

be said that they carried out these duties as efficiently as their male predecessors. The peak strength of the W.A.A.F. was 3,652 in July, 1943.

The year under review has seen many changes in policy and administration, resulting in reduction in strength from 2,607 to 629. These releases represent those airwomen who applied for discharge for various reasons.

One W.A.A.F. officer and four senior N.C.O.s are on special duties with Historical Records Branch of R.N.Z.A.F. Headquarters, London.

MEDICAL BRANCH

During the war the Medical Branch of the R.N.Z.A.F. continued to expand its organization to a size commensurate with medical requirements of the Service, and reached its peak in June, 1944, with a total of 778 personnel. With the cessation of hostilities, the Branch was steadily reduced to 149 personnel as at 31st March, 1946.

Activities during the latter half of the year under review were concerned chiefly with demobilization, those connected with flying and research problems having practically ceased. This resulted in a considerable increase in Medical Boards during the period, the total number held being 35,347. The policy of carrying out a chest x-ray on all personnel at demobilization was put fully into effect, and 29,096 x-ray films and reports were received.

EQUIPMENT

The year under review ended the responsibility for the logistic support of an active fighting Service and ushered in a period in which the primary responsibility changed to the custody and the salvage of equipment and stores.

On the cessation of hostilities, the task of the final closing-down of bases in six separate areas in the South Pacific commenced. All equipment, stores, vehicles, &c., were thoroughly examined, and every item of value was packed and made ready for transportation back to New Zealand. In this respect many difficulties were experienced, but with the chartering of the G.S.S. "Matai" all stores required were returned, some 324 vehicles and some 4,100 tons of stores being shipped.

With the reduction of activities of the R.N.Z.A.F. since VE day it was necessary to establish storage units to prevent undue deterioration of surplus aircraft. Two such units have therefore been established, one at Rukuhia for storage of metal-type aircraft and the other at Woodbourne for storage of composite type. Some 1,000 aircraft are now stored at these units, consisting of Venturas, Corsairs, Kittyhawks, Avengers, Hudsons, Harvards, Oxfords, and Tiger Moths.

Much radio and radar equipment formerly used as part of Air Force combat equipment has been transferred to the Civil Aviation Branch for use in Civil Aviation.

As an unavoidable aftermath of war, the main activity was the disposal of surplus stores and equipment. Through the offices of the War Assets Realization Board, surplus stores to the value of £684,176 have already been disposed of to both Government Departments and the public.

MAINTENANCE

Up till the cessation of hostilities in the Pacific the maintenance organization followed that of the previous year. Since VJ Day disbandment of units and changing commitments necessitated considerable reorganization. These commitments included the increased activity of transport squadrons engaged in repatriating personnel from the Pacific and the ferrying back from the Pacific to New Zealand of 203 Corsair aircraft. Prior to this latter flight, it was necessary to carry out in the field a major modification to the engines of 130 of these aircraft.