

FLEET SHORE ESTABLISHMENTS.

The Fleet Shore Establishment Section of E. in C. Department, is responsible for the provision of equipment to all the establishments which are manned by Naval personnel, such as the mechanical training establishments, training camps, R.N. barracks, net and boom defence works, etc., at home and abroad. With the fall of France, new and additional problems were introduced in the form of developments necessary for defence. Net defence, boom defence and controlled mining, entailed a great deal of design work in close collaboration with the departments directly responsible.

With France in enemy hands, there came the need for the establishment of bases around the entire south and east coasts of England to maintain craft which would be brought into service in operations on enemy held beaches.

The damage suffered during the training period by the very limited number of craft available was considerable and repair and maintenance of these craft became a major problem. In order to obtain workshop equipment in reasonable time, machine tool manufacturers were informed of the difficulties and it must be said that most of them played up magnificently.

In spite of this it was not possible in many cases to provide all the equipment required and the lack of machine tools was, therefore, severely felt.

1942 FLEET & 1943 LIGHT

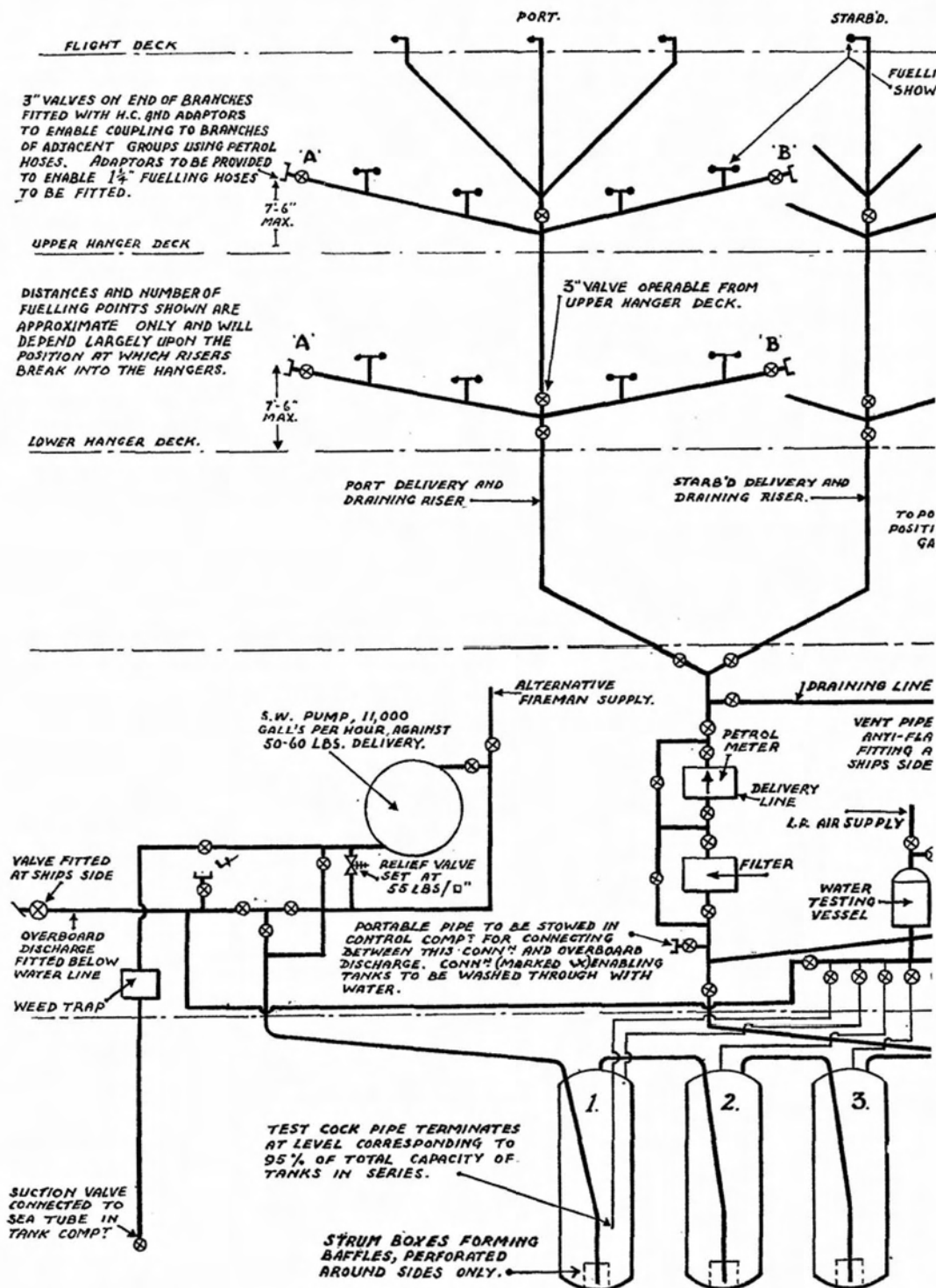
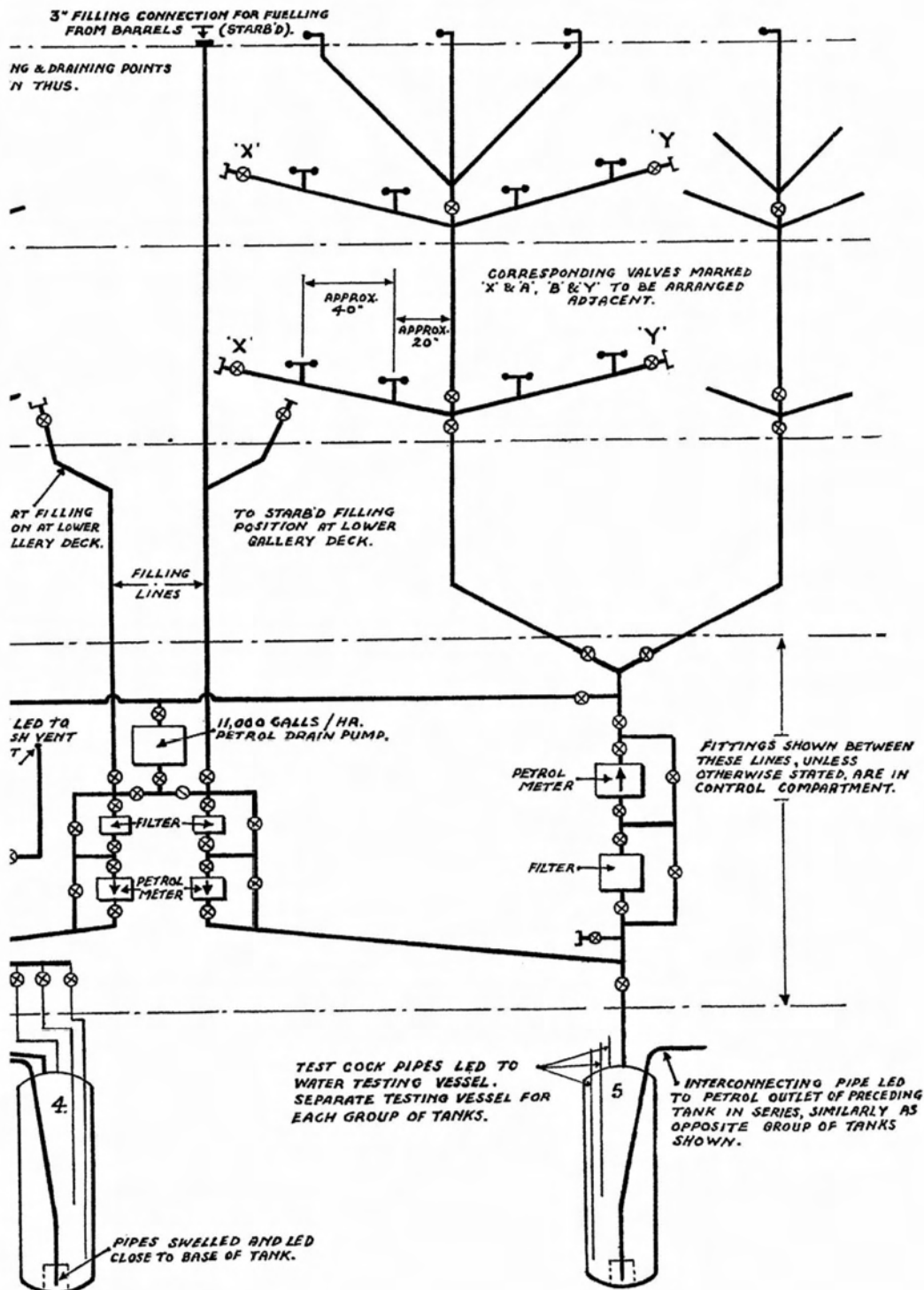


FIG. 1.—DIAGRAMMATIC ARRANGEMENT OF

FLEET AIRCRAFT CARRIERS.



Supply was not always speedy enough for keen base engineer officers and many were the heated discussions which ensued. Cases were not uncommon where engine parts were hacked out of the solid block or bar and completely finished with hand tools for lack of a simple shaping machine. Such work meant long and laborious hours spent at the bench and great credit is due to base engineer officers and their staffs for carrying out their duties under such difficulties. Machine tool manufacturers in some cases would cheerfully offer machines such as radial drilling machines, precision lathes or milling machines, for delivery in 16 to 18 months, when delivery was required in as many weeks. Consequently when urgent service was required, switching of contracts and services became the rule of the day.

During 1942 the supply position somewhat improved and demands were being met in fairly good time. This state of affairs was not to remain for long however. Along came urgent demands for equipment for installation in the North African ports immediately following the landings. Tactics which had proved successful in 1940-41 were immediately adopted. Reallocations were arranged for several items and appeals were made to manufacturers who again came up to scratch and the equipment was forthcoming in good time. These methods again proved successful, but only up to a point. A letter from the C. in C. Mediterranean stating that 60 welding sets had never arrived proved to be a bitter pill to swallow when it was found that other 'go-getters' were in the Mediterranean, who were prepared to take for themselves, equipment intended for other services. The high degree of secrecy attendant on Mediterranean operations generally added to the difficulty of consignment of these items and caused many heart aches.

Although a tremendous amount of equipment, in the form of C.R.U's (Craft Recovery Units), M.L.R.U's (Mobile Land Repair Units) and E.R.U's (Emergency Repair Units), was required for the Normandy landings, time had been available for assembly, and preparations were generally completed in good time. As clearances of enemy-held ports were effected, maintenance bases were set up to deal with craft engaged on the 'shuttle' service necessary for furthering operations on the continent.

Floating Docks.

In view of the large numbers of small craft, invasion craft and coastal force craft and the many bases which had been set up for their maintenance, the need arose for the rapid development of dry docking facilities. To meet this need, floating docks constructed of pre-cast reinforced concrete on mass production lines, varying in lifting capacity from 400 to 1,000 tons were built and a great saving in building time was effected. Some of these docks equipped with generating plant, pumping gear and workshop equipment, have been in use across the channel since the Autumn of 1944, and have certainly proved their worth. Another new departure has been the construction of N.L. docks built of steel on the American principle of unit construction. For the operation of these docks, tender barges equipped with all necessary gear sufficient for the working of the dock and repair of craft, had to be provided.

In addition to the operational requirements handled by the Fleet Shore Establishment Section, in connection with maintenance and repair facilities in captured territory, quite a number of routine jobs are being carried out. These include installation of air conditioning and gas filtration plant in underground offices, heating, cooking and sanitary services in requisitioned property, and the equipping of W/T stations at home and overseas with generators, workshop machinery and air conditioning plant.