

251. Introduction of a New NCO Structure into the Band Service

Improvement of Promotion Prospects

1. While planning the future deployment of the Band Service after 1973, with a reduced strength of about 510 other ranks, it has been decided to bring the Band NCO structure more into line with the other branches of the Corps. In effect this has meant significantly improving the promotion prospects of the Non-Commissioned ranks. The new structure is to be introduced gradually as the band redeployment plan is effected between now and 1973. The details of the changes to be made are given below.

Staff Bandmasters

2. There will be a greater requirement for Staff Bandmasters in the new Band Service which will mean an increase over present numbers. This is to take into account the need to:-

- a. Keep a Staff Bandmaster in each of the three large bands for Portsmouth Group, C-in-C Western Fleet and Royal Marines School of Music.
- b. Have a Staff Bandmaster to command each of the private bands at the new standard strength of 25 band ranks, i.e. those bands not allocated to Flag Officers and commanded by a Band Officer.
- c. Upgrade two SNCO billets at RMSM to Staff Bandmaster to balance the increased responsibility arising from the reduction in officer strength at the school.

3. As the rank of Bandmaster is to be abolished for the reasons given below, the present Bandmasters Course will become the qualification for promotion to Staff Bandmaster only.

Introduction of the Rank of Band Colour Sergeant

4. There will be no ships' bands after 1973 and thus no requirement for the rank title of Bandmaster, which until now has been suitable for the SNCO in command of a ship's band. There is also an anomaly at present between the high qualification required for promotion to Bandmaster and the absence of any extra qualification for promotion to the equivalent rank of Colour Sergeant in the rest of the Corps. It has been decided therefore to abolish the rank of Bandmaster and to introduce the rank of Band Colour Sergeant in lieu.

5. With immediate effect all promotions from Band Sergeant will be made to the new rank of Band Colour Sergeant, for which no additional qualification will be necessary. In order to ensure that sufficient Band SNCOs pass the Bandmaster's course early in their careers and subsequently get the necessary experience before promotion to Staff Bandmaster, the Promotions Board may only make promotions from Band Sergeant to Band Colour Sergeant to maintain the minimum and maximum proportions of Colour Sergeants given below:-

- a. A minimum of 40 per cent of Band Colour Sergeants qualified for promotion to Staff Bandmaster.
- b. A maximum of 60 per cent of Band Colour Sergeants not qualified for promotion to Staff Bandmaster.

6. In all other respects factors affecting promotion will be as for other non-commissioned ranks.

7. The badge of rank to be worn by Band Colour Sergeants will be that worn by all Colour Sergeants in the Corps for each dress, with the Branch Badge of the Band Service worn on the lower right sleeve in all appropriate orders of dress. The same badge of rank will be worn on No. 1 Ceremonial Dress (Band) as is worn on No. 2 Blue Dress, (i.e. Chevrons, surmounted by a Laurel Wreath surrounding a Globe, crossed Colours and a Foul Anchor) but without the Branch Badge on the lower right sleeve.

8. SNCOs holding the rank of Bandmaster prior to the date of this order will continue to wear the uniform, badges of rank and accoutrements of that rank and to use its title. For pay, complementing and employment purposes they will be regarded as Band Colour Sergeants. In order not to prolong excessively the period in which both ranks will be in use, Bandmasters, commencing fifth or sixth five engagements after the date of this order, are to wear the uniform and to use the title of Band Colour Sergeant.

Numbers of Band Colour Sergeants, Band Sergeants and Band Corporals

9. The number of each of these ranks will decrease as the Band Service strength reduces but the proportions of Band Colour Sergeants and Band Corporals of the new Band Service strength will be greater than at present, to bring them into line with the rest of the Corps. The proportion of Band Sergeants does not need altering

Traditional Band Appointments

10. Certain Band SNCO appointments and ranks have in the past been retained from the old divisional bands. With the introduction of the new Band NCOs' structure it is intended that, whilst the appointments may be retained, the special badges of rank relating to them should cease to be worn when the present incumbents are relieved, at the discretion of the Directors of Music.

Current Regulations

11. RMIs, NPR and Uniform Regulations will be amended in due course.