



These radio-location girls at a coastal unit may be studying text-books—on the other hand they may not



"There is always a bunch of them together"



Back from a spell of leave, they present their papers to the guard

NOT GRACE DARLINGS

But Radio-Location Girls Do Vital Job To Guard Our Coast

RADIO-LOCATION, as we all know, has proved to be a very important factor in the defence of Britain. In the defence of New Zealand it may also prove vital. In both New Zealand and in Britain this work is very largely in the hands of women. In an interview with an officer of the Royal New Zealand Air Force, *The Listener* was told something of the work and life of these girls upon whom the air defence of New Zealand so largely depends.

"Apart from the direction at the head," he told us, "the radio-location part of the air defence system depends largely upon women. Why? Well, I suppose that is because women turned out to be so efficient at radio-location work in the Battle of Britain. They were used for such work in the first place because every fit and able man was needed for active service, but they soon proved as good as the men, and a little better. Not only are they good at the job, but they have shown themselves just as cool and level-headed during raids and just as able to carry on under fire. So here in New Zealand we have started from scratch with women. The opinion of experts is that they can handle delicate instruments with precision because as a rule they are more nimble and deft with their fingers than men are. Again, the general impression is that they are more conscientious than men and pay greater attention to detail and do not tire of monotonous work. And, by the way, many people held the opinion that women could not be used on work that is secret, but we have found that women are just as reliable as men in keeping secret information under their hats—or perhaps I should say W.A.A.F. berets. I think we can now say that the hand that was intended to rock the cradle will rock the Axis."

"Precisely what part do these girls play in the Dominion's air defence?"

The answer was something like this: "Their work falls into three sections—the radio-location centre, the operations room, and the ground work at the fighter stations. The radio-location centres throw an invisible chain of beams around New Zealand. Any aircraft that enters this field of beams is immediately detected and located. This information goes at once to the operations-room, where the exact position of the aircraft is plotted on a large map; in fact all air operations within a certain radius can be followed accurately in this room."

We asked about the life at the coastal units of the system.

"I don't think you would find much of the Grace Darling touch in the lives of girls serving at these units. There is always a bunch of them together. They have quite a pleasant life, bathing, swimming, hiking, and playing all sorts of games in their off time. They have comfortable quarters, and are well fed. They do everything except the heavy mechanical and maintenance jobs which are done by men.

"What are the qualifications?"

(Continued on next page)