the Captain of the ship and forwarded through Naval and Air Force channels to the Admiralty and Air Ministry. In the event of attached Officers not being borne on the books of one of H.M. Ships, the reports will be forwarded to the Admiralty through Air Force channels.

The good service of an attached Officer will therefore come as in under the notice of the Admiralty as if the Officer was serving entirely under Admiralty authority.

- (d) Officers at present serving as observers and other specialist Officers (T), (N), etc., are not debarred from volunteering under this scheme and will be considered, subject to their services being spared.

12. All applications are to be forwarded, through the usual channels, to the Secretary of the Admiralty, and in the case of Officers serving, should be accompanied in every case by recommendations from their Commanding Officers, and medical reports, instructions for which will be promulgated in a subsequent Fleet Order.

13. From amongst the number of Officers who volunteer, 54 will be selected to undergo the first course, which it is hoped to commence at No. 1 Flying Training School, Netheravon, Wilts, on 15th May next, or as soon after as possible. A further 54 Officers will be required for each of the second and subsequent courses, which will commence at intervals of approximately six months until such time as the total number of Naval Officers required shall have been trained.