



FOR LIGHT RECONNAISSANCE

*The Fairey Seafox Catapult Floatplane : Napier Rapier VI Engine :
Monococque Fuselage : Easy Maintenance Features*

TRADITIONALLY silent, the Navy has unobtrusively taken into service a number of Fairey Seafox floatplanes of a large batch ordered for operation with the Fleet. The official term "light reconnaissance" is novel and calls for some definition. An "L.R." machine as typified by the Seafox is a lightly loaded, lightly armed seaplane designed primarily for operation from cruisers under any but the very worst conditions. Ease of handling on the water and on shipboard are first essentials, and provision must be made for easy repair. The Seafox is the first machine of its kind to be adopted and may be operated from the smaller type of naval catapult, which is not intended to handle the heavier amphibians and floatplanes. Its compactness when folded allows three machines to be carried on a cruiser of average size.

Several Seafoxes with Napier Rapier VI engines have been in service since the early part of this year in East and West Indian, South African and Mediterranean waters. Although the performance is not high—speed climb and ceiling being relatively unimportant so far as the specification is concerned—the handling qualities of the Seafox have ensured its popularity among Fleet Air Arm pilots.

Not only is the Seafox expected to be able to land safely in quite appalling seas, but it must withstand the blast of naval guns and the effects of prolonged exposure to sea water and salt air.

The precise extent of the Seafox contract is confidential, but as the entire Fairey factory at Hamble is devoted to the production of these machines it is obviously of a substantial nature.

The staff at Fairey's Hamble works is headed by Mr. B. G. Slater, the general manager, who has Mr. G. Lyon as his production manager. Mr. C. G. James is the chief draughtsman.

Designed to the same factors as the Fairey Battle high-speed medium bomber, the Seafox, unlike that aircraft, is a two-bay slightly staggered biplane with twin-float

undercarriage, stressed-skin Alclad fuselage, and fabric-covered wings. It is produced exclusively as a floatplane.

As frequently pointed out in *Flight*, one of the major disadvantages of the stressed-skin fuselage as applied to modern military aircraft is the difficulty of installing the complex equipment. Notwithstanding the "light" in the official designation of the Seafox, this problem was quite acute, as the standard load is very similar to that of the big Pegasus X-engined Fairey Swordfish torpedo spotter reconnaissance machine operating in "reconnaissance" condition. Matters were eased very considerably when it was decided to build the fuselage in a number of sections. The main portion—approximately of horseshoe section—is fitted with a fore-and-aft coaming plate and the top decking, which is really fairing, is subsequently added. Large apertures must, of course, be left in the coaming plate for the cockpits. The bottom portion of the fuselage is strengthened by longitudinal inter-bulkhead members and longitudinal stringers, but for the greater part there are no stringers in the accepted sense of the term, each

