

There are many tasks in the local defence of the ports and coasts of the Dominion which call for the co-operation of aircraft with the other defence services. Such co-operation is likely to entail in the aggregate a great deal of flying, and it would be unsound to tie up the Regular Squadrons in such work. For local patrols and escorts, and for the attack of hostile vessels in coastal waters, the Territorial Squadrons provide a satisfactory and economical force. By the end of the period under review the Wellington Squadron had been recruited to approximately full strength and had received its initial equipment of twelve Baffin aircraft. These aircraft which have been replaced by more modern types in the Royal Air Force have proved themselves admirably suited to the requirements of the Territorial Air Force. The organization of the other three squadrons has been commenced, but progress must largely depend on the availability of the necessary instructional staff. It will be appreciated that during a period of rapid expansion the provision of instructors with the necessary skill and experience is a matter of some difficulty, although the authority which has been given to obtain personnel who have recently completed their service with the Royal Air Force should do much to overcome this.

THE AERO CLUBS.

Throughout the period under review the aero clubs have rendered valuable services in providing the initial training for candidates selected for Wigram, and also in training personnel for the Civil Reserve which has already been referred to. In addition, by maintaining a ground organization on a number of aerodromes throughout the Dominion, and by stimulating public interest in aviation in their districts, the aero clubs have done much which is of potential value in the defence of the Dominion.

CO-OPERATION WITH THE ROYAL AIR FORCE.

In a small service such as the Royal New Zealand Air Force it is essential to provide the means of keeping in touch with general developments in aviation, and also to give personnel the opportunity of studying the latest equipment and the methods of using it. These requirements are being met in the following ways :—

Firstly, by the appointment from January, 1938, of a New Zealand Liaison Officer to the Air Ministry. This ensures not only that New Zealand is supplied with the latest information on all matters of interest, but also that the equipment which is ordered is of the latest pattern and most suited for the purpose for which it is required. The advice which this officer has been able to give has already proved of great value.

Secondly, by a system of interchange between officers of the Royal New Zealand Air Force and the Royal Air Force. Such interchange is of mutual benefit, and two officers left New Zealand during 1937, being replaced by a Signals Officer and an Engineer Officer from the Royal Air Force whose technical knowledge has proved invaluable.

Thirdly, by means of courses of instruction in England. During 1937 four officers were sent on courses in engineering, signals, and armament. On return to New Zealand they will be available to instruct in these subjects.

Lastly, by the appointment of New Zealand officers in the Royal Air Force. For a number of years there has been a steady flow of young men to join the Royal Air Force. Until this year applicants for commissions paid their own passages to England and took the risk of not being selected on arrival, but by an arrangement with the Air Ministry the system has now been changed and candidates are selected in New Zealand and their passages paid. During the period under review 104 candidates were selected, and the reports which have been received from the training establishments in England are most satisfactory.

The Air Ministry has agreed that certain categories of these officers who, during their service in the Royal Air Force desire to transfer to the Royal New Zealand Air Force, shall be permitted to do so. By this means it is hoped to draw on personnel who have obtained experience in the latest types of aircraft and in all branches of Air Force work.

PERSONNEL.

The strengths of the Royal New Zealand Air Force on 1st April, 1937, and 31st March, 1938, were as follows :—

						1st April, 1937.	31st March, 1938.
Regular Air Force—							
Officers	..	..	..	..	..	21	37
Airmen	..	..	..	..	..	156	302
Reserve (pilots)—							
R.N.Z.A.F. Reserve	..	..	..	..	..	10	13
Civil Reserve	..	..	..	..	..	Nil	106
Territorial Air Force—							
Officers	..	..	..	..	..	71	73
Airmen	..	..	..	..	..	Nil	75
						258	606

EQUIPMENT.

During the period under review orders were placed for five Airspeed Oxford twin-engine trainer aircraft. Of these, four will be used for advanced training at the Flying Training School, Wigram, and the fifth will be specially fitted for aerial survey work.