

SERVICE AVIATION



Royal Air Force and Official Announcements : Fleet Air Arm News : Military Aviation Abroad

BOTH ENDS OF THE STRING : On Empire Air Day visitors will be able to witness the operation of barrage balloons at Cardington. A new type of mobile winch is used.



Balloon Barrage Progress

THREE balloon barrage squadrons of the Auxiliary Air Force commenced to form last Monday, May 16, at No. 1 Balloon Centre, Kidbrooke, London, S.E.3. These are Nos. 901, 902 and 903 (B.B.) Squadrons and are the first units to be organised in the new Group. Administration will be by the County of London Territorial and Air Force Association and recruiting started from the date of formation.

Regular N.C.O.s and airmen have completed training at Cardington, Beds, as instructors for the new squadrons and the necessary accommodation for the units has been completed. The total number of personnel eventually required will be about 6,000, but the majority will not be entered until later.

Service in a Balloon Squadron will be similar to that in the Auxiliary Air Force or the Territorial Army, but rather less exacting. Men will be required to attend for evening or week-end training, to put in a certain number of parades in the course of the year and to attend fifteen days' annual training. Engagement will be for a period of four years and re-engagement will be allowed for one, two, three or four years at a time. Bounties will be paid and pay will be issued during annual training. Lectures on balloon operation will be followed later by practical work.

The lower age limit for enlistment has been fixed at 38, thus an excellent opportunity for men of over normal Service age is provided. Recruits will be enlisted as aircraftmen second-class, and on satisfactory completion of training they will be eligible for promotion.

Seven other auxiliary balloon squadrons are to be formed shortly in Surrey, Middlesex and Essex. These squadrons will be located at balloon centres now under construction at Hook, Stanmore and Chigwell in the respective counties, and recruiting on a limited scale for one squadron in each of these districts also commenced last Monday. Application should be made to the following addresses: No. 904 Squadron, Hook, Mansfield Road, Hook, Surbiton, Surrey; No. 907 Squadron, Stanmore, Stanmore Park (adjoining Stanmore Church), Stanmore, Middlesex; No. 909 Squadron, Ghigwell, Essex Territorial Drill Hall, Loughton Way, Buckhurst Hill, Essex.

Command of No. 824 (T.S.R.) Squadron

THE command of No. 824 Squadron in H.M.S. *Eagle* has been taken over by Sqn. Ldr. R. G. Forbes. The squadron is equipped with Swordfish and attached to the China Station. Sqn. Ldr. Forbes succeeds Sqn. Ldr. Woodhall and has for the past two years been with No. 822 Squadron in H.M.S. *Furious*.

Whitleys I, II, III, and IV

IN the short time since the first Whitleys entered service three more Marks have appeared. The Whitley I is powered with 775/805 h.p. Tiger IXs and has a maximum speed at 7,000ft. of 192 m.p.h. The Whitley II has the more recently introduced Tiger VIII with two-speed superchargers, and these give 805/845 at 6,250ft. and a maximum of 780 h.p. at 14,250ft. The take-off power is 920 h.p. As may be expected this Mark is somewhat faster and attains 215 m.p.h. at 15,000ft.

The Whitley III is powered similarly but will incorporate an improved form of bomb stowage which necessitates certain structural alterations to the fuselage.

As announced recently in *Flight* an order has now been placed for the Whitley IV powered with liquid-cooled Rolls-Royce Merlin engines—probably the Merlin X. The performance should in this case undergo a further "bump-up" and the altitude speed will probably be 15 to 20 m.p.h. better.

Helping the Benevolent Fund

UNTIL this year the Council of the R.A.F. Benevolent Fund has received considerable donations from the public and the Royal Air Force through the Hendon Display. These have now ceased and, although the capital sum with which the Fund was started after the war has been augmented by investment, and produces an income which goes a good way towards covering the need of dependants, the balance must be found by subscription from the general public.

The Council hopes that assistance will continue to be forthcoming from Empire Air Day and other displays, but such events constitute an uncertain source of income and the Fund may be faced with the task of finding an extra £6,000 a year.

Post-war cases are dependent upon the money which can be raised annually, and the effect of the expansion is already being felt by the Fund through the additional calls made upon it. Expenditure on post-war cases is expected to be doubled within a few years.

The Service is determined that no situation shall arise where it can be said that income is inadequate for post-war personnel in distress and that they cannot be helped without depleting the capital of the Fund. Serving personnel have therefore decided that the needs of post-war cases shall be, to a great extent, shouldered by themselves by making a voluntary subscription of one half-day's pay per annum.

Representatives of the Comrades of Royal Air Force Association have been invaluable voluntary helpers in recent years.

Expenditure in the past was mainly upon war-time ex-officers because of the high proportion of officer casualties. The present-day casualties are, however, higher among airmen than officers, with the result that all ranks are now brought equally into contact with the Fund.

Flying Accidents

THE Air Ministry regrets to announce the following accidents:—A.P/O. Errol Desmond Gimson lost his life in an accident which occurred at Sealand on May 6 to an aircraft of No. 5 F.T.S., Sealand, Queen's Ferry, Chester. A.P/O. Gimson was the pilot and sole occupant of the aircraft.

No. 741397 Sgt. Stephen Henry Douglas Leech lost his life in an accident that occurred on May 7 at Locksheath, Hants, to an aircraft of No. 3 Elementary and Service Flying School, Hamble. Sgt. Leech was the pilot and sole occupant.

P/O. Hugh Henry-May lost his life in an accident which occurred at Kenley, Surrey, on May 10 to an aircraft of No. 3 (F.) Sqn. P/O. Henry-May was the pilot and sole occupant.

P/O. Ivor Jack Fawdry and P/O. Colin James Carr Lee lost their lives in an accident which occurred near Godmanchester, Huntingdonshire, on May 10 to an aircraft of No. 139 (B.) Sqn., Wyton, Huntingdon. P/O. Fawdry was the pilot and P/O. Lee the other occupant of the aircraft.

P/O. Richard Douglas Hamilton Maxwell and No. 563262 Cpl. David Spencer Wissett lost their lives, and No. 566975 A/C. 1st Class Whitfield Dodds was injured in an accident which occurred at Hemswell on May 10 to an aircraft of No. 144 (B.) Sqn., Hemswell, Lincoln. P/O. Maxwell was the pilot and Cpl. Wissett and A/C. Dodds were the members of the crew.

An accident occurred at Wyton, Huntingdon, on May 10 to an aircraft of No. 114 (B.) Sqn., Wyton, in which the following occupants lost their lives:—P/O. Douglas Perry, No. 524637 A/C. 1st Class John Joseph Gerrard Rice. No. 523273 A/C. 1st Class Frederick Crimes. P/O. Perry was the pilot and A/C. Rice and A/C. Crimes were the members of the crew.