

NEW NAVAL HELICOPTER SQUADRON

The Royal Naval Helicopter Squadron destined for Malaya, and referred to in the House of Commons to-day, is numbered 848, and is commanded by Lieut-Commander S.H. Suthers, D.S.C., Royal Navy.

The Squadron is at present at the R.N. Air Station, Gosport, where it will receive and train in the Sikorsky helicopters being provided by the United States under the Mutual Defence Assistance Programme.

The helicopters are due to reach Southampton at 11 p.m. tomorrow, Tuesday, in the S.S. AMERICAN PRODUCER.

NOTE TO EDITORS.

It is hoped to provide an opportunity for representatives to see the Squadron and its aircraft at the R.N.A.S. Gosport before the departure of the unit overseas. Applications to view should be made to the Chief of Naval Information, Admiralty, Whitehall (Telephone: Whitehall 9000, Ext. 1125).

All enquiries for facilities to visit the S.S. AMERICAN PRODUCER at Southampton Docks, or to determine the time of unloading, should be made to British Railways, Southampton 3838, Extension 410.

Admiralty, S.W.1.
17th November, 1952.

BIOGRAPHY

LIEUTENANT-COMMANDER SYDNEY HAL SUTHERS, D.S.C., R.N.

Recently appointed to command the Royal Navy's new Helicopter Squadron (No. 848) is Lieutenant-Commander Sydney Hal Suthers, D.S.C., R.N., who was born in Gillingham but now lives at Alverstoke, Hants. His new command is at present preparing at the Royal Naval Air Station, Gosport, for a period of service in Malaya, and they are being equipped with new American S.55s.

Suthers, who is 34 years of age, joined the pre-war Air Branch of the Royal Navy as a Midshipman in 1939. In 1941 he was a member of 813 Squadron (Swordfish) in H.M.S. EAGLE and took part in the most successful operations against the Italian Naval forces in the Red Sea. In one week this Squadron sank two Italian destroyers and caused one other to be scuttled, while operating from an airfield at Port Sudan. Suthers was credited with the whole sinking of one of these and was awarded the Distinguished Service Cross for "courage, skill and determination" in September, 1941.

After further operations in the Middle East, Suthers started a long period of service as an Instructor in various units.

He transferred from fixed to rotary winged aircraft in 1949 and was, prior to this appointment, in command of the Naval Helicopter Training unit (705 Squadron). He was the pilot in charge of the aircraft which made the attempt from Cudroze of rescuing Captain Carlson and Mr. Dancy from the 'FLYING ENTERPRISE'. For this effort he was highly commended by F.O. Air (Home) together with his Observer, Commissioned Observer Lambert whose work in the Atom Bomb Tests was recently praised by the Prime Minister in the House of Commons.

Lieutenant-Commander Suthers met his wife, Patricia, when she was in the W.R.N.S. and she and their daughter will probably be remaining in Alverstoke during his service abroad. Near her, in Lee-on-Solent, will be the wife of Suthers' Senior Pilot, Lieutenant G.C.J. Knight, R.N. He started flying in 1941 as a member of the R.N.V.R. Air Branch and transferred to the R.N. in 1946. He has also been flying helicopters in 705 Squadron since 1949.

November, 1952.

Monday 8th December, 1952.

848 Squadron - R.N. Air Station Gosport.

Gosport has been the scene of Service flying since 1912, and it is still going strong. 848 Squadron which you will see to-day, is the latest page in Gosport's history.

This Squadron was very recently formed and will shortly be proceeding overseas for operational duty. The preparation of the aircraft has been progressed in record time - tribute is due to the excellent performance of the maintenance personnel of Squadron and Station.

848 Squadron is the first Naval front line helicopter squadron to be formed, and is equipped with the SIKORSKY H R S.2. - provided by U.S. Mutual Aid. Powered with a 600 H.P. engine this aircraft is capable of carrying 2 pilots and 8 passengers, has a maximum speed of 105 knots and an endurance of 5 hours.

Lieutenant Commander. S.H. SUTHERS, D.S.C., R.N. is the Commanding Officer, LIEUTENANT Commander G.D. LUFF., R.N. the Senior Observer, and Lieutenant G.C.J. KNIGHT., R.N. the Senior Pilot.

Gosport is the home of Naval helicopter activities. 705 Squadron, Commanded by Lieutenant Commander H.R. SPEDDING., R.N., has the important task; amongst others, of conversion training for all the aircrew and maintenance personnel required for helicopter duties.

705 Squadron is equipped with the WESTLAND S.51 helicopter which, powered by an ALVIS LEONIDES engine of 520 H.P., carries a pilot and 2 passengers at a maximum speed of 89 knots, and has an endurance of 3 hours.

During this forenoon you will have the opportunity of seeing the aircraft on the ground, interviewing the personnel who operate them (catch the aircrew during the forenoon as they will probably all be flying in the afternoon), and of taking short local passenger flights in either the H.R.S.2 or the S.51.

Before being taken up as passenger it is essential that you sign the well known "Blood Chit".

Lunch will be served in the Ward Room commencing at 1315 (1. 15 p.m. in civil parlance).

At approximately 1430 (2.30 p.m.), there will be a formation fly-past by all available aircraft of 848 and 705 Squadrons. There will be opportunities for some of the photographers to be carried as passengers on this fly-past flight. This flight will be staged so that there will also be good opportunities for photographs to be taken from the ground.

Transport to Gosport Ferry will be provided, leaving the Air Station, at approximately 1530 (3.30 p.m) for those returning to London by train.

Lieutenant Commander LUFF who will be in the Bus meeting those arriving at Gosport Ferry in the forenoon, will be in general charge of arrangements for visitors - if you have any queries or difficulties get in touch with him.