

It was on the 12th July, 1940, that the first batch of 20 naval airmen sailed from New Zealand in s.s. "Rangitane" for England, and so commenced New Zealand's outstanding naval contribution from a personnel viewpoint. Nine hundred and forty-nine were to follow those pioneers, who came from all callings, who had never before been in the air, yet to whom, as a means of answering the country's call, the combination of sea and air warfare, as in the Fleet Air Arm, had an irresistible appeal. One hundred and fifty-one of those men will not return; accidentally killed, 82; missing, presumed killed, 57; killed in action, 3; executed by Japanese, 2; died of wounds, 3; missing, 4.

In all, 738 achieved commissioned rank in the Air Branch of the Royal New Zealand Naval Volunteer Reserve—this includes 88 officers and airmen of the Royal New Zealand Air Force transferred to the Royal New Zealand Naval Volunteer Reserve early in 1945. Three hundred and nineteen naval airmen did not attain status of officer—a number because the standards of training or medical fitness were so high, but mostly because of termination of training on the capitulation of Japan. Actually serving in the Royal New Zealand Naval Volunteer Reserve Air branch at the peak period of October, 1945, were 587 officers (predominantly pilots): 20 Lieutenant-Commanders (A); 235 Lieutenants (A); 240 Sub-Lieutenants (A); and 92 Acting-Sub-Lieutenants (A).

This represents, as stated by Vice-Admiral Sir Philip Vian, nearly 10 per cent of the Fleet Air Arm. Actually, the percentage was higher than that earlier in the war. It is a contribution to the Air Arm of the Royal Navy of which New Zealand may justifiably feel proud. As early as 1942 the Admiralty stated that the supply of so many officers was a remarkable effort considering the small population of New Zealand and her commitments elsewhere. Excepting 120 officers who received their training and were granted their commissions in the United States of America, the Air Branch officers were trained in England and Canada and received their commissions in England. In all parts of the world where there has been Royal Naval Air Stations and H.M. aircraft carriers there have been New Zealand Fleet Air Arm officers. Some of the operations in which New Zealand Air Arm officers took part show this diversity: attacks on German supply traffic off the Norwegian coast; attacks on enemy shipping and aerodromes in the Mediterranean; Atlantic convoys; air strikes on the "Tirpitz" in Norway; air targets in Japan; attacks on Palembang, Sumatra; air strikes on Kilbotn, Norway; Malta convoys; Nicobar Islands; operations from Malta; Pacific fighter sweeps over Japanese-held islands; North Russian convoys; D Day; Invasion of south of France; bombardment of Sabang and Medan; strafing of Sakishima Gunto and Formosa; surrender of Diego Suarez; landings on Madagascar and Salerno; operations in the Aegean Sea for the relief of Greece; operations with Coastal Command; operations in the Western Desert; operations off the Algerian coast; and destruction of enemy aircraft in all theatres, the number of which is not available, not having been communicated. For their part in these operations they gained 1 D.S.O., 39 D.S.C.'s, 2 Bars to D.S.C., 1 D.F.C., 2 M.B.E.'s, 46 Mention in Despatches, and 2 Letters of Commendation. In a message of farewell to the New Zealand pilots from the Pacific Fleet, Vice-Admiral Sir Philip Vian, Flag Officer Commanding Aircraft Carriers, assured the Naval Board of the great part played by the Royal New Zealand Naval Volunteer Reserve pilots (they were in every aircraft carrier) in the British carrier operations against Japan. He said, "I consider the pilots from New Zealand second to none, and to have ever excelled in the offensive spirit." Their "offensive spirit" had also been commented on in the Western Hemisphere.

(iv) *Scheme "Y"*: Men with yachting experience or qualifications granted temporary commissions in the Royal Naval Volunteer Reserve for service in Malaya. They were later transferred to the Royal New Zealand Naval Volunteer Reserve as from date of entry.