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SPECIAL ISSUE

318 Prizes—Herbert Lott Naval Trust Fund prizes (U)

CONTENTS

I. ADMINISTRATIVE AND GENERAL

319 Aviation—flying—Sea Harrier FRS Mk 1—intensive flying trials unit (R)
320 Change in length of notice required from QARNNS and WRNS ratings leaving
the Service on marriage (U)
321 Health and Safety—asbestos materials and dusty insulating materials (U) (see
Amendments)
322 HMS ARK ROYAL—addressing of correspondence after 25 May 1979 (U)
323 Naval base public holidays 1979/new year 1980 (U)
*Transfer of responsibility for National Gas Turbine Establishment (NGTE)
outstations at Haslar and Portland to Admiralty Marine Technology Estab-
lishment (AMTE) (U)

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331/79. UNIFORM—REVIEW OF CURRENT PROGRAMME OF IMPROVEMENTS (U)

[N/STE1022/78—DGST(N) 83A]

1. The purpose of this DCI is to give the Fleet a summary of recent and planned developments in uniforms.
2. Improvements in the past year have included:
 - a. Introduction of ready-made jumpers and trousers in modernized square rig range with diagonal worsted serge material displacing the old 'rough' serge; and in an improved metric size range. (DCI (RN) 169/78 (*time-expired*)).
 - b. Introduction of new working dress for WRNS dental hygienists and dental surgery assistants. Easy care tunics and washable black trousers replacing old starched, wrap-over white overalls. (DCI (RN) 644/78.)
 - c. Inclusion of two white T shirts in RN ratings' kits, with sports jerseys available on loan when required. (DCI (RN) 727/78.)
 - d. Changes in arrangements for wear of outer coats by WRNS, WRNR officers and women medical and dental and RCNC officers, to conform with RN officers and including a separate warm 'liner' for the top-coat. (DCI (RN) 27/79.)
 - e. Introduction of ready-made jackets and trousers in diagonal serge material for men not dressed as seamen to replace the old 'rough' serge, and in an improved metric size range. (DCI (RN) 77/79.)
 - f. Introduction of WRNS officers' mess dress in a style more representative of the uniformed service and in modern washable materials. (DCI (RN) 274/79.)

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Changes already approved by the Admiralty Board

3. The following changes have been approved by the Admiralty Board: the target date by which it is hoped introduction can be achieved is indicated in brackets:

- a. *Swords for RN and RM Officers.* A limited pool of RN and RM officers' swords and belts is to be established and distributed to selected ships and establishments for issues on temporary loan to officers for wear on full ceremonial and other appropriate occasions. Officers may of course continue to purchase their own swords if they so wish. (Mid 1980.)
- b. *RN and RNR Junior Steward Ratings' working dress.* A new working dress is to be introduced in two stages:
 - (1) 'Informal' rig, comprising white collar-attached shirt, bow tie, cummerbund and straight blue worsted/polyester trousers. (Mid 1979.)
 - (2) 'Formal' rig, as above, with the addition of a new style short white jacket with blue lapels. (Late 1980.)
- c. *RN and RNR Cl I and III Ratings' cap.* A new two-piece cap which consists of a peak and frame, and a detachable white top, is to be introduced as stocks of the present cap waste out. The new cap is lighter than the current pattern and was demonstrated in Fleet trials to be both smart and comfortable. The top can be replaced as required and will be obtainable separately. (Mid 1980 onwards.)
- d. *RN Ratings' suitcase.* A modified suitcase, of the same strength and dimensions as the present item, but using the same standard materials as the Army pattern case is to be introduced on a wastage basis. (Mid 1982.)
- e. *WRNS and QARNNS suitcase.* Because the current RN suitcase is considered too heavy and unnecessarily robust, a commercial pattern lightweight suitcase (about two lbs lighter than the RN item and a little larger) is to be introduced for WRNS and QARNNS ratings. The suitcase will also be issued to WRAC and QARANC personnel. (Mid 1979.)
- f. *WRNS and WRNR officers' and ratings' heavy wool jersey.* A tri-Service pattern garment, with V-neck, elbow patches and shoulder flaps is to be introduced in navy blue for WRNS personnel. The new jersey will be included in WRNS ratings' initial kits, in place of the present cardigan and jersey, and serving ratings will be able to buy one at a special price for a limited period. The current pattern WRNS officers' jersey will be phased out in the normal course of uniform maintenance. (Late 1979.)
- g. *Badges.*
 - (1) *Engineering Branch.* Contracts have been placed for badges for the new sub-branches. The 'propeller' device is to be retained for ME ratings; and the 'aeroplane' will continue in use for the AE badges. WE ratings will wear a new device incorporating 'a missile, a torpedo and lightning flashes'. In all badges letters below the basic device will be included to denote specialist qualification. The aim is to make the new badges available to ratings, by gratuitous issue, on the dates the reorganizations come into effect (currently September 1979 for ME and WE, and September 1980 for AE).
 - (2) *Other new designs.* For gold wire badges, there has been a slippage in introductory dates because contractors have been giving priority to the manufacture of the very large quantities of additional badges for the Engineering Branch. Badges in production are:

- (a) *Electronic Warfare Sub-Branch*. DCI (RN) 420/78 announced that new badges were to be introduced incorporating 'crossed lightning flashes superimposed upon two atomic ellipses'. The introductory date is now late 1979.
- (b) *Radio Operator (Submarine) Sub-Branch*. The new badges will incorporate letters 'SM' below the 'wings crossed by lightning flash' device; (late 1979).
- (c) *WRNS and QARNNS categories*. New badges are also being obtained for QARNNS clerical and quarters assistants and the WRNS family services category: in each case the design will comprise letters in a circle: introduction during 1980. Badges for WRNS dental hygienists' and dental surgery assistants' white tunics and for WRNS physical trainers' blue uniform suits will be available later this year.
- h. *Discontinuance of separate white shirts and collars from Cl I and III Ratings' kits*. Kit scales currently include one white shirt and two separate collars, plus four collar-attached shirts (two white and two blue). The scale of white shirts is to be amended to provide three of the collar-attached pattern, and these will be worn on all occasions with blue uniform, including therefore wear with No 1 Dress. (Mid 1979.)
- i. *Addition of a pair of blue worsted/polyester trousers to RN Ratings' kits*. In the manner of Army 'barrack dress' trousers, proposals are well advanced to add a pair of worsted/polyester trousers to RN ratings' kits (ie the separate trousers introduced for RN officers at the end of 1977). These trousers are for wear with blue shirt-sleeve and heavy wool jersey rigs in place of blue uniform trousers or No 8 trousers: they are warmer and smarter than the No 8s, and are also hard-wearing and will save wear on blue uniform trousers. Because of the long lead-times involved, first to obtain the cloth, then to have it turned into garments, introduction cannot be before the middle of 1981, at best.
- j. *White bush jackets for RN officers*. Contracts will be placed shortly for first deliveries of RN officers' white bush jackets for wear in place of white tunics in Nos 4W and 5W dresses. The jackets will have short sleeves, shoulder straps will be worn as on white tunics at present, and the material will be white satin drill to match existing trousers. Free issues will be made to all officers on first occasion of need. (Late 1980.)

Items undergoing trials

4. Fleet trials of the following items are currently underway or just beginning:
 - a. *Material for white uniform*. After inconclusive trials in 1977, this re-run to find an easy-care material to replace white satin drill for tropical uniforms, is due to span the 1979 summer. Personnel in Gibraltar, Naples, Hong Kong and USA, a few naval attachés and officers and ratings in ships operating in tropical waters are participating. Dacron/cotton, as used by the USN, is included in the trials.
 - b. *General purpose boots*. Three types of experimental general purpose boots are undergoing a nine-month trial to determine whether any single pattern would be suitable for introduction in ratings' kits and could be worn both ashore and afloat for ceremonial occasions, for training purposes and in place of non-slip safety footwear.

- c. *Shoes, black leather, women's.* The present black leather lace-up shoe is unpopular with all three women's Services both because of its style and wear life. The results of trials are now coming in, and if results are favourable, each service will introduce the improved pattern shoe on a wastage basis.
- d. *Evening shirts for RN and RM officers.* Trials of a new slimmer-fit, collar-attached, evening shirt with a semi-stiff front are about to begin in a number of ships and establishments. The aims are to determine whether a shirt of this kind, in easy-care polyester/cotton would be a suitable replacement for the present collar-attached evening shirt and how far in addition it might replace the stiff shirt and winged collar.

Items under consideration

- 5. Other items currently being examined include:
 - a. *RN officers' windproof jacket.* Experience has indicated that there is no desire or need for a garment of this type in officers' uniform outfits. It is likely, therefore, that it will be deleted from uniform scales and dress tables. However, the jacket is acknowledged to have sound functional and protective properties and consideration is being given to providing it in loan scales and for specific uses on a more limited basis. The extent to which such use should be authorized is being investigated.
 - b. *RN ratings' windproof working jacket.* It is still hoped to improve on this jacket but there are conflicting requirements, eg the need for the item to be windproof and waterproof without condensation under the garment. Garments of this nature cannot reasonably be washable as well, and no single garment is likely to meet all requirements. The possibility of producing something between the present costly foul weather jacket and current windproof working jacket is being considered.
 - c. *White bush jackets for class I and III ratings.* It is still the aim to provide bush jackets for class I and III ratings, although there are unresolved differences of opinion whether white drill tunics are also needed. The bush jackets in mind would be of similar style to those for RN officers. Ideally, they would be the same design, but the way in which rate badges would best be worn has not yet been agreed. Because white uniform is now worn less widely, the project has not been given high priority in financial programmes, and at the moment it is likely that final decisions will await completion of the trials of improved white materials.
 - d. *Modernized square rig.* In view of the good quality and fit of the ready-made square rig jumpers and trousers introduced last year, consideration is being given to providing both No 1 and No 2 'suits' from the ready-made ranges and to discontinuing the made-to-measure garments. Thought is also being given to the possibility of improving the front closure of the jumper and at the same time enhancing the general appearance by adding tapes at the base of the V-opening and wearing a white lanyard with them.
 - e. *Rate badges for RN and WRNS ratings.* There is general agreement that everyone should wear rate badges on the shoulders of heavy wool jerseys. Careful consideration is being given to the design of these badges to ensure suitability for more extensive wear, for example on shirt-sleeve rigs, on bush jackets, and even on raincoats if required at some future date. Because of this the introductory date has slipped from the mid 1980 date originally hoped for and with the large purchases involved is likely to be nearer mid 1981.

Badges of rank: RN officers' 'top-coats'. The addition of shoulder straps to blue gaberdine raincoats has not been a popular change, and it begins to look as though detachable EP wire shoulder badges would be preferred (or, maybe, even an unbadged coat). Consideration is being given to this and also particularly to whether the 'soft' shoulder badges would be of sufficiently smart appearance, and whether coats could be modified, whilst still retaining the advantages of a standard tri-Service pattern for officers and ratings.

Lightweight nylon raincoat (PACAMAC style) for RN officers and ratings. The merits of such a garment are being re-examined, and opinions point to the conclusion that it has no place in uniform outfits, essentially because it is insufficiently smart and of doubtful value in bad weather.

The summary in this DCI is not comprehensive but gives an indication of the range of projects under review and especially those known to be the subject of discussion among the customers in the Fleet. It is proposed to issue a DCI (RN) of this kind each year about this time.