

## OFFICERS

During the past year, a variety of changes in the total RN officer requirement have occurred, thus making the achievement of a match between bearing and requirement an elusive aim. These variations are not an abnormal feature: they result from changes in ship programmes, complement reviews, and reconsideration of the allowances made in the requirement for both higher training and those essential elements of the appointing cycle such as travelling and turn-over time.

Despite a rationalisation which led to an increase in the allowance made for the higher training of officers, the overall officer requirement has fallen over the last year. The bearing has also shown a drop and, as this was rather less than that for the requirement, the overall RN officer shortfall reduced (from 2.2% at 1 April 1986 to 1.8% at 1 April 1987). This shortfall is, however, spread unevenly amongst branches and ranks thus making its effects much more noticeable in some areas than others. Counted within the bearing figures are officers on extensions of service and those on the temporary special duties list, all of whom play an important part in alleviating shortfalls.

The difficulty in foreseeing shortages within sub specialisations was raised in the previous issue and this continues to demand the attention of the manpower planner. Endeavour in this area is proving largely successful although achievement of the correct balance continues, in many cases, to take longer than we would wish. An important feature in the alleviation of some of these shortages has been an increase in the number of transfers, for suitable officers, from short to longer supplementary list careers. This approach also has the significant advantages of increasing the return on our training investment and reducing the total training throughput.

Retention of trained personnel is probably the most important single element in the manpower equation. Variation in wastage rates makes manpower forecasting and planning difficult and inaccurate; far more importantly, high wastage rates cause increased turbulence and overstretch in the Fleet and over loading of the training pipeline. Within the RN overall (including RM WRNS and QARNNS) the premature voluntary retirement rate has risen over the past year continuing a trend which started in 1982. In the last issue it was reported that there were some signs of the rate levelling out. In the event this was not realised, although there is sufficient evidence for the optimist to repeat the observation this year. In any event the current rate which is now close to 3% is

unquestionably too high and only a significant fall will ease overstretch in both the Fleet and the training establishments. Every effort is being made to achieve this.

1986/87 proved to be the best year for officer recruiting for a long time, with the achievement of 99% of our entry target. Particularly encouraging was the full house for Engineer and Instructor Officers - the latter boosted by 6 direct entry WRNS officers. A new scheme for WRNS officers seeks to attract suitably qualified young women to read for engineering degrees at RNEC Manadon. The entry target for 1987/88 is down slightly on last year but is expected to return to about the same level in subsequent years - ie well over 700 new officers each year. Clearly we still need the same number appearing before the Admiralty Interview Board. Outline requirements, entry options and useful points of contact are shown on the accompanying fact sheet.

The prospects of meeting our targets this year are fairly bright - but the future is much less certain. The competition is increasingly tough, not only for engineering, mathematics and science students, but for high calibre people in all categories. It remains a key objective to attract a larger proportion of these brighter candidates, especially where we have found it more difficult to do so. In the Engineer and Aircrew entries.

The excellent support that the Director of Naval Recruiting receives from serving and retired officers continues to be invaluable. Time and again it is through informed talent spotting and encouragement that we are put in touch with promising candidates - please keep it up.

## RATINGS

BROADSHEET 86 drew attention to unsatisfactory rating retention levels. In the event 11.3% of the trained strength left the Service in the course of last year. The projection for 1987/88 is brighter: notice-giving has fallen from a mid-1985 peak of 6.8% to a late 1986 figure of 5.9%. Outflow during 1987 will be correspondingly less - perhaps a little under 10% - due to the combined effects of lower notice-giving, fewer "normal terminations" (1986 was an exceptional year, related to high recruiting around 1964), and the leading edge of the "2OE" (Second Open Engagement).

A reduction in notice giving to not more than 5% is our target for 1987/88; this would lead to a total outflow of 9% in 1989. As the unformed manpower ceiling

reduces by 1% per annum from April 1988 the Service would thus be seeking to replace 8% of its trained men per year - a challenging but attainable and "healthy" goal.

23,863 young men and women applied to enter Naval service in 1986-87, a 4% rise on the previous year. Recruiting targets were achieved in nearly all categories, including Artificer Apprentices (442) and Royal Marines (1178); however, we were short of Radio Operators, Medical Assistants and Writers. This year the targets have been reduced slightly for the RN and

RAM, but they are likely to rise following forthcoming reviews. There is an increase in the WRNS target and QARNNS targets are also expected to rise with the advent of a new category QARNNS Medical Assistant - in response to an acute shortage of RN Medical Assistants (see 'Medical Matters'). However with the steadily decreasing number of school leavers over the next few years (the 'demographic trough'), the rating recruitment task will become increasingly difficult, particularly in those categories where there are already shortages.

## **DEPLOYMENT OF MANPOWER**

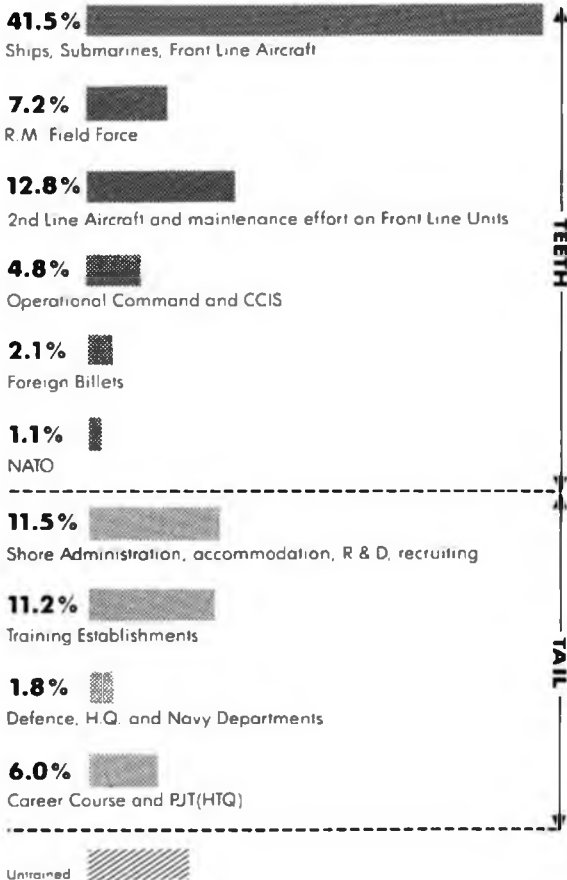
In last year's BROADSHEET, the problem of aligning our tasks with the allocated ceiling numbers was explained (remember the "gingerbread man" showing the amount of manpower controlled by the 8 Tasking Area Flag Officers?). This year, we take a brief look at the deployment of our valuable manpower assets against the tasks they perform.

Our cake has now been cut a different way. There are basically four main segments of identified activity. Firstly, we have the Front Line comprising all billets on the Schemes of Complement for ships, submarines, sea-going air squadrons and the Royal Marine Field Force. Secondly, there is the Front Line Direct Support encompassing personnel complemented in Operational and Command staffs; shore communication stations, second line air squadrons, Fleet Maintenance Groups, Submarine Maintenance Units and aircraft repair bases; plus NATO and all foreign billets. Collectively these first 2 groups constitute the "Teeth" and account for 70% of our strength. The "Tail", more correctly termed Indirect Support, absorbs all billets associated with accommodation and supporting roles, administrative tasks, headquarters and training establishments, and the allowances made for higher training through further career and PJT courses. The fourth and final slice of our cake is the untrained strength which covers new entry training, ranging from 4 months for some to 7 years for Engineer Officers.

The coming 10 years will see a slight decline in the overall numbers at sea as the less manpower intensive Type 23s replace our ageing Leanders and Type 21s.

This reduction in the Front Line is partially offset by increased numbers in the EH101 helicopter programme, but the overall need to shed nearly 3500 billets in the mid-1990s, whilst attempting to retain a Teeth:Tail ratio of 70:30, will result in numerically equal losses from the 2 support areas. With some 7000 billets lost in the Naval Home Command since 1981 extreme caution and careful management will be required if we are to retain the present effective shape of our infrastructure without impairing the overall quality of Naval life.

## DEPLOYMENT OF MANPOWER



## Pay and Allowances

The AFPRB has continued to raise the level of Forces' pay (5.99% this year), maintaining comparability with wages nationally and keeping the necessary differentials between ranks. The Review Body continues to have credibility with the sailor: there is general acceptance of the fairness of basic pay and this is not a current cause for concern. Allowances are a different matter though: they are not all perceived, by officers or ratings, to provide a proper recompense for the specific areas they are meant to recognise, and writing anomalies continue to exist. This is presently the subject of a wide-ranging review.

## Retention Measures

Increases in the average length of service for ratings, reduction in the numbers taking notice and good recruiting are all, at last, showing healthy trends but these are short term and there is no room for complacency. The long awaited demographic trough is upon us: retention and recruitment requirements in an increasingly difficult manpower market mean that conditions of service must continue to be attractive. Manpower uses some 27% of the Defence Vote, is expensive to train, and the current rates of PVR are still too high.

Surveys of why ratings seek early release taken at the time they give notice and again when they actually leave, indicate the following main reasons (there are others, less frequently expressed but not being ignored).

**a. Turbulence** A major factor is the turbulent nature of RN service when compared to that perceived for civilian counterparts. Turbulence is endemic to seagoing service but is also increasingly evident ashore. The inability to make longer term personal plans is often deemed unacceptable to today's young ratings, whether married or single.

**b. Separation** Although people understand that separation is inevitable in Naval life, it is still a major disincentive towards long service for many.

**c. Job Dissatisfaction** This also features prominently as a reason for leaving and is largely attributed to the use of highly trained people in the more mundane duties associated with ship husbandry and the Communal Party.

Many of these factors have traditionally been considered a normal part of naval life but reducing their impact has to be a major concern of the Personal

Services department. Minimising short notice drafts to reduce turbulence, making Duty Watches smaller to reduce the frequency of standing them and putting preservation, painting and cleaning of ships out to contract are all part of the remedial action. A major review of retention, with the aim of formulating a Naval Retention Strategy is being undertaken.

## The Family

The attitudes of the family have a vital place in ensuring good retention. There is a need to improve communications with naval families, not to intrude into their lives, but to make information and support more readily available when required. In this the Naval Personal and Family Service (NPFS) plays an important and increasingly effective role. With some 59 Social Workers, the NPFS is respected as a professional, useful and friendly organisation to help naval families cope with increasing pressures of modern life. But we cannot leave the communication problem entirely to the NPFS and improvements in other areas are also being sought.

## Living Conditions

Reductions in capital spending programmes ashore have focussed attention on the need to make the best use of our existing resources. In this end funds are being channelled towards buildings and establishments where conditions are worst, such as RM Arbroath and HMS COCHRANE, where work has already begun. Elsewhere improvements will take considerably longer to achieve.

## The Way Ahead

The long term aim is to alleviate the worst effects of separation by addressing the Portsmouth-Plymouth-Rosyth sea shore imbalance, stabilising ships' programmes, reducing drafting turbulence and improving working conditions and job satisfaction, in particular of ships in harbour. The tight management of manpower resources and capital funding since the Nott Review (Command 8288) has opened the possibility of improvements due to this increased efficiency. To this extent the initiative lies with the RN. A prime task is to introduce an allowance package designed to compensate those having to spend more of their lives at sea than formerly and to offset the turbulence that is now all too frequent when ashore.

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