

PERSONNEL

RECRUITING

Officers

In 1987 88 officer recruitment was 4.5% short of the target which itself was some 18.3% lower than the previous year. Principal shortfalls were for Doctors and Chaplains and there was a small undershoot for Seaman and Engineers. Instructor and Aircrew recruitment has held up well but Observers are still hard to find. Recruiting is now very competitive but we are maintaining our efforts to attract our fair share of high quality school leavers and graduates.

A range of initiatives to overcome rank and specialisation mismatch between Bearing and Requirement has been bearing fruit. Some marked reductions in localised shortfalls have occurred and the signs are encouraging.

Ratings and Other Ranks

In the past year the recruiting achievement was 98% of the target, with recruitment of RM Other Ranks and to the WRNS being particularly buoyant. Shortfalls occurred for Artificer Apprentices, Stewards, Communications and Medical Technicians, Radio Operators, and Nurses.

Even small shortages in a branch can upset sea:shore ratios and the manning of the Fleet. This problem is with us now for Artificers and there is a projected shortfall in Senior Rates in the mid-1990s. It was, in part, to offset these deficits that the Second Open Engagement (2OE) from 22 to 32 years service, was introduced, and this is now entering its third successful season.

General

We continue to keep a close watch on recruiting criteria. For example, the eyesight standards required for Seaman Officers have been brought into line with Merchant Navy practice and it is under consideration for the standards required of Royal Marines to become the same as those for the infantry, these measures will significantly increase the size of the recruiting pool.

But the demographic trough is beginning to present severe problems. There will be a drop of up to 35% in the age groups from which we recruit. The competition for these young people will be fierce with business and industry offering increasingly attractive financial packages and improved training. We shall be responding strongly in every way we can - vigorously promoting RN careers in all environments, providing greater support to recruiting from Naval PR activities, giving potential recruits more contact with the

environment in which they would work and increasing the flexibility of Officer entry and degree schemes. In addition we need the maximum support possible from everyone with the interests of the Navy at heart.

For Careers Information:

Write to Director of Naval Recruiting
Room 105 Archway Block North
Ministry of Defence
Old Admiralty Building
Spring Gardens
London SW1A 2BE

Tel 01 218 2427

Or Contact visit the nearest Royal Navy & Royal Marines Careers Information Office (listed in local telephone directories under "Naval Establishments")

RETENTION

It is important that we improve retention so that lower recruiting targets may be set, to relieve pressure on the training machine and to ease the turbulence in ships and establishments which results from too high a number of people being cycled through the system. Recently however there has been a small but steady rise in the number of officers taking early retirement and of ratings giving 18 months' notice. Our wastage although low by civilian standards, has been higher than we would wish and a considerable effort is being made to enhance retention by actions on a broad front to improve job satisfaction and the quality of Naval life. As always, there are many contrary pressures too, but we aim to encourage attitudes at all levels in the Navy towards a "Retention Culture".

CONDITIONS OF SERVICE

Our people operate in an environment where heavy demands are made on their skills and commitment. Preserving the delicate balance between full utilisation of their abilities and pushing them too hard has a major impact on retention. The following paragraphs describe some of the measures we are taking. Space does not allow a full account.

Pay and Allowances

The recommendations of the AFPRB were implemented in full giving an average increase of 6.7%, varying by up to 2.1% according to rank or rate. Typical annual rates of Basic Pay now stand at £11,195 for a Leading Hand, £14,147 for a Chief Petty Officer, £16,202 for a mid-seniority Lieutenant and £30,514 for a Captain on promotion.

There have been some major changes in Allowances with particular improvements for those at sea. To recognise that people spend more of their careers at sea than has been the case for many years a new allowance has been introduced for those men, single and married, who have completed two years sea service, and there are increments at seven and ten years. To help them see more of their families, seagoers receive more travel warrants and will get extra warrants in their subsequent shore jobs.

A broader Tri-Service Review of Allowances also came into effect in October. There are still some details to be resolved but in addition to the seagoers' package the main improvements are considerable increases in Disturbance and Relocation Allowances, there are adjustments in the eligibility for Boarding School Allowance which are unwelcome to many of the present claimants, there are reductions in travel warrants for some of those ashore, and home-to-duty travelling expenses for the home owner will eventually be abolished. In the medium to long term, the Navy Board accepts that there should be overall benefits from the new allowances, but the transitional phase will be more difficult.

Utilisation

We continue to improve manpower utilisation as a retention measure. Some examples are as follows:

- more Warrant Officers filling selected junior officer billets
- formation of an Aircraft Control Branch
- introduction of Open Engagements for QARNNS and WRNS ratings and RM other ranks
- employing more WRNS ratings in S & S billets ashore (releasing male ratings for sea service)

Engineering Branch Development (EBD) is now complete and Marine Engineering Departments in ships have assumed responsibility for electrical power generation and distribution. The final scene was enacted last year when electrical training was transferred from the "White City" in HMS COLLINGWOOD to the purpose designed Faraday Block in HMS SULTAN.

PROMOTION

In the Navy as in all walks of life, the prospect of gaining promotion is a strong motivating factor and has an important effect on retention. But we need to balance the numbers of people in each rank or rate and sub specialisation with the billets to be filled and achieving this in a visibly equitable way is a constant challenge.

Officers

Some variations in promotion opportunities for officers are inevitable due to the differing requirements of each specialisation. These are minimised by controlling the numbers serving on each type of commission within a given specialisation. There has been a significant improvement in promotion opportunities for the Special Duties and Supplementary List in the last 20 years, and also in the opportunity to transfer from these lists to the General List.

Ratings and Other Ranks

Promotion prospects for ratings are more directly related to changing requirements. Whereas career planning does take account of reasonable expectations of advancement it is inevitable that the length of time in any given rate will depend on the rate of exit from the one above it. For example in 1977 advancement to Leading Hand took on average only 3.7 years, which was rather too fast to achieve the required quality in the higher rate, while in 1987 it took 5.9 years, which is a little too slow! Various programmes have attempted to engineer this process but in the main deviations from career pattern "normality" are left to work themselves out, producing a broad picture that is in the event reasonably consistent.

Normally patterns of promotion and advancement thus vary between what are quite modest extremes and usually within a short cycle. Smaller groups such as the P1 branch are the most sensitive to changing requirements and thus experience fairly frequent fluctuations.

The overall situation is best illustrated by the average time taken from entry as a raw recruit to reaching the top of the rating structure as a Warrant Officer. For both artificers and non-artificers this is currently just over 19 years, a figure which has only varied by a year or two over the last twelve and is unlikely to change significantly in the future. The opportunities for rating entries to become officers are also very good: 30% of all officers now serving entered as ratings and it is not unheard of for rating entries to become Admirals.

The Women's Royal Naval Service is an important factor in the manpower equation. There is continuing discussion of how even greater use can be made of this valuable human resource. Not everyone is clear about the restrictions on the employment of the WRNS. The following paragraphs outline the present situation and offer some thoughts on the future.

The Geneva Convention states:

"Members of the Armed Forces of a party to a conflict (other than Medical Personnel and those covered by Article 33 of the 3rd Convention) are combatants, that is to say, they have the right to participate directly in hostilities".

Thus, in these terms, members of the WRNS would be combatants in the event of a conflict involving the UK. However, it has long been Government policy that Servicewomen shall not be employed in "combat roles". As the Royal Navy classifies all seagoing billets in naval hulls as "combat", Naval Servicewomen do not qualify for regular sea service and they do not serve in complemented sea billets.

There are nonetheless occasions when WRNS personnel do go to sea where appropriate arrangements can be made. Both officers and ratings can serve at sea in some RFAs for short periods, mainly during exercises. Because of their expertise, some are required to go to sea in warships during trials, and others carry out their tasks in HM Ships on a day running basis.

For the future, the WRNS is well able to continue to provide a stabilising factor in shore establishments. This ability will be important over the next decade, when sea/shore manning difficulties will tend to peak, and widening the scope of WRNS employment opportunities ashore may well be sensible. How they can help overcome seagoing "overstretch", however, is more problematical but the desirability of expanding their role to include some sea service is kept under regular review.

A comprehensive study is about to examine our existing policy on the employment of female personnel with the RN and consider the scope for utilising their potential employment into the 21st century. Much can be learned from the experience - not always happy - of other nations who, for a variety of reasons, now employ women in warships and auxiliary support vessels. Many questions will obviously need to be addressed.

Whatever the outcome we shall continue to seek the best possible ways of realising the full potential of all our man and woman power.